

# Hobart 2010 Public Spaces and Public Life

## A city with people in mind

THE FIRST STAGE OF HOBART'S INNER CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**GEHL** ARCHITECTS  
URBAN QUALITY CONSULTANTS



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*Public Spaces & Public Life, Hobart 2010* has been jointly commissioned by the Hobart City Council. The report was commissioned from Jan Gehl and Gehl Architects to gain data about the public life in the city centre of Hobart, and receive expert advice and opinion on the opportunities for its future inner city development plan.

Gehl Architects have been given editorial freedom for the report, and the recommendations of the report are therefore those of Gehl Architects, and are not to be construed as being the adopted policy of the client.

The client group have supplied some supporting information used in the study. While every care has been taken to ensure the reliability of the information supplied, they can not warrant the completeness or accuracy of the data.

## Reflections

Hobart is not a big city, but in a very unique way a great city. It is centre for the region, the capital of Tasmania and with no other competing cities anywhere close. It is the heart of the region and a heart with a steady heartbeat stimulated by a lively business environment and gifted by a still active harbour. Nature has blessed Hobart with a unique setting with hills, nature reserves and the sea close to the city. Few cities can ask for more.

Further Hobart has benefited from a slower growth rate than other Australian capitals, meaning that much of the character of the city as well the many historic buildings have been protected. With a few less fortunate exceptions, Hobart has almost managed to keep a gentle, low skyline, which is fortunate given the wind problems high-rise buildings would have caused in any city on this location. Add to this setting an industrious population, a lively, creative arts community and the presence in the city of a great number of students and academics. Hobart is extremely lucky that so many quality features have been preserved in the city. Any problems that exist should be easy to straighten them out because so many of the basic ingredients of a fine city are still here.

And problems there certainly are. As in all other Australian cities Hobart has seen a severe auto invasion which over the years have detracted from many qualities of the city. Highway type city streets provide serious barriers between the city and its harbour. The traffic of cars dominate everywhere in the streets, and worse still lenient parking policies combined with many bad habits developed over years have allowed the parked cars to penetrate everywhere resulting in Hobart being very much the city of the ever-present parked cars – regardless of other qualities effected. No parked cars in the World have a better view from their empty cabins, than the hundreds of cars parked along the Hobart Waterfront.

This invasion of motorcars and the gradual erosion of city qualities has happened gradually over a long period. However in the meantime the concern for quality for people in the city, for pedestrians and public life has also grown, as has the wish to promote “green mobility” inviting people to walk and bicycle more in order to create more sustainable and healthy environments. This shift of emphasis from a car dominating orientation to a more balanced attitude where all city users are invited, and where a wider range of people activities are encouraged can be seen in many other Australian cities –predominantly Melbourne & Perth, but also Adelaide and Sydney are well on their way on the orientation towards creating a better city for people.

It is my hope that through the studies presented here the people of Hobart will gain insights concerning how the city works today and more importantly will find inspiration and directions for improving the city in the years to come. Because of the fine basic fabric the process will be easier than in many other cities, yet visionary leadership – as seen in the many other fine cities of the world - will be needed.

A heartfelt welcome for Hobart to join the exclusive club of the greatest cities in the world. Just a broom and a steady hand are needed.

Hobart/Copenhagen  
22 November 2010



Jan Gehl, Professor, Dr. Litt.  
Founding Partner – Gehl Architects, Urban Quality Consultants

# How to read the report

## **Introduction**

The Introduction gives a general introduction to the study. It also provides a summary on the overall findings - challenges and recommendations.

## **Analysis**

The Analysis is divided into 4 sub-chapters and includes an analysis of the physical conditions provided for pedestrians in the city centre as well as how the city's streets and squares are used. The analysis covers both the issues related to walking and getting around in general, and the issues regarding spending time in the city.

## **Recommendations**

The Recommendations are divided into 4 sub-chapters and are based on the findings in the analysis. A set of simple and overall recommendations are put forward covering the main problematic issues today. These are followed by more detailed guidelines indicating desirable improvements.

## **Public life data**

The Public life data presents all the collected data of the public life surveys. How are the streets, squares and parks in the study area used? How many people are walking in the streets? How many activities are going on? What goes on during weekdays and Saturdays?

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# Background for the study

Gehl Architects has been invited to conduct a Public Spaces & Public Life study in Hobart. With the 'human dimension' as a starting point, Jan Gehl has, over four decades, worked to improve city environments in Denmark and internationally.

The book 'Life between Buildings', originally published in 1971 and translated to 21 languages, has become required reading in numerous architecture schools worldwide. 'Life between Buildings' describes the life which takes place in the public realm, in both cities and suburbs, and advocates for a stronger effort from planners and architects to understand and create the framework which will enhance public life in the best possible way.

The objective of Gehl Architects is to create a stronger coherence between the life in the city and planned or existing building structures. Public life is at the top of the agenda and great care is needed to accommodate the people using our cities.

As part of a working tool, Gehl Architects has developed the 'Public Spaces and Public Life' (PSPL) methodology, which has been applied in different contexts around the world. In Copenhagen, PSPL surveys have been conducted every ten years over the past forty years. The surveys have provided empirical evidence of the significant improvement in city life resulting from the increase in public space

quality over the past 4 decades. Additionally, follow-up surveys have enabled the municipal government to gather information, as well as inspiration, for the further development of the public realm, whilst the general public has acquired valuable understanding and interest in public spaces and public life.

This method of working has over the years been taken up by cities in many parts of the world. Besides Stockholm and Copenhagen, Gehl Architects has performed follow-up surveys in Perth in 2009 (follow-up to a 1994 survey) and Melbourne in 2004 (follow-up to a 1994 survey). In both cases, Melbourne in particular, PSPL studies have shown that public realm improvements have the potential to significantly impact the public life of the city. Such evidence has proven to be vital to maintaining public interest in further improvement projects, as well as general satisfaction amongst citizens who can see quantifiable evidence of improved city quality.

The 'Public Spaces and Public Life' methodology has been used for this Hobart survey and it make it possible to compare the current situation with other cities.

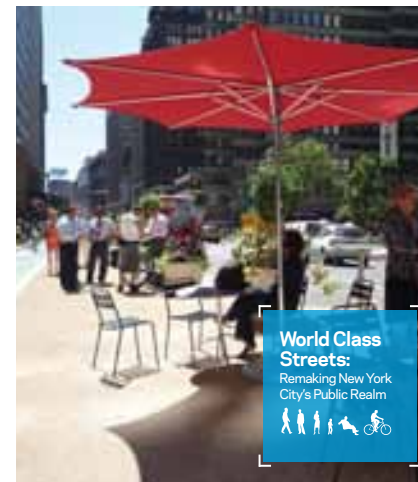
## Overview of some of the Public Spaces and Public Life surveys conducted in the period 2000-2009 in other cities



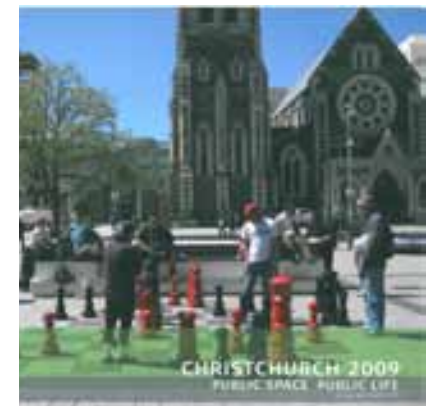
Melbourne - 1994 and 2004 - 3 million inhabitants



London - 2003 - 7.5 million inhabitants



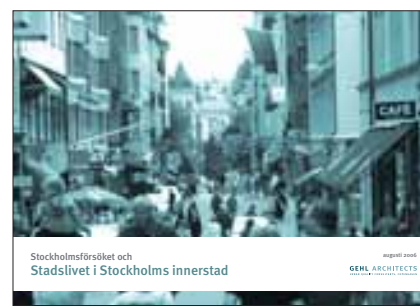
New York - 2007 - 8 million inhabitants



Christchurch 2009 - 0.4 million inhabitants



Adelaide - 2002 - 1.3 million inhabitants



Stockholm - 1990 and 2005 - 1.2 million inhabitants



Copenhagen - 1986, 1995, 2005 - 1.3 million inhabitants



Wellington - 2004 - 0.3 million inhabitants



Sydney - 2006 - 4 million inhabitants



Perth 1994 and 2009 - 1.6 million inhabitants

## Study and study areas

# Introduction

## The place

- Hobart enjoys a remarkable natural setting
- A city with a concentrated city centre and many heritage buildings
- Hobart is gifted with a diverse, active, working harbour

Tasmania is the most southerly of Australia's six states. It is an island with a population of approximately 500,000 people and is separated from the rest of Australia by Bass Strait, a water body 300 kilometres wide. Hobart enjoys a wonderful setting created by natural landscape features and Mount Wellington and Sullivan's Cove give the city a strong character with fine parklands in between.

The city has a compact centre which is sprinkled with fine heritage buildings and sits right at the waters edge. Hobart is privileged with a truly active, working harbour and has many other attractions for the citizens and it's visitors inside as well as outside the city. Even the climate is diverse and rich in this city.

Hobart is a relatively low city with wide streets. High rise buildings have primarily been built in the area between the city centre and the harbour and have impacted the climatic conditions in these areas negatively.

## The task

- To create a vision
- To collect a strong new data base
- To initiate a new discussion for the future of the city

The task is to create a strong vision for the future of Hobart. A vision which can be an inspiration for the citizens, the businesses, the institutions, the City Council and all the people involved in the development of a great future for Hobart.

The vision is based on collection of a new set of data that gives the city and it's citizens detailed information about the quality of the existing public spaces and the life and activities that take place there. A new discussion of the way the city should be developed is possible based on the new and existing data which is available in this report.

The greatest task is to create a clear set of ideas about what the challenges, the possibilities, and the outcomes are so that the city and it's citizens can take the right actions for their future.

## The challenges

- The public life is very concentrated in the city centre which has the character of a shopping mall
- Heavy traffic and barriers between city and water
- Surface parking dominates the city and especially the waterfront

City life in Hobart is concentrated within just a few city blocks, an area of just 300 x 300 metres, and the surrounding areas are rather inactive. The city centre consists of one pedestrian mall which forms the heart of the city centre. This is dominated by commercial activities during the day and is closed, inactive, and uninviting during the evenings. Today the city centre seems very introverted, it works within itself.

The city is strongly prioritizing vehicular traffic and Davey Street and Macquarie Street are major obstacles and barriers when it comes to linking the city and the waterfront. The traffic barriers in Hobart are expressed in various ways. On a city level large traffic arteries cut off the city centre from the harbour and from Queens Domain. On the next level almost all the streets in Hobart are dominated by driving as well as parked cars. Hobart has a very high number of parking spaces in the city centre offering good conditions for the cars but also increasing the problem of traffic in the city centre. The parking along the harbour front has a very negative impact on the waterfront environment.

## The outcome

- A world class waterfront city
- An extended and diverse use of the city centre
- An active lived-in city centre
- A city with a vibrant city life and a 21st Century traffic system

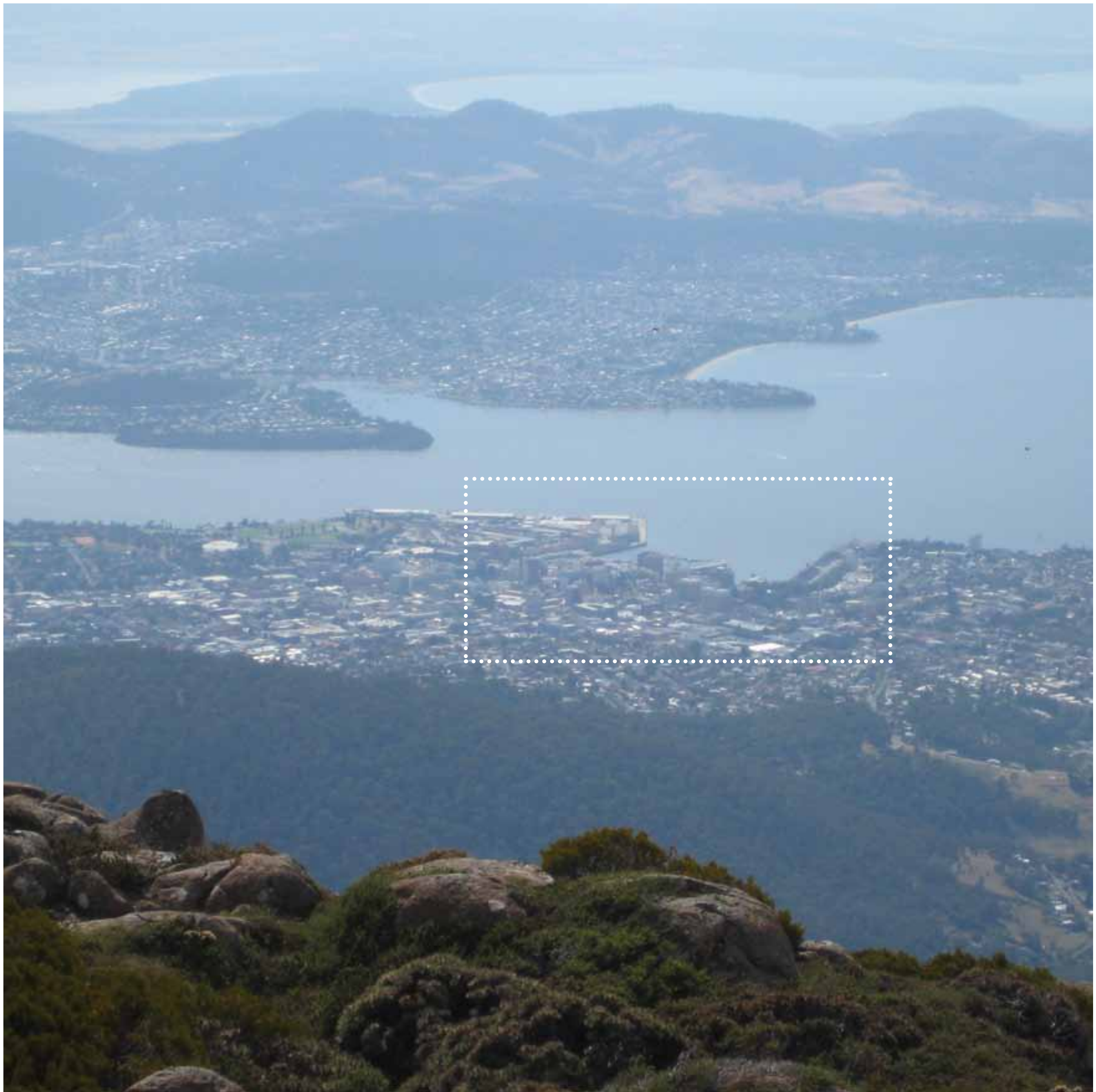
The particular qualities of the city must be celebrated so the urban richness can be enjoyed.

The use of the city centre has been extended and there is more diversity of public spaces, which are offering fine places for many user groups to spend their time.

Most parking on the waterfront has been removed and the active waterfront can be enjoyed by citizens and visitors. More residents and more students are now living in, and are active in, the city centre, which is more alive day and night.

Hobart has become even more diverse and vibrant. The unique qualities, especially the harbour and topography, have been celebrated and one can enjoy the fine seasons in many different public spaces.





# Hobart - the study area

## Definition of the study area

The outline of the study area has been determined in close cooperation with Hobart City Council. The main focus of the study is the city centre. The boundaries of the study area are Brooker Avenue (north), Harrington Street and Mollie Street (south), and Brisbane Street (west).

The study area encompasses the most intensely used areas in the city. Having a coherent study area allows for a study of networks and coherence as well as connections to the bordering areas. Thus, the main feeders to the city centre have been studied in terms of pedestrian movement to and from the city. These links are vital walking links and relate very closely to what is going on in the city centre.

## Scale of the study area

The study area is approx. 1,340,000 square metres in size. Historically most city centres have, like Hobart, an area of approximately 1 sq km, as one kilometre is a reasonable walking distance when using the city facilities. Short walking distances provide greater potential for flourishing city life, as well as healthy and sustainable city living.

## Hobart characteristics

- A strict grid system, which only to a limited degree reflects the topography.
- Large city blocks (approx. 80-150 m wide, east-west, and 80 - 200 m long, north - south)
- Generous street widths of 18-20 metres in most streets.
- Laneways divide the long blocks and service the buildings.
- The grid system creates few public spaces.
- The clear focus of the city is Sullivans Cove.



Study area and approximate walking times in Hobart city centre

You can reach potentially anything in the city centre within **10 -15** min. by foot

## Who is using the Hobart city centre?



approx. **18,000**  
people working in the city centre  
44,702 working in the entire city

**1,900**  
residents in the city centre



**9,850**  
students in the city centre  
21,500 students in the entire city

**600,000**  
visitors to hobart a year



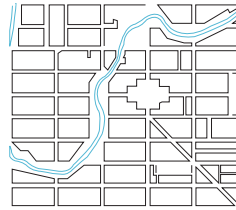
## City scale comparisons



### Launceston, Tasmania

City centre 1,282,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 Approx. 500 residents in the city centre  
 4 residents per hectare  
 Approx. 65,000 residents within the municipality (2006)

Inner city area 1-2 km<sup>2</sup>



### Christchurch, New Zealand

City centre 1,740,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 Approx. 2,000 residents in the city centre  
 12 residents per hectare  
 (382,000 residents in the metropolitan area)

Inner city area 1-2 km<sup>2</sup>

### Comparing Hobart to other Australian and European cities

Our studies of other cities have provided valuable information that can be used for comparison, as well as acting as frames of reference for this study. Comparisons are based on similar studies carried out in Launceston, Christchurch, Wellington, Apeldoorn, Odense and Copenhagen. A comparison study with these cities will provide insight into public life of other cities of comparable or smaller sizes.

Melbourne, Christchurch and Launceston are considered “new world cities”, and the city centres are comparable with Hobart in architecture and public space typology. Copenhagen and Odense, on the other hand, although medieval cities, can serve as inspiration for what can be achieved when conducting gradual urban renewal. Copenhagen has been active in this field for the last 50 years.



### Apeldoorn, Netherlands

City centre 1,200,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 Approx. 1,900 residents in the city centre  
 16 residents per hectare  
 Approx. 155,300 residents within the municipality (2009)

Inner city area 1-2 km<sup>2</sup>



### Odense, Denmark

City centre 870,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 Approx. 7,400 residents in the city centre (2008)  
 85 residents per hectare  
 (186,700 residents in the municipality 2007)

Inner city area 1-2 km<sup>2</sup>

Hobart has **1/6** of the number of residents per hectare than Odense and **1/3** of Melbourne.



### Melbourne, Australia

City centre 2,300,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 12,000 residents in the city centre (2006)  
 52 residents per hectare  
 (3.5 million residents in the metropolitan area)

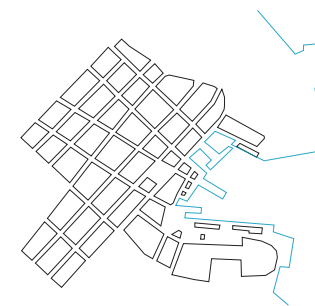
Inner city area 2-3 km<sup>2</sup>



### Copenhagen, Denmark

City centre 1,150,000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 7,600 residents in the city centre (2005)  
 66 residents per hectare  
 (1.2 million residents in the metropolitan area)

Inner city area 1-2 km<sup>2</sup>



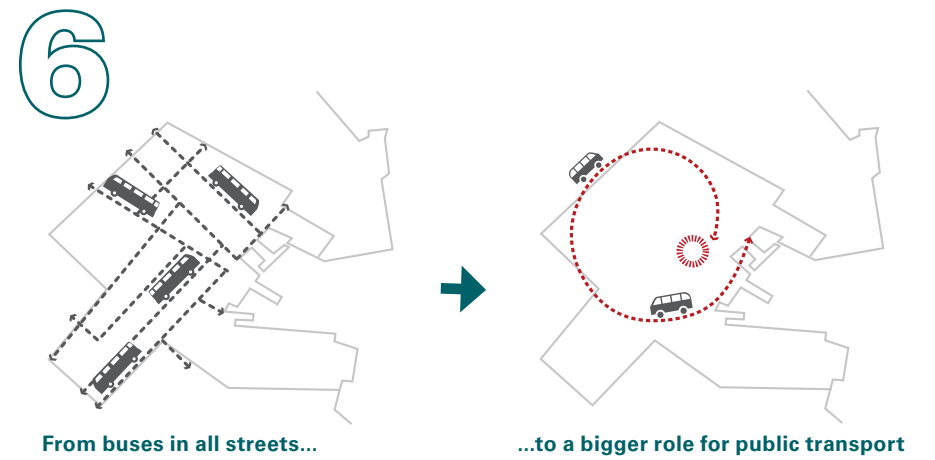
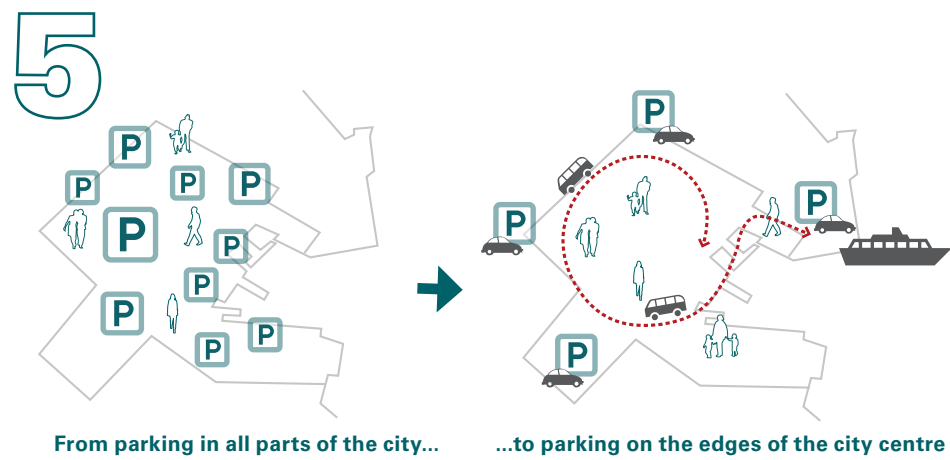
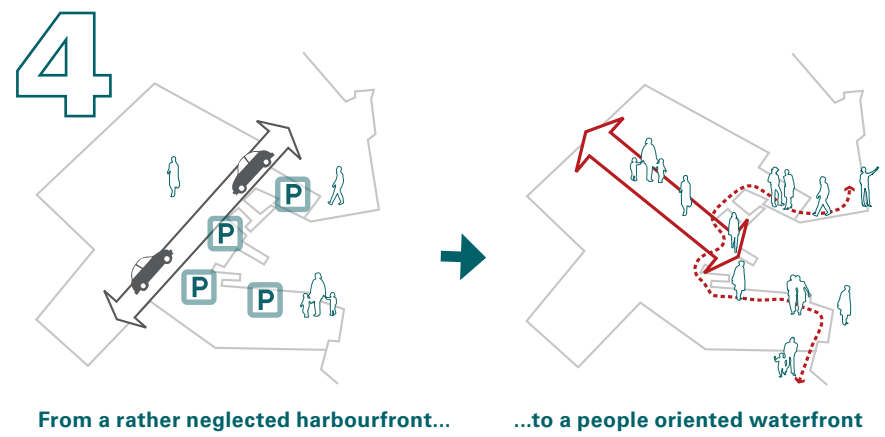
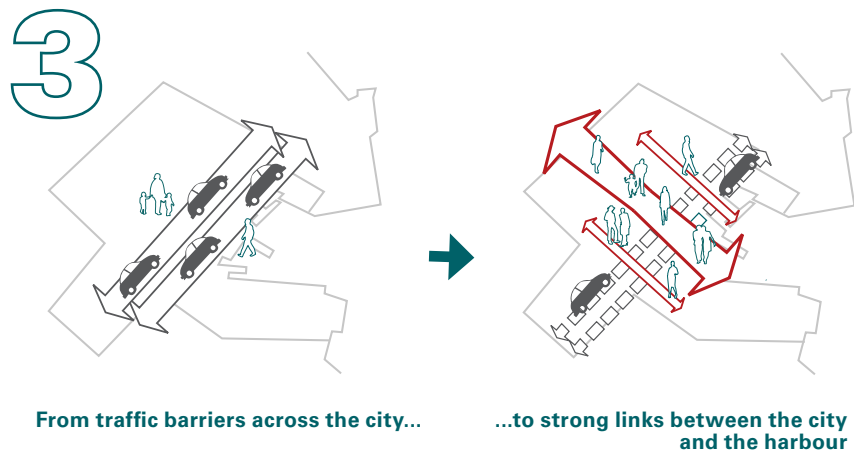
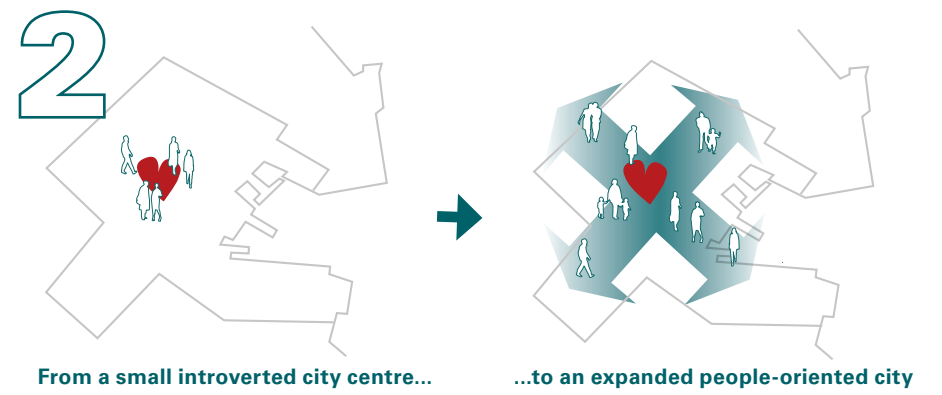
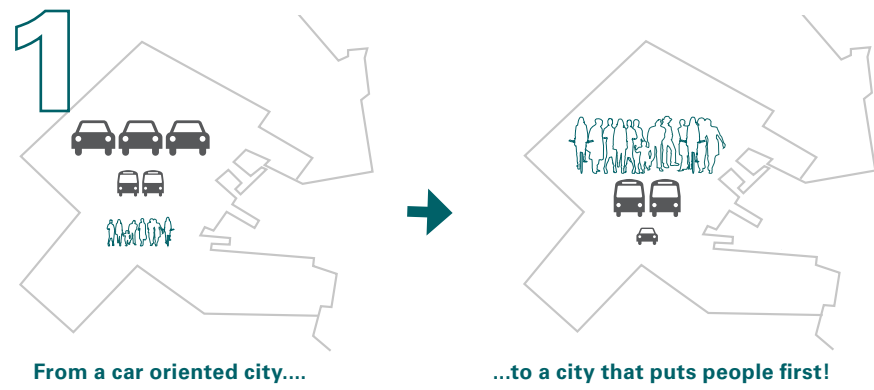
### Hobart, Tasmania

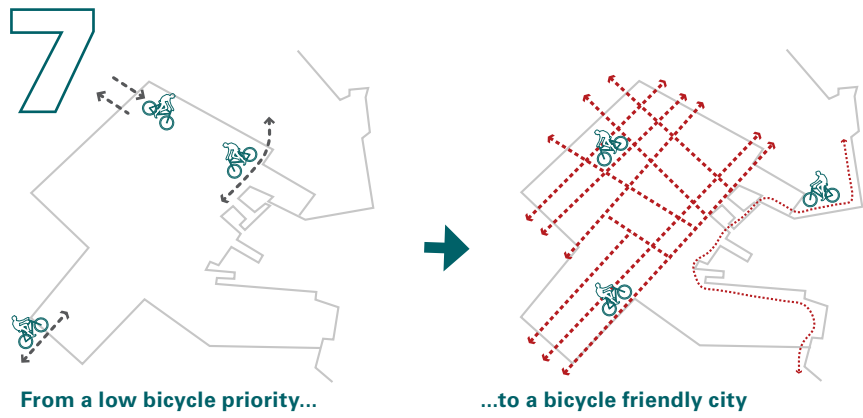
City centre 1,335,600 m<sup>2</sup>  
 Approx. 1,900 residents in the city centre  
 14 residents per hectare  
 50,000 residents in the City of Hobart  
 (200,000 residents in metropolitan area)

Inner city area 1-2 km<sup>2</sup>

All maps are shown in 1:40,000

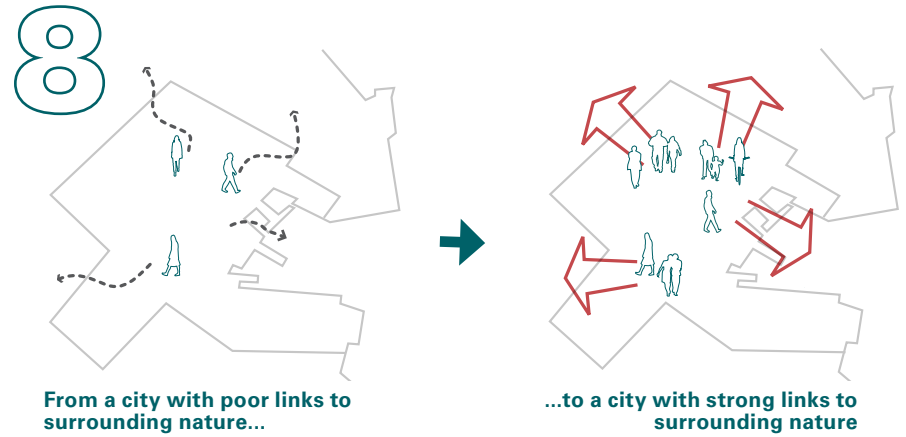
# Executive summary - challenges and recommendations





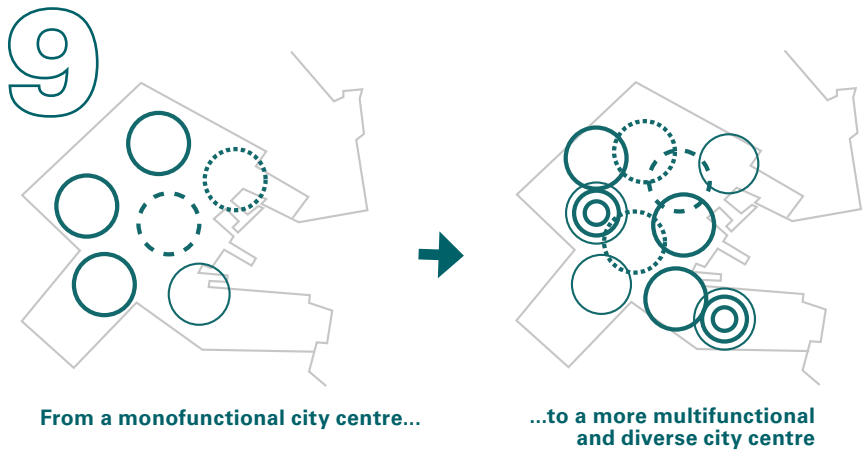
From a low bicycle priority...

...to a bicycle friendly city



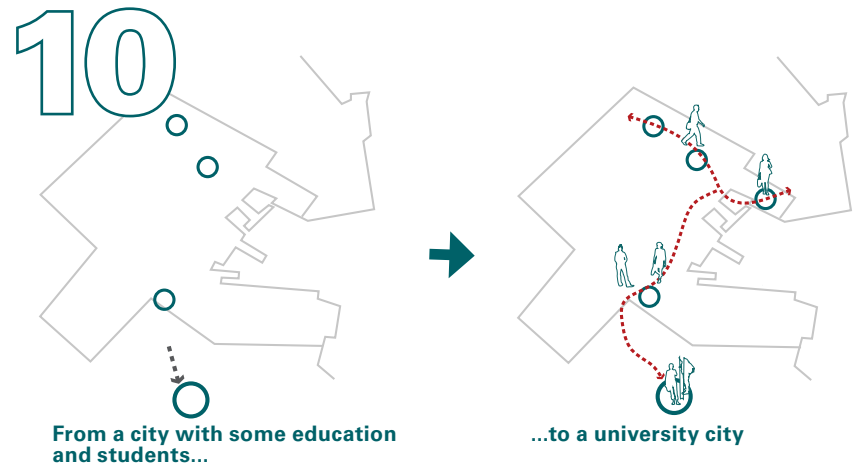
From a city with poor links to surrounding nature...

...to a city with strong links to surrounding nature



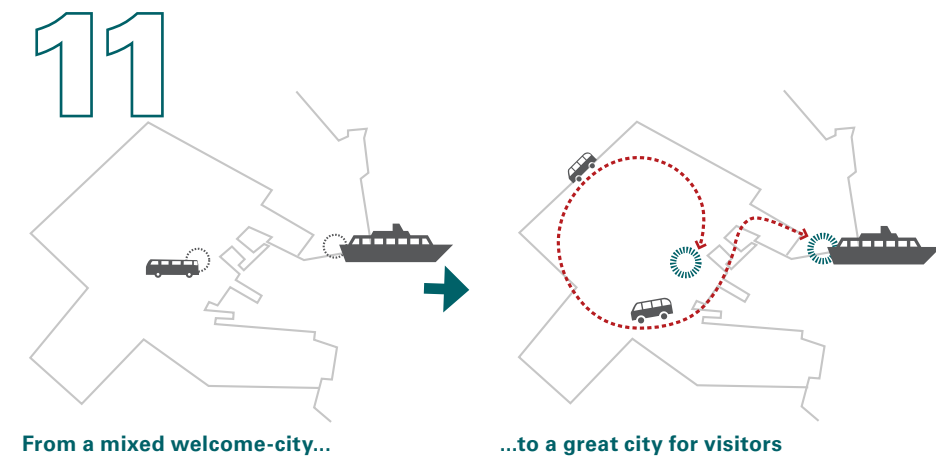
From a monofunctional city centre...

...to a more multifunctional and diverse city centre



From a city with some education and students...

...to a university city



From a mixed welcome-city...

...to a great city for visitors



From a city with scattered street trees...

...to a green city centre

