



Canberra Lyric Theatre

Architectural & Urban Design Report



Acknowledgment of Country

We wish to acknowledge the First Nations people as traditional custodians of the Canberra region and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands.

We recognise the enduring spirit of Country through the knowledges, languages, stories, song lines, land, skies, waterways, spirit systems and design practices that have reciprocally nurtured local peoples for millennia.

We acknowledge that sovereignty for the places in which we live and work was never ceded. Always was, always will be.



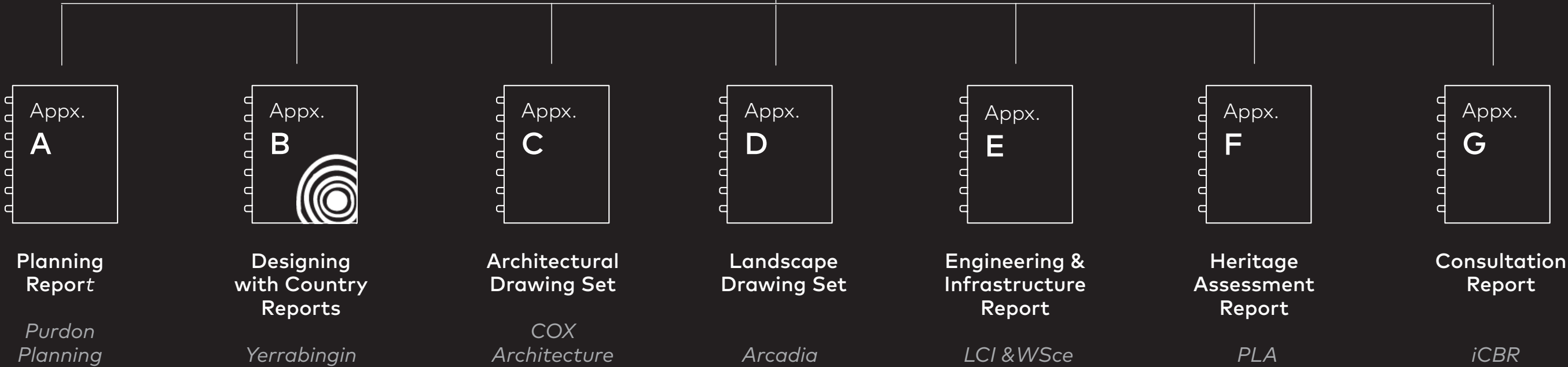
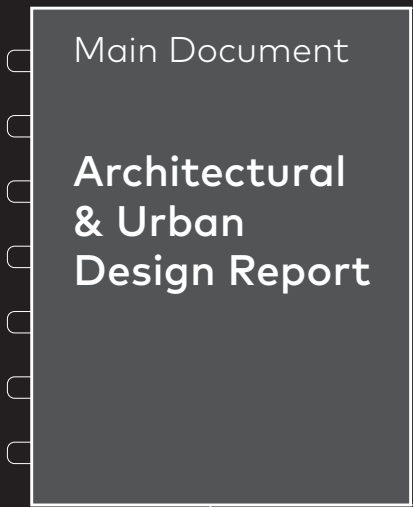
MATRIARCH (ARTWORK)
Jessika Spencer, 2021

Introduction to Document Structure and Format

NOTE: THIS ICON DENOTES DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY CONSIDERATIONS THROUGHOUT THE DOCUMENT, REFLECTIVE OF THE COLLABORATIVE DESIGN PROCESSES WITH YERRABINGIN.



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Executive Summary

The **Canberra Lyric Theatre** is the cornerstone project in the evolution of Canberra's Civic and Cultural Precinct, delivering a world-class performing arts venue that reflects the city's cultural aspirations and its role as Australia's capital. The project supports the broader objectives of this key cultural hub within central Canberra.

The design is founded by a recognition of Country, honouring the First Nations people as Traditional Custodians of the land and embedding respect for culture and heritage into every stage of planning and design. Reflected in users journeys through the building and the building's expression in materiality and built form, opportunities to celebrate the city's cultural origins have been adopted throughout.

The theatre aims to be an inclusive and welcoming cultural beacon - celebrating diversity, ensuring universal accessibility, and providing equitable experiences for all patrons and performers. The auditorium design balances intimacy with technical excellence. The 2,000-seat auditorium (1,000 stalls, 500 circle, 500 balcony) almost doubles on the capacity of the current theatre, enabling larger productions to showcase their talents in the ACT.

The building is sited to provide a generous public forecourt to the north and aligns the fly tower with the existing Playhouse theatre to continue the rhythm of built form massing along key public frontages. Operationally, the scheme provides enhanced back-of-house functions through the inclusion of a shared loading dock for the Lyric and Playhouse theatres, consolidating service functions in a discrete location further enhances public realm and pedestrian amenity outcomes across the site.

The external expression of the building is defined by verticality, layering, and veiling; mediating between transparency and enclosure while framing views to Black Mountain and Vernon Circle. The result is a performance venue that harmonises with Canberra's civic fabric, embraces cultural inclusivity, and sets a new benchmark for accessibility and artistic experience in the ACT.

Kind Regards,

Joe AGUIS
DIRECTOR | COX Architecture

Project Particulars

Project Details	
Name of Project	Canberra Lyric Theatre
Project Description	New Lyric Theatre
Location	Civic Square, London Cct., Canberra City, ACT 2601
Principal Client	ACT Government iCBR
Principal's Representative	Julia Pucci

Schedule of Proposed Works	
Gross Floor Area	13,200m²
Site Coverage	80% (approx.)
Max. Height	33.65m (Varies), RL 599.350 (Refer Drawing Set)
Building Setbacks	Varies (Refer to Drawing Set)
External Materials	Refer to External Finishes Palette (Drawing Set)
Number of Seats	2,000 Seats

3D Visualisations Note

The artistic impressions included in this report are indicative of the design intent only and are subject to further detailed design coordination required for construction. They may include elements or imagery that relate to future project stages or works delivered under a separate NCA Works Approval.

Certain components may be adjusted or simplified to enhance visual clarity of the building. In all cases, the accompanying drawings shall take precedence over any representations made within these visualisations.



CANBERRA LYRIC THEATRE RENDER, WEST ENTRANCE



Context & Site Analysis

PANORAMIC AERIAL VIEW OF CANBERRA CITY LOOKING
NORTH OVER LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN
BY STEVE, ADOBESTOCK



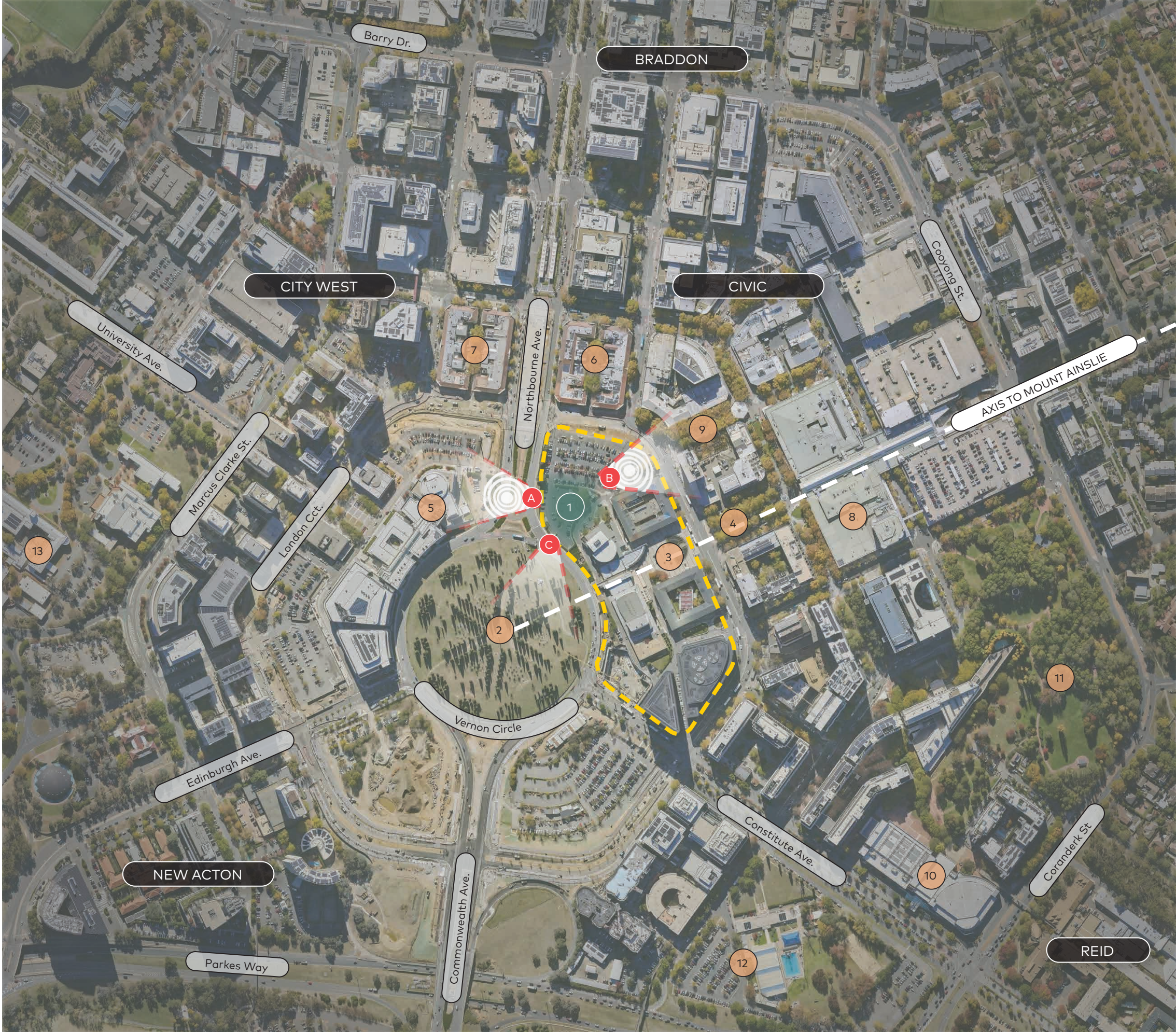
1 Context & Site Analysis

1.1 Site Context

The subject site (Block 23, Section 19, Canberra City) holds a prominent position in Canberra City. It is situated along the Main Avenue/ Approach Route to Parliament House, Northbourne Avenue. Whilst located at the edge of the Civic Centre, the site is situated at the knuckle of Vernon circle, therefore holding an edge of the Municipal Centre within the city's urban fabric at City Hill.

Legend	
1	Subject Site
2	City Hill
3	Civic Square
4	Ainslie Place
5	ACT Magistrates Court
6	Sydney Building
7	Melbourne Building
8	Canberra Centre
9	Petrie Plaza
10	Canberra Convention Centre
11	Glebe Park
12	Civic Pool
13	Australian National University
Canberra Civic and Cultural District Boundary	

Views	
A	Black Mountain
B	Mount Ainslie
C	Lake Burley Griffin & Parliament House



1 Context & Site Analysis

1.2 Key Site Planning Objectives

Historic

Located at the northern vertex of the National Triangle, the site is subject to the Griffin Legacy framework. The framework seeks to emphasises the Griffins' vision for the city, including geometric boulevard layouts, central axes, and strong visual and spatial relationships.

1. Subject Site

2. City Hill

3. Capital Hill

4. Mount Pleasant

5. Australian War Memorial



GRIFFIN LEGACY DIAGRAM
KEY NODES AND AXIS

National

Noting the relationship to the Griffin Legacy, the site is located on Designated Land and is therefore subject to Works Approval under the National Capital Plan (NCP).

The NCP locates the site within the City Hill Precinct, which describes the area as the municipal heart of central Canberra. The City Hill Precinct forms the Griffin's symbolic and geographical centre for the City – a corner completing the National Triangle as a gateway to the Central National Area and a hub connecting significant main avenues and vistas.

- City Hill

Adjoining Precincts

Land Use Subject to Territory Plan



NATIONAL CAPITAL AUTHORITY, NATIONAL
CAPITAL PLAN, CITY HILL PRECINCT DIAGRAM

Civic

Further to the sites National significance, it also holds status in a civic context as it is located within the ACT Government, City Renewal Authority's Canberra Civic and Cultural District (CCCD), with precinct objectives described to foster a vibrant arts and cultural scene.

- CCCD Precinct Boundary

1. New Lyric Theatre

2. Existing - Canberra Theatre Centre

3. South Building - ACT Legislative Assembly

4. North Building - Canberra Museum & Gallery

5. Civic Square

6. Petrie Plaza

7. Ainslie Place

8. Legislative Plaza

9. City Hill

10. Constitution Place

11. Block 40 - New Commercial Building

12. KPMG Building

13. Bus Interchange



CITY RENEWAL AUTHORITY CANBERRA CIVIC AND
CULTURAL DISTRICT (CCCD) AND CONTEXT DIAGRAM

1 Context & Site Analysis

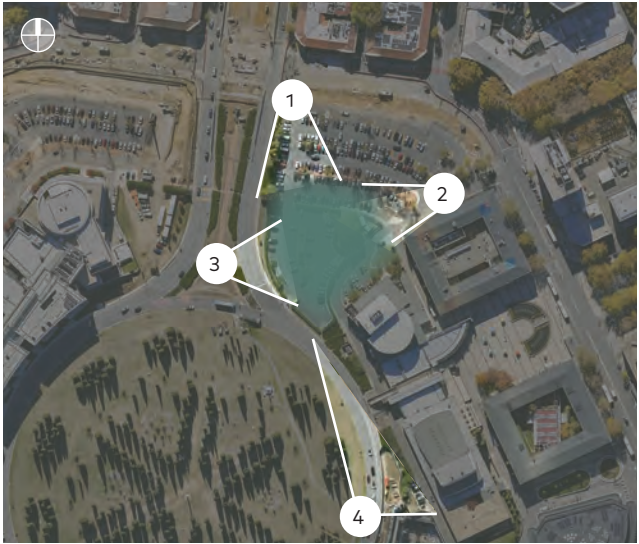
1.3 Civic Context - Views & Vistas

- 1

The north-east frontages of the site are adjacent to the existing car park and more distantly interface the Sydney Building. Until the car park site is redeveloped this aspect will be highly prominent from London Circuit. It is noted that Image 1 was captured prior to upgrade works commencing at this intersection and that the verges will be upgraded as part of these current works. Upon completion of works, the view upon the site will be of a similar nature.
- 2

The south-west frontages of the site interface Vernon Circle. Presentation of future built form along this aspect is highlighted to be of primary importance noting the significance of Northbourne Avenue as the Main Approach Route (in accordance with the NCP) and the future intended character of Vernon Circle.
- 3

The existing volumes of the Canberra Theatre and Playhouse are noted for visual prominence from Vernon Circle, with lower scale built form creating a base for these elements.



↑ VIEWS UPON THE SITE



VIEW FROM CORNER LONDON CIRCUIT AND NORTHBOURNE AVENUE



VIEW FROM ENTRY TO EXISTING THEATRE LANE CAR PARK



VIEW FROM ACROSS NORTHBOURNE AVENUE TOWARDS PLAYHOUSE

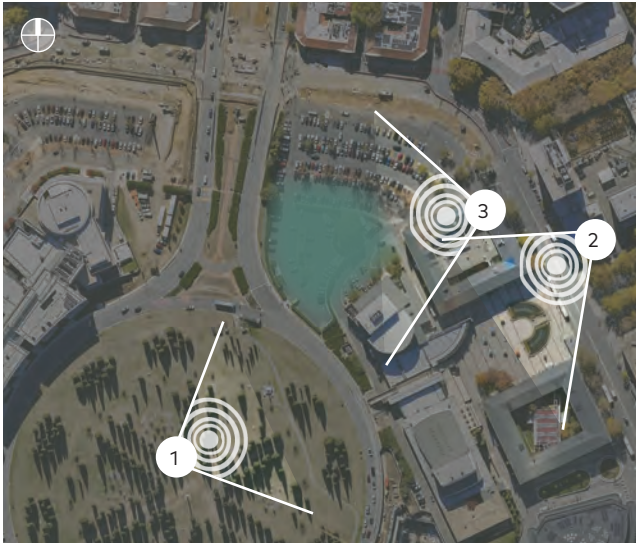
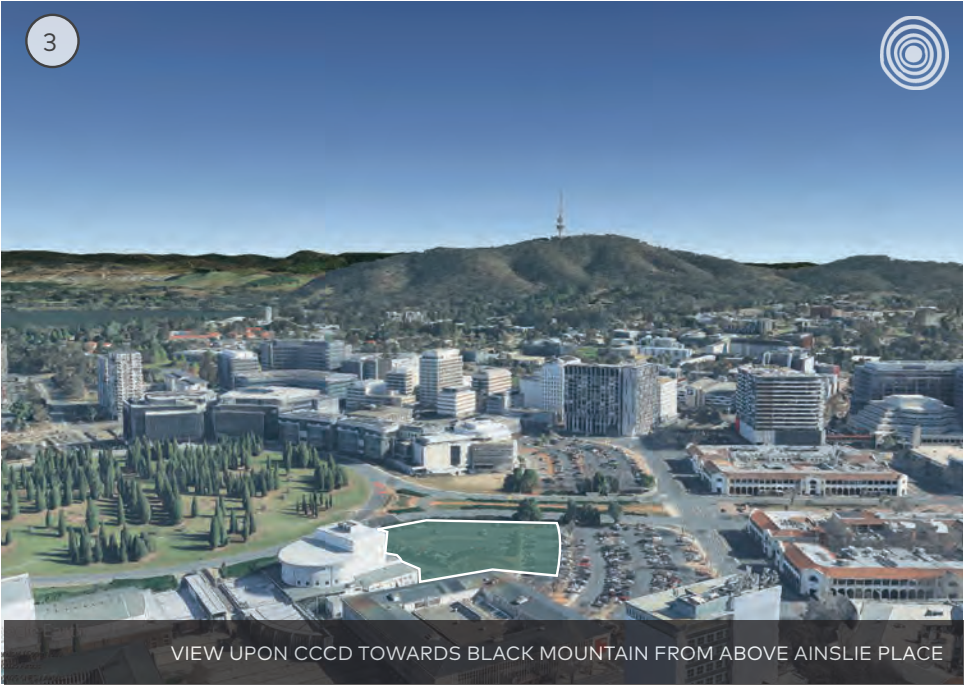
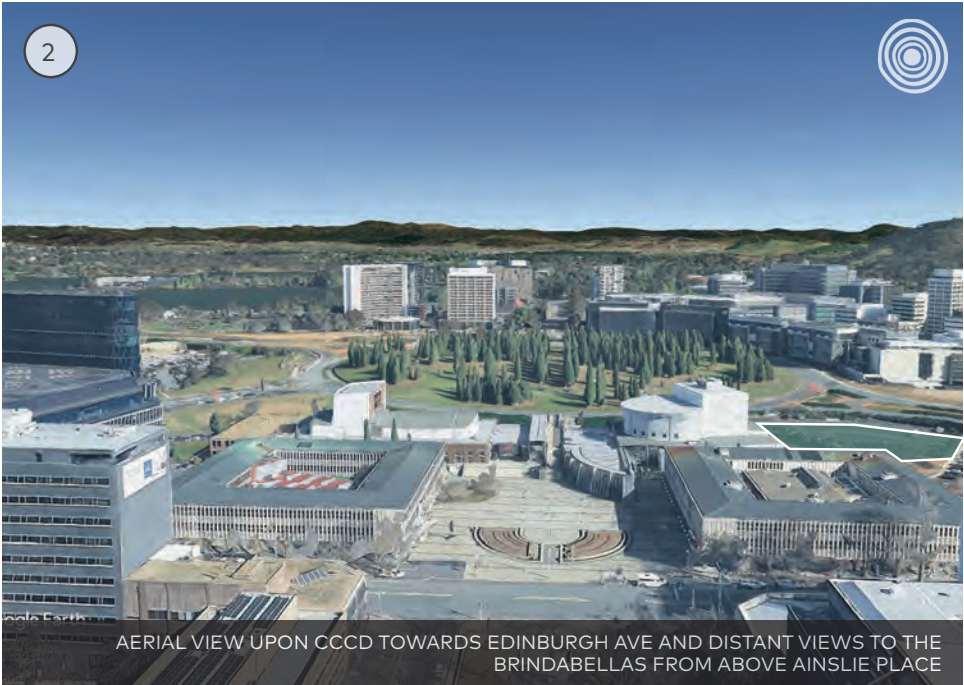


VIEW FROM VERNON CIRCLE FACING NORTH

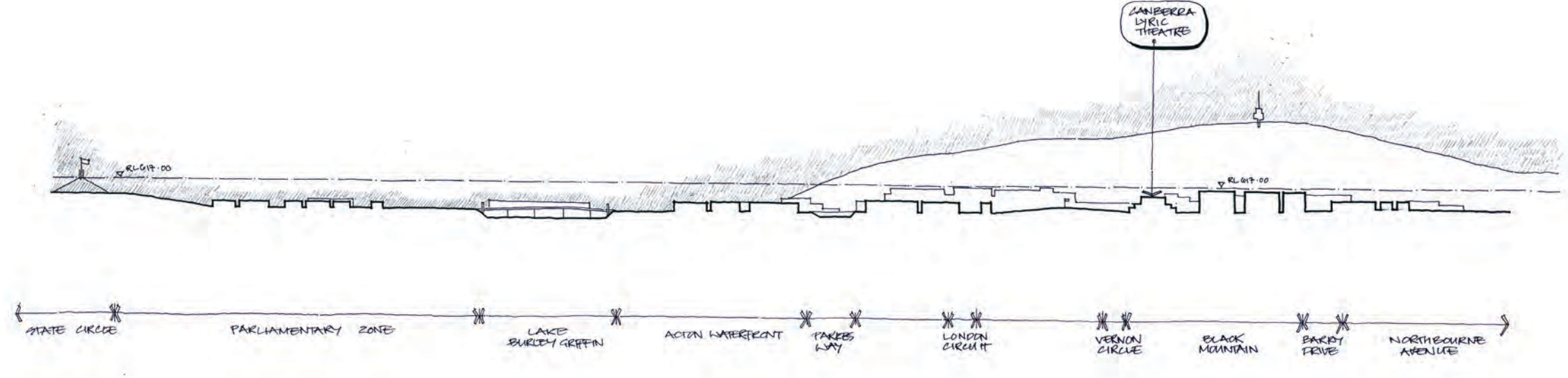
1 Context & Site Analysis

1.4 Landscape Context

1.4.1 Views & Vistas



↑ VIEWS UPON THE SITE



↑ CONTEXTUAL LONG SECTION

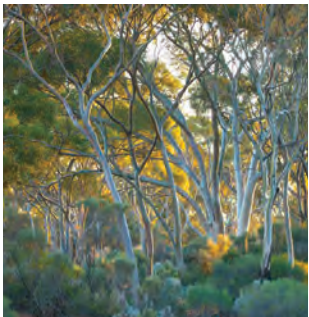
1 Context & Site Analysis

1.4 Landscape Context

1.4.2 Natural Systems



Key Considerations +
Local Inspiration



Woodlands /
Forest Systems

Box Gum (open
woodlands), grassy
woodlands



Waterways

Molonglo river /
Lake Burley Griffin



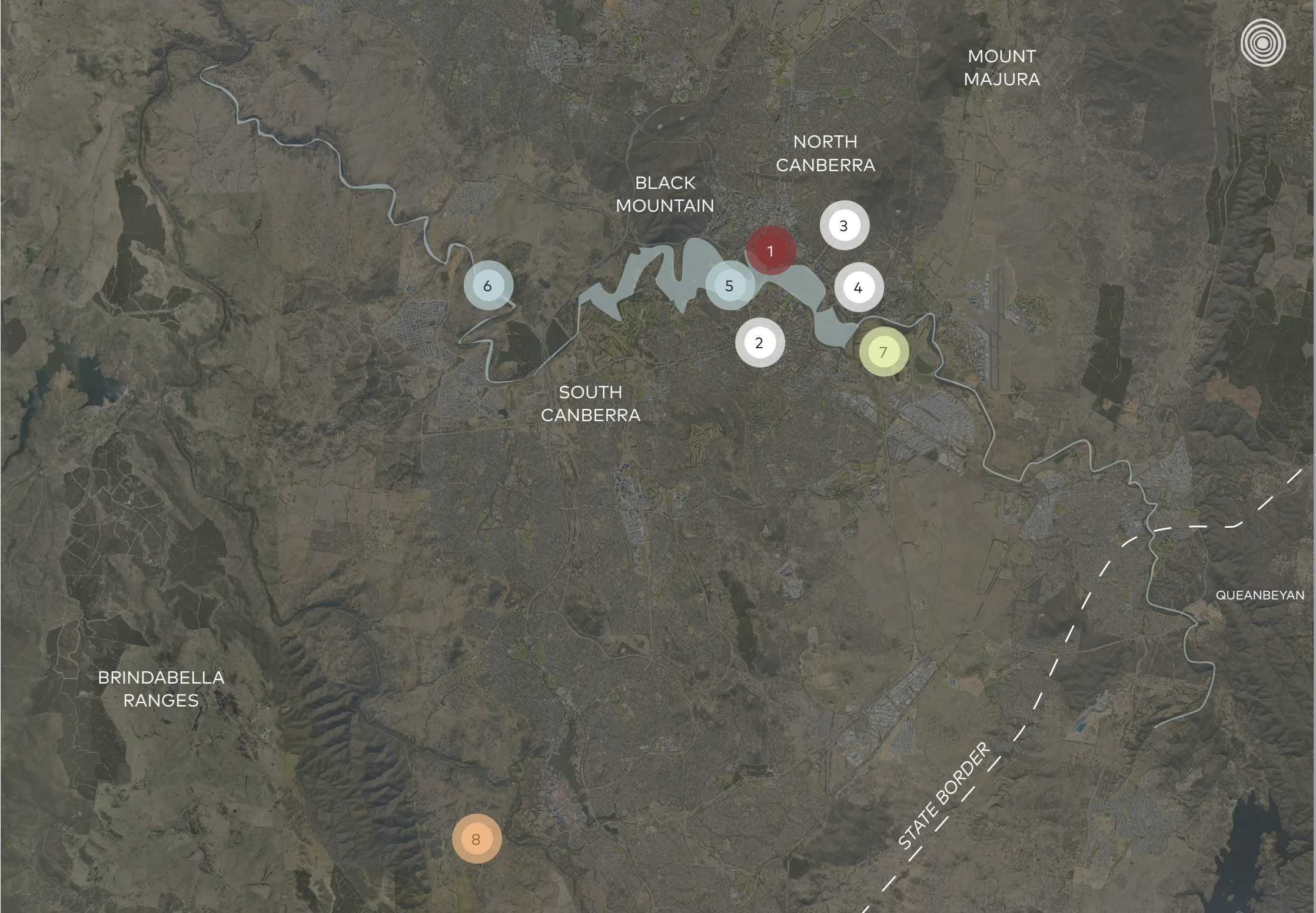
Wetlands

Jerrabomberra Creek
Wetlands, soil flats,
riparian vegetation



Grasslands +
Plains

Monaro Plains, native
grasslands, high
plateau/plain, rolling
hills



Legend

	Subject Site
	Woodlands / Forest Systems
	Waterways
	Wetlands
	Native Grasslands

1	City Hill
2	Capital Hill
3	Australian War Memorial
4	Mount Pleasant
5	Lake Burley Griffin
6	Molonglo River
7	Jerrabomberra Creek Wetlands
8	Monaro Plains



1 Context & Site Analysis

1.5 Topography - Site

The site features a steady slope from the south-east to north-west with a steep bermed area at the south between Vernon Circle and Theatre Lane.

There is approximately a 3 metre fall from Northbourne Avenue to Knowles Place with the footpaths around the site offering a consistent gradient for ease of use by pedestrians.

Due to the current topographic conditions, the opportunity to reflect broader scale natural systems (i.e. water story) is identified along the interface between the subject site and the existing car park.

Legend

Overland Flow Path

Lowest Area of Site



NOTE: The site context as shown includes elements that are subject to separate works approvals and are provided for broader context purposes only.



1 Context & Site Analysis

1.6 Existing Precinct

Legend

1	Subject Site - Canberra Lyric Theatre
2	Playhouse
3	Link Building + Civic and ACT Heritage Library
4	Canberra Theatre
5	Canberra Museum & Gallery (CMAG)
6	Civic Square
7	ACT Legislative Assembly
8	Legislative Plaza
9	Constitution Place
10	Block 40 - New Commercial Building (currently under construction)
11	KPMG Building
12	Ainslie Place
13	City Hill
14	Melbourne Building
15	Sydney Building
16	ACT Magistrates Court
	Light Rail Stop - Alinga Street Station
	Canberra Civic and Cultural District Boundary



NOTE: The site context as shown includes elements that are subject to separate works approvals and are provided for broader context purposes only.



1 Context & Site Analysis

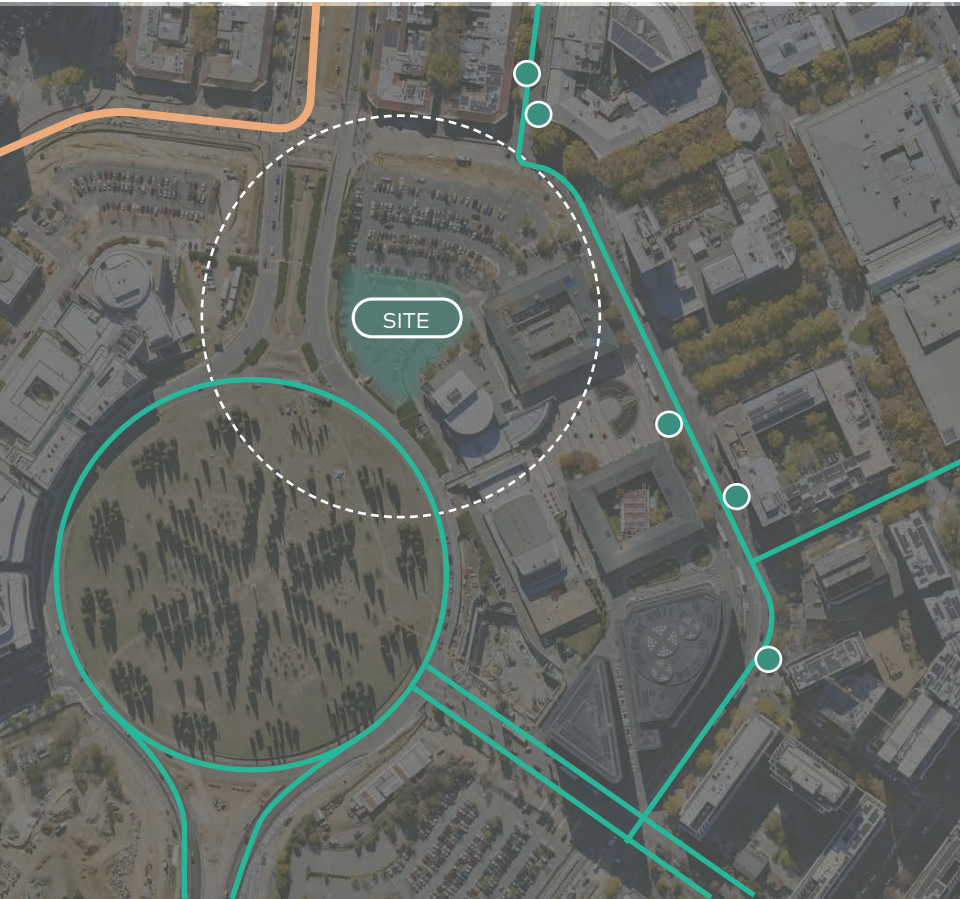
1.7 Connectivity

Vehicles



Legend	
	100m radius
	Vehicular Movement
	Publicly Accessible Car Park
	Future underground public car parking - limited access due to construction works

Public Transport



Legend	
	100m radius
	Light-rail route
	Bus Route
	Bus Stop

Pedestrian & Active Travel



Legend	
	100m radius
	Pedestrian + Active Travel
	Pedestrian Entry Point to Site

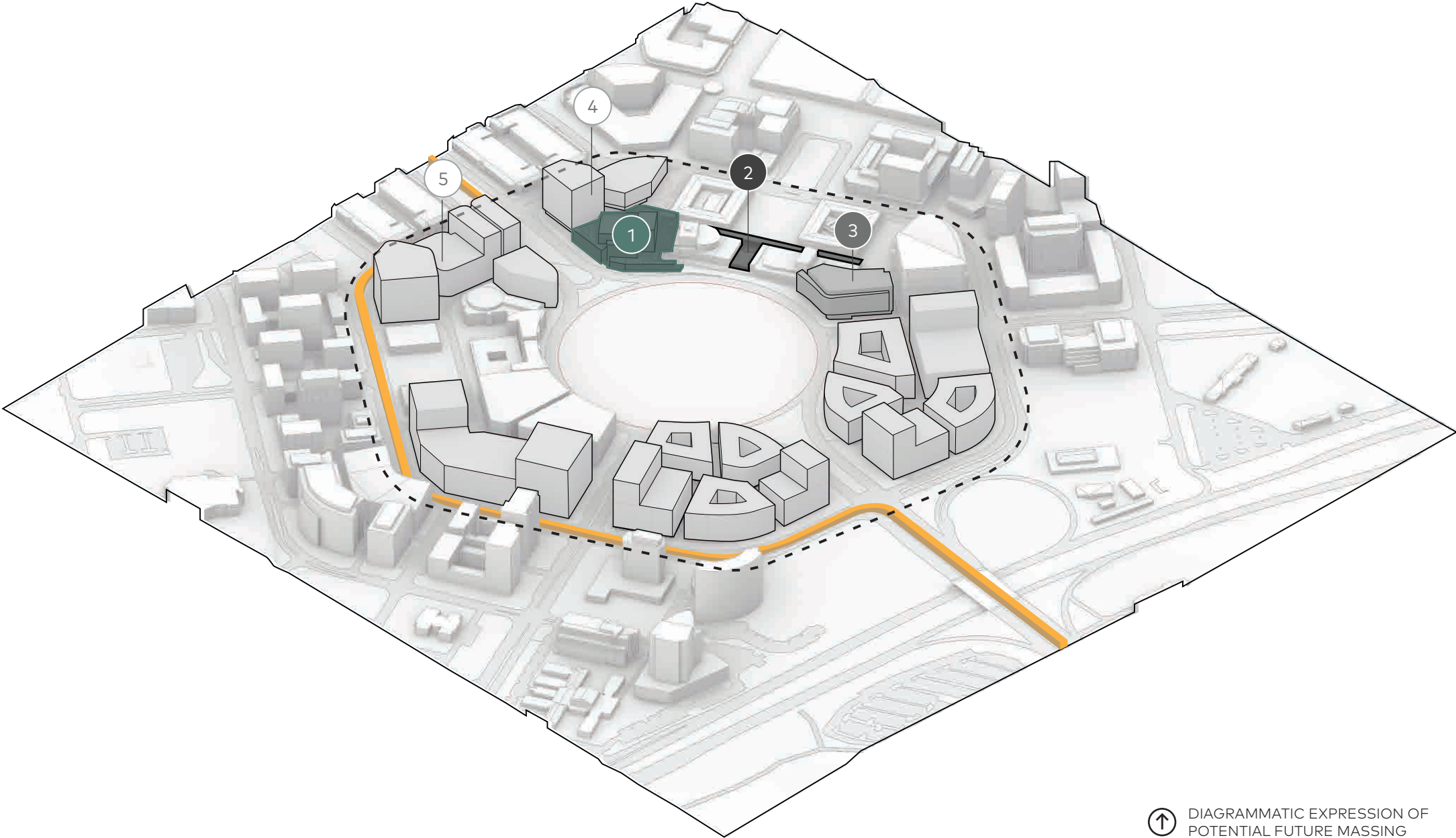
1 Context & Site Analysis

1.8 Future Development Context

The future development context is driven by objectives in the National Capital Plan that reinforces the City Hill Precinct as the municipal heart of central Canberra.

Densification of built form around City Hill is considered to enable vibrancy and activation for this key area within central Canberra and provide a metropolitan-like character.

The NCP also illustrates the vision of enveloping City Hill Park with buildings of municipal or cultural significance.



Legend	
1	Subject Site - Canberra Lyric Theatre
2	Future Stage/s: Precinct Upgrade Works
3	Block 40 - New Commercial Building (currently under construction)
4	Block 23 Section 19 (Future Land Release Site)
5	Block 40, Section 100 (Approved commercial development)
---	City Hill Precinct - Land Use A Zone (National Capital Plan)
—	Light Rail - Future Stage/s Route

⬆ DIAGRAMMATIC EXPRESSION OF
POTENTIAL FUTURE MASSING
OUTCOMES FOR CITY HILL PRECINCT

Project Scope

RENDER VIEW UPON SITE FROM CITY HILL LOOKING EAST



2 Project Scope

2.1 Canberra Civic and Cultural District

2.1.1 Current

The Canberra Civic and Cultural District (CCCD) is currently home to key civic organisations, including performing arts, library, museum, gallery and parliamentary uses.

Development of the **Canberra Lyric Theatre** is considered to be the cornerstone project of the evolving precinct, with recent redevelopment of 220 London Circuit and Constitution Place under construction, the new Theatre celebrates activation and cultural enrichment opportunities offered to the city through regeneration of this precinct.

Legend	
1	Subject Site - Canberra Lyric Theatre
2	Civic Square
3	Ainslie Place
4	Canberra Theatre
5	Link Building
6	Playhouse
7	Civic and ACT Heritage Library
8	Canberra Museum & Gallery (CMAG)
9	ACT Legislative Assembly
10	City Hill
11	Block 40 - New Commercial Building (currently under construction)
12	Verity Lane
13	Sydney Building
14	Constitution Place
15	KPMG Building
16	Legislative Plaza
<div></div>	Canberra Civic & Cultural District Boundary
<div></div>	Vehicle Drop-off
<div></div>	Public Transit and Bus Stops



NOTE: The site context as shown includes elements that are subject to separate works approvals and are provided for broader context purposes only.

2 Project Scope






2.1 Canberra Civic and Cultural District

2.1.2 Draft Concept Master Plan

The future vision for the CCCD will be captured by the Concept Master Plan. This document is currently under development by the City Renewal Authority and is understood to hold intentions for reinforcing the precinct as a core cultural hub within its civic context.

Outcomes of the Canberra Lyric Theatre should be further coordinated with the draft Concept Master Plan as it is developed to ensure overall functionality of the precinct can be realised. The Concept Master Plan's aims are observed to promote strong amenity outcomes for the public realm (e.g. pedestrian links, public plazas/forecourts, awnings and shelters, etc.) as the precinct develops.

Legend

	CCCD Precinct Boundary
	Knowles Place Road Reserve Boundary
	Theatre Works Boundary
	Indicative building envelopes for Block 23 - Ground Level
	Indicative building envelopes for Block 23 - Upper Levels

Subject Site

1	Canberra Lyric Theatre
---	------------------------

Existing Works

2	Playhouse
3	Canberra Museum & Gallery (CMAG)

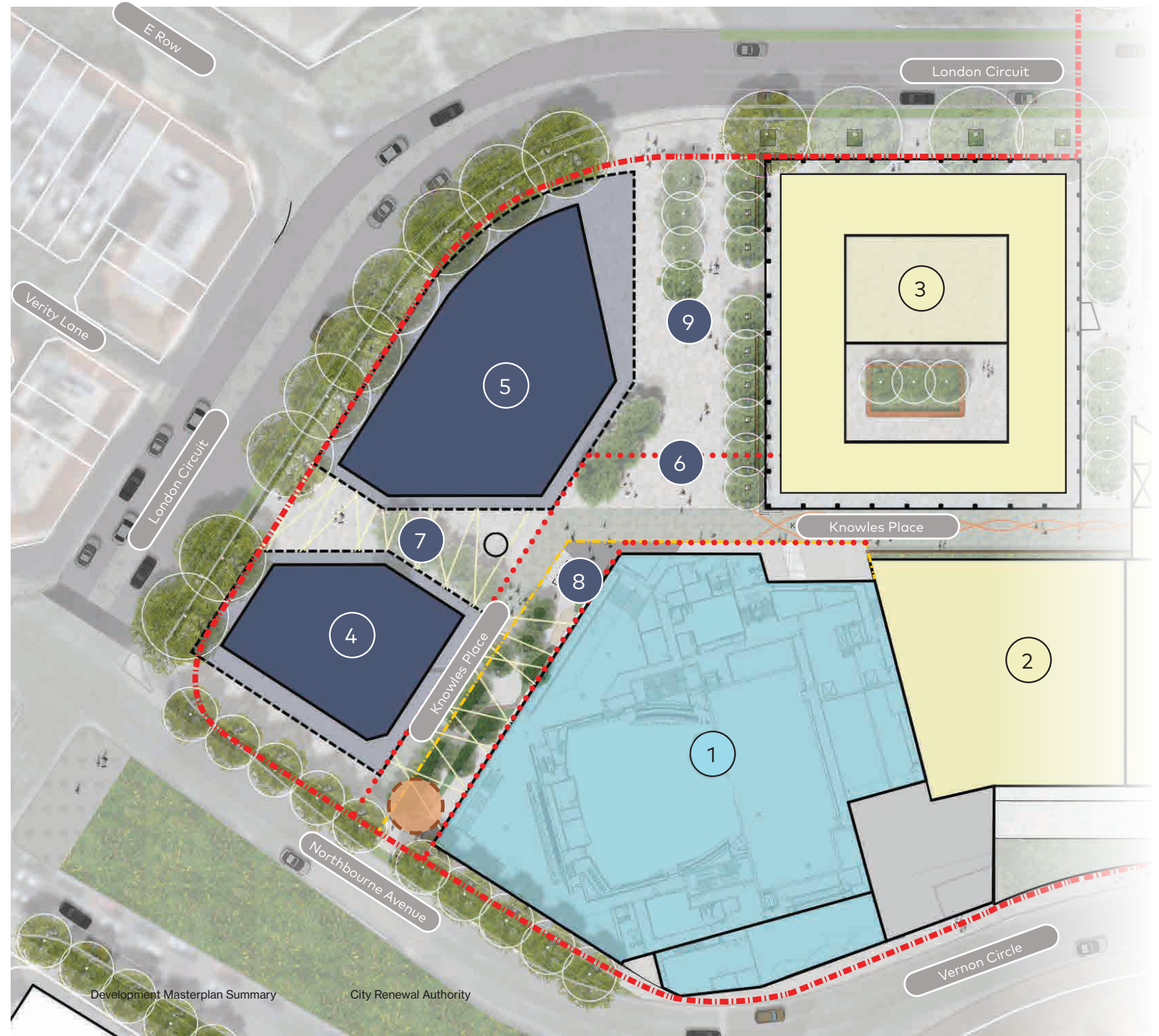
Future Stage/s

4	Block 23 Section 19 (Future Land Release Site) - Building 1
5	Block 23 Section 19 (Future Land Release Site) - Building 2
6	Lyric Plaza
7	Foodies Lane
8	Pedestrian access tunnel provision under Knowles Place. Future Block 23 basement to allow for DDA access connection to Theatre
9	Access and drop off to Lyric Plaza

Proposed Vehicular Drop-off for Canberra Lyric Theatre

Proposed vehicular drop-off location for Canberra Lyric Theatre to be in basement car park of future/link development at Block 23. Theatre to be accessed via tunnel/link connection under Knowles Place.

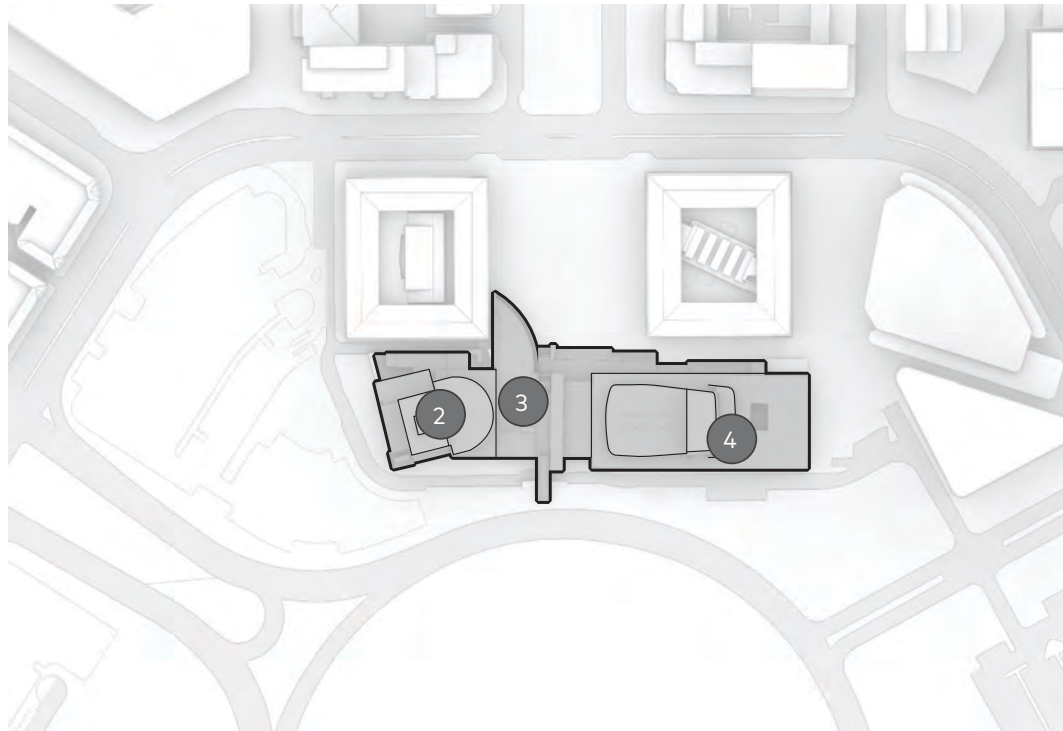
THIS PLAN IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE **CITY RENEWAL AUTHORITY'S DRAFT CCCD CONCEPT MASTER PLAN**, PAGE 8



2 Project Scope

2.2 Project Staging

Subject of Works Approval

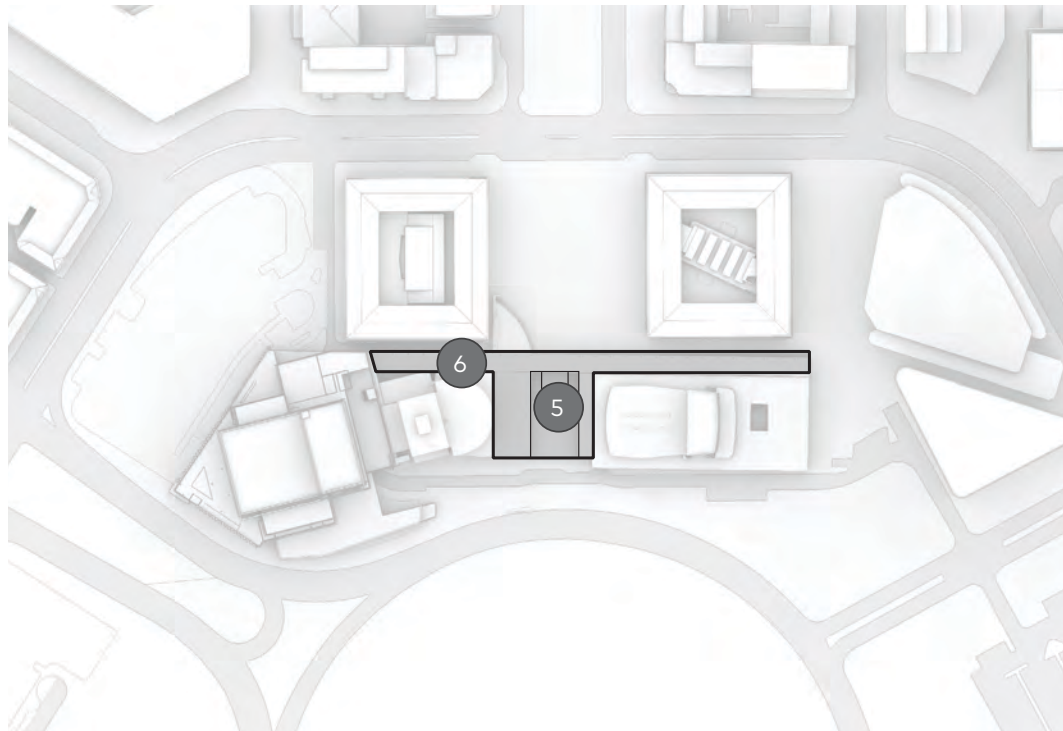


Existing Site

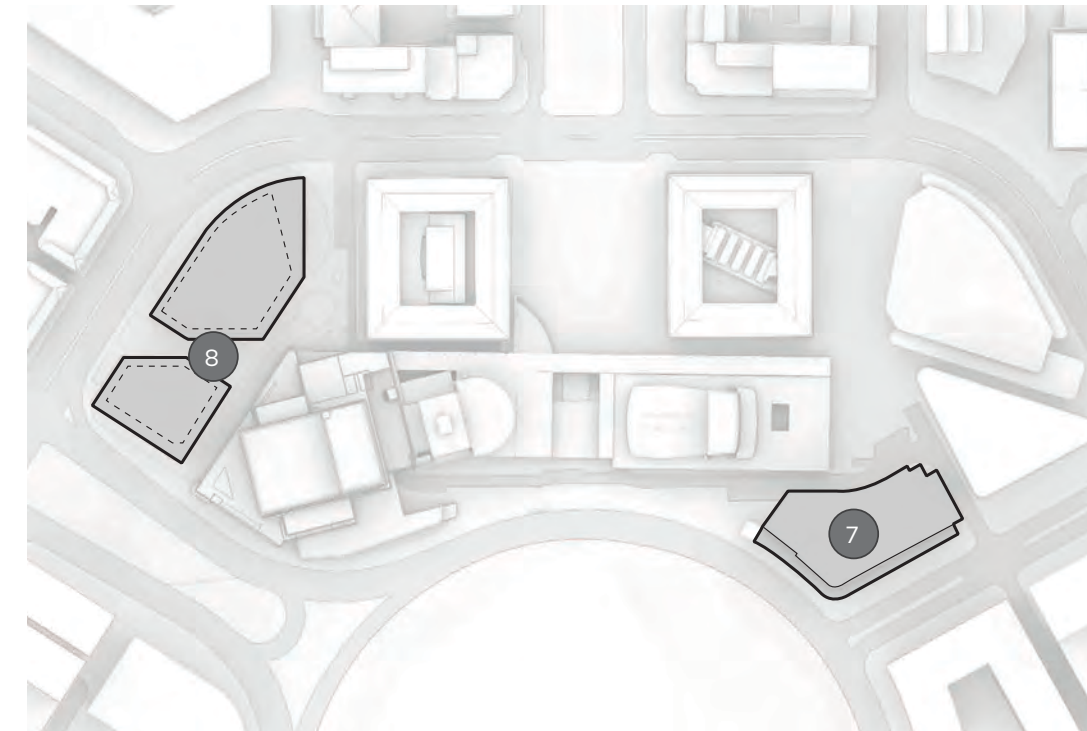


Canberra Lyric Theatre (**Subject of Works Approval**)

Legend	
1	Canberra Lyric Theatre
2	Playhouse
3	Link Building + Civic and ACT Heritage Library
4	Canberra Theatre
5	Accessible Pedestrian Connection between Civic Square & Vernon Circle
6	Colonnade to connect Theatre District
7	Block 40 - New Commercial Building (currently under construction)
8	Block 23 Section 19 (Future Land Release Site)



Future Stage/s: Precinct Upgrade Works (**Not included in this Works Approval**)



Future Stage/s: Master Plan Vision & Surrounding Development, based on draft CRA CCCD Concept Master Plan

2 Project Scope

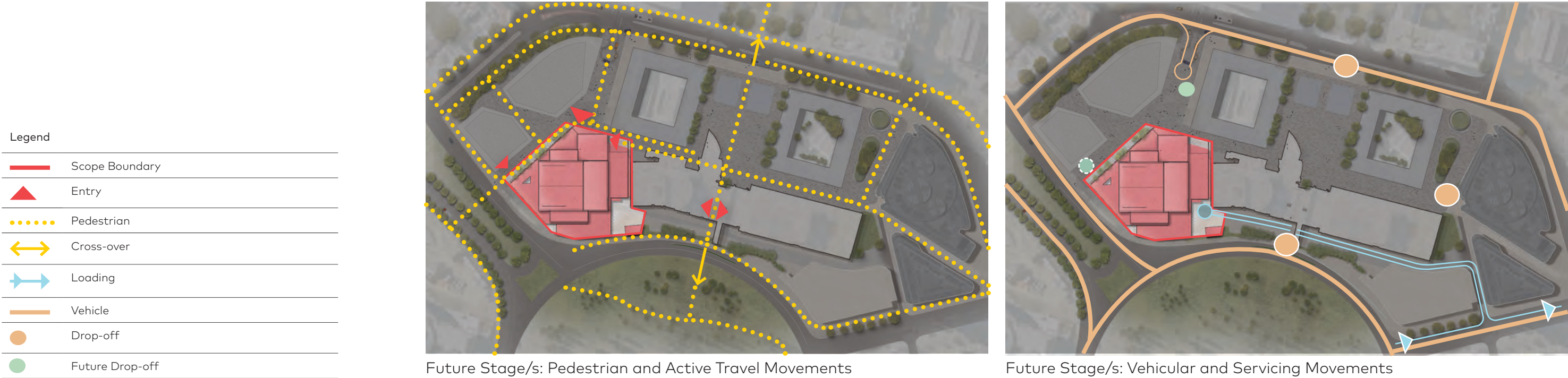
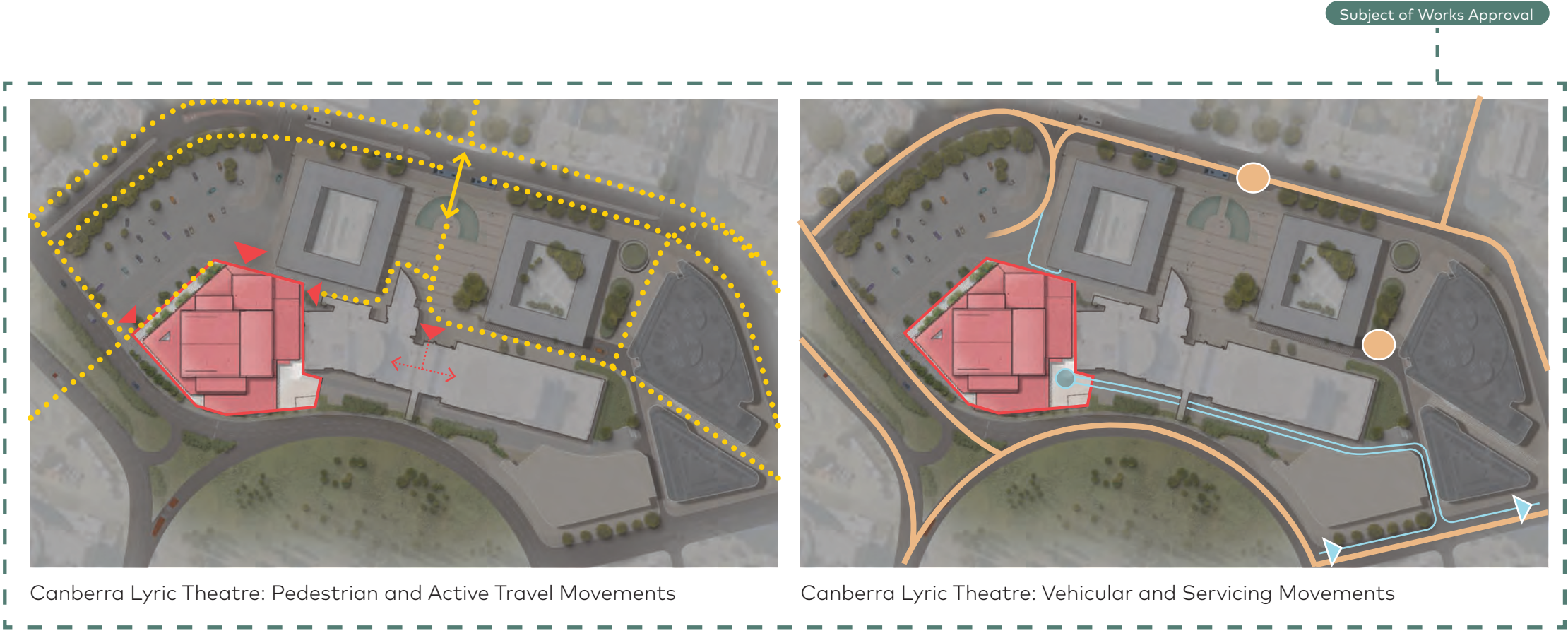
2.3 Movement Strategy

Pedestrian and Vehicular movements have been considered in the CCCD concept master plan to ensure functionality and continuity of access across each stage of development.

Pedestrian and Vehicular movements have been considered in the CCCD concept master plan to ensure functionality and continuity of access across each stage of development.

An accessible DDA compliant drop off is located outside the Courtyard Studio.

A second drop-off is located on London Circuit.



2 Project Scope

2.4 Project Staging Considerations

*The current scope of work for this Works Approval is for the Canberra Lyric Theatre.
Any other stages/development works are not within the scope of this Works Approval.*

The design team acknowledges that the Canberra Civic and Cultural District (CCCD) is an evolving precinct within central Canberra. With the recent completion of Constitution Place, the KPMG Building and One Constitution (currently under construction), the Canberra Lyric Theatre will be the cornerstone project of the Canberra Theatre Centre, setting the scene for future revitalisation works within the broader precinct.

Acknowledging the early design phase of the master planning works, the Canberra Lyric Theatre has been developed with consideration towards the future urban structure of the precinct. The design team appreciates that future development stages will enhance and further support the functionality of the theatre as it integrates cohesively with the development intentions of the public realm.

The design team understands that the overall functionality of the precinct may not be realised upon completion of the Canberra Lyric Theatre and highlights the following considerations/assumptions:

01. Car Parking

The design anticipates the use of the existing surface car park located to the north of the site for nearby patron and staff car parking. In the future, the design team understands that a public basement car park will be included in the redevelopment of Block 23 to the north, with a direct underground link provided in the design to facilitate a direct, accessible pedestrian connection to the foyer. The design team acknowledges that a provision for nearby parking to the Canberra Lyric Theatre may require consideration during the construction phase of redevelopment at Block 23.

02. Vehicle Drop off

Vehicle drop is assumed to be retained as per the existing arrangement, i.e. along London Circuit and an additional drop-off point to be provided within the surface car park to the north. The design team understands that a vehicle drop-off will be provided in the basement car park of Block 23 upon its redevelopment.

03. Pedestrian Connectivity

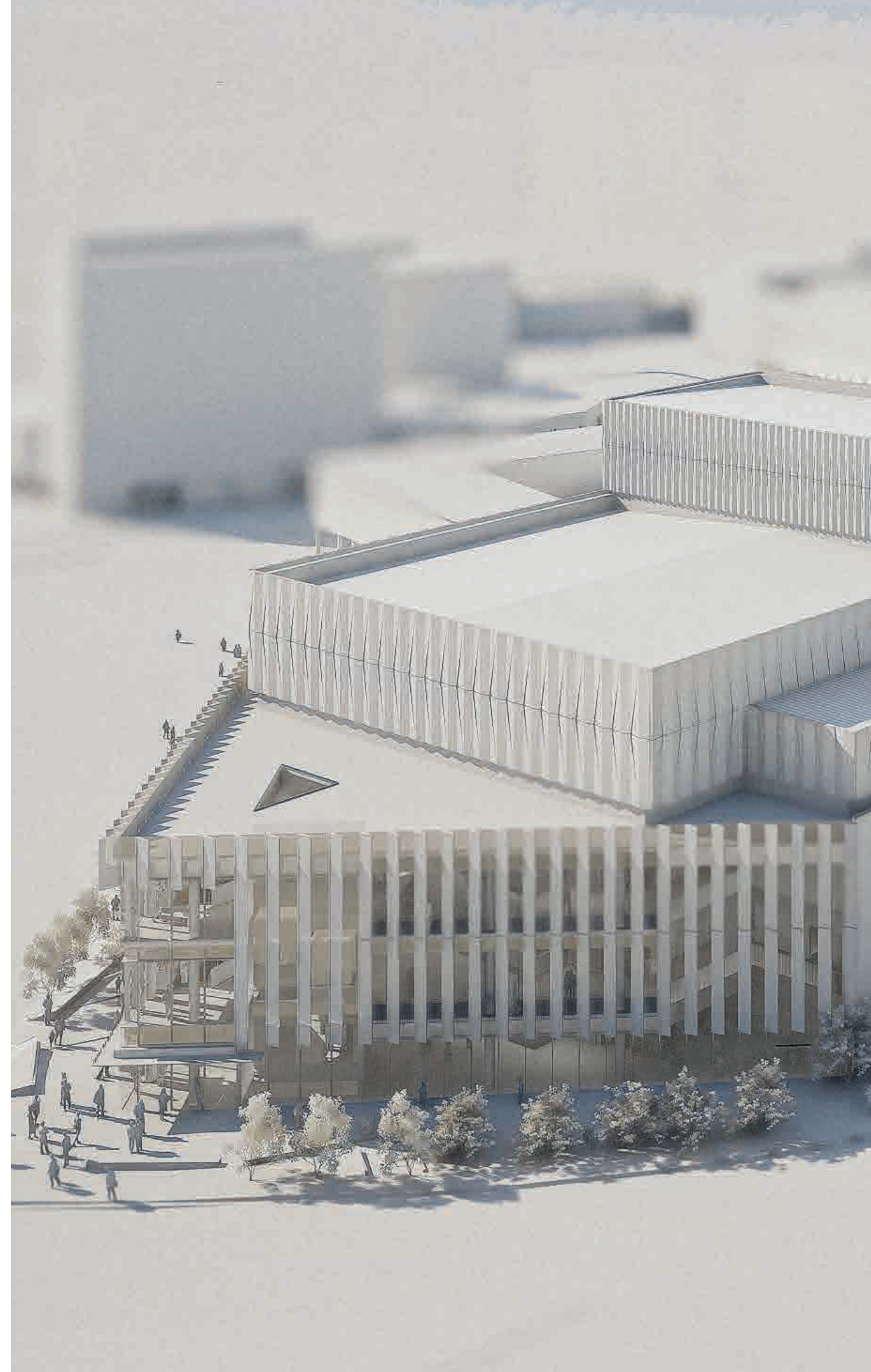
As the City Hill precinct develops, the design team anticipates that an accessible pedestrian connection will be provided over Theatre Lane to Vernon Circle to further enhance accessibility and active travel outcomes across the site.

04. Loading and serviceability

The design team acknowledges that any future built form encroaching above Theatre Lane may limit the capacity for high-clearance vehicles and considers that a provision for loading of these vehicles may be required for optimal serviceability of Canberra Lyric Theatre and Playhouse in future.

In addition, the design team acknowledges the proximity of the Canberra Museum & Gallery (CMAG) loading zone to the Canberra Lyric Theatre and suggests that a management strategy is considered noting the increased pedestrian movement in this zone to mitigate this potential conflict of use.

RENDER VIEW OF SITE FROM NORTH



Design Principles

Canberra

Lyric Theatre

LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN PHOTOGRAPHED FROM THE TELSTRA
TOWER - CANBERRA, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA
BY IKONYA, ADOBE STOCK



3 Design Principles

3.1 Canberra Lyric Theatre - Design Statement

The Canberra Lyric Theatre announces itself within the city's cultural heart as a sculpted terracing form. Embracing Vernon Circle, the building reinforces the legibility of the CCCD and the desired outcomes of the City Hill Precinct through carefully carved massing and built form elements.

The lower terraces create an elegant base that respond politely to neighbouring development. The auditorium and fly tower then rise proudly from this plane to present these elements as urban markers within the city's built form landscape.

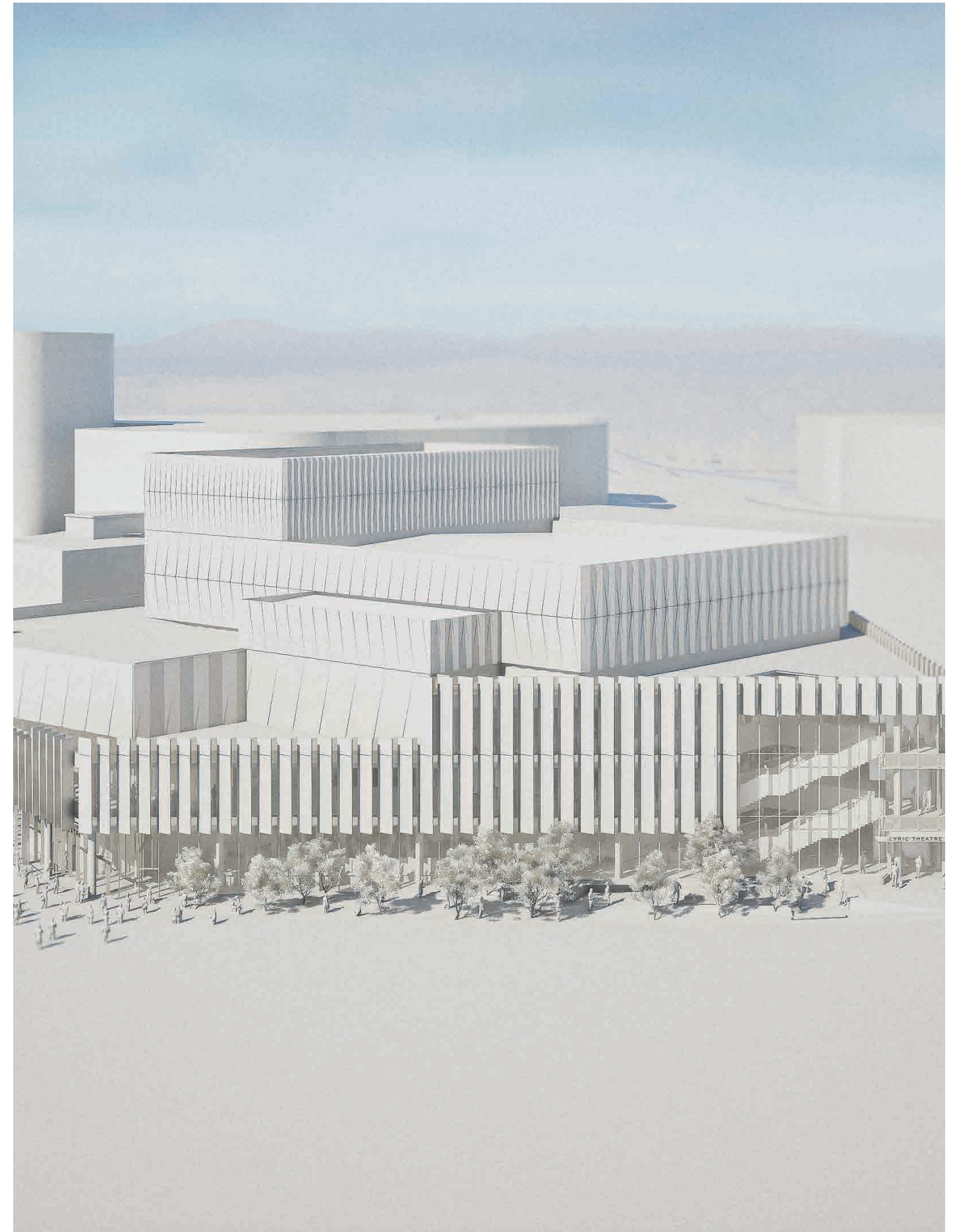
There are three main entries to the building. Two of which, East Foyer Entry and Stage Door, are oriented towards Knowles Place and the future Lyric Plaza. Connecting these entries with a welcoming, northerly forecourt promotes activation in the public realm and anchors the building within its master planned context. The third, West Foyer Entry, engages with Northbourne Avenue, providing ease of connectivity with major public transport routes and celebrates the character of the Main Avenue Approach Route.

The façade reads as a vertical tapestry of shadow and light—layered planes, slender fins, and translucent veils respond to the rhythms of the day. Glimpses through the screen catch sight of Black Mountain; reflections shimmer along Vernon Circle. The architecture becomes a living curtain—filtering, framing, and performing—a lyrical expression of culture and place.

A seamless back-of-house strategy discreetly tucks a shared loading dock between the Lyric and Playhouse, erasing the need for vehicle access off Northbourne and reinforcing a calm, uninterrupted urban edge.

The sculptural form of the auditorium is compressed—stepped terraces of 1,000-seat stalls, 500-seat circle, and 500-seat balcony stack within a lowered volume, intensifying intimacy while reducing vertical scale.

RENDER VIEW FROM NORTH



3.2 Designing with Country

The Canberra Lyric Theatre will be shaped through a Country-focused, collaborative design methodology developed in partnership with Yerrabingin. This methodology combines principles of design thinking and user-centred design with a deep commitment to Country.

Legend:

- First Nations Community Sessions
- Key Deliverables
- ⊙ Project Team Workshops

Timeline:

- MAY 27th**
Design Sprint Workshop
- MAY 2025**
Yerrabingin commencement
- 19 JUNE 2025**
Session #1
First Nations Community
- 19 JUNE 2025**
Session #2 -
First Nations Community
- 20 JUNE 2025**
Session #4 -
First Nations Community
- 20 JUNE 2025**
Session #3 -
Broader FN Community
- DESIGN RATIONALISATION**
Engagement Stage One:
Community Feedback Sessions
Project Updates
- 3 JULY 2025**
Community Feedback
Report Draft
- JULY 2025**
Ideation Development
Workshop
- 17 JULY 2025**
ATSIAN Presentation
- 24 JULY 2025**
Walk on Country
- 24 JULY 2025**
ATSIEB Presentation
- 01 AUGUST 2025**
Community Feedback
Report Final
- AUGUST 2025**
Detailed
Design Workshop
- Session #1**
- ATSIIEB Presentation**
- ATSIAN Presentation**
- NOVEMBER 2025**
DESIGN STAGE ONE
Engagement Stage two:
Community Feedback Sessions
Detailed Design
- Session #2**
- Session #4**
- Session #3**
- NOVEMBER 2025**
Ideation
Development Workshop
- DECEMBER 2025**
CWC Design Report - Draft



*Indigenous
Reports
Yerrabingin*

①

3 Design Principles

3.2 Designing with Country

3.2.2 Community Feedback Process

Grounded in dialogue, workshops, and site visits, community voices have directly informed key principles—a shared authorship—where Elders, knowledge holders, and designers come together to weave Country into every material, space, and gesture. The result is a design that listens as much as it speaks, honouring both the place and the people who care for it.

The co-design process through a series of in-person workshops at the site in June 2025, brought together over 30 Aboriginal community members alongside Infrastructure Canberra, Multiplex, COX Architecture, Charcoal Blue, and Yerrabingin. Key themes emerged through the sessions, including the importance of topography, local geology, and waterways; the sensory experience of Country through light, sound, scent, and texture; and the need for spaces that support storytelling, gathering, and education. The feedback reinforced the building's role not only as a performance space, but as a living cultural vessel—one that honours Country, connects people across generations, and reflects the stories, textures, and spirit of place.

Appx.
B



Refer:

Indigenous Reports
Yerrabingin



WORKSHOP IMAGES (EXTRACT FROM YERRABINGIN COMMUNITY FEEDBACK REPORT - FIGURE 5; PAGE 10) 

3 Design Principles

3.2 Designing with Country

3.2.3 Principles & Pillars

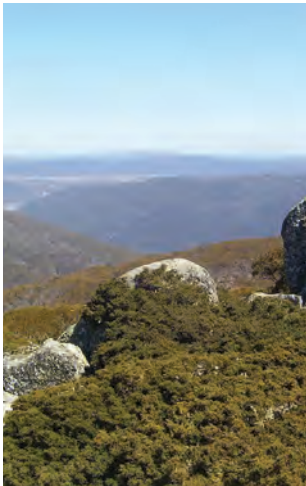
Rooted in deep listening and First Nation’s community input, in consultation with Yerrabingin, design pillars and principles make space for the architecture to become a living, breathing extension of Country, where performance is not separate from Country, but held within it.



Topography of Performance

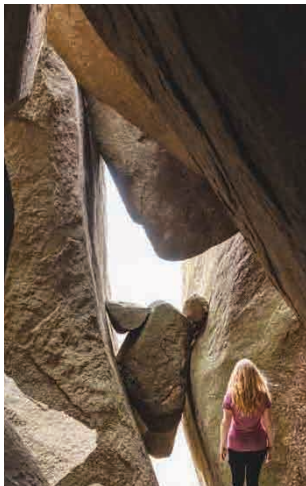
Grounded in Canberra’s distinct topography and ecology in its surrounding landscape—Brindabella Ranges, Namadgi National Park, Black Mountain, Mount Ainslie, these landforms rich with story and meaning, offer a canvas for expression by local First Nations voices. Drawing from the geology beneath and the ecologies above, integrating colours, textures, and movements of keystone species into the spatial experience, echoing the terrain—layered, living, and responsive.

Key Aspects:



Of Place - Topography + Ecology

Image of Mount Ginini - Namadgi National Park



Emerging from Geology

Area commonly known as 'Legoland' Namadgi National Park



Immersed in Country

Immersed in Country invites a sensory journey through land, water, and sky—where sound, scent, light, and touch evoke deep connection to place. The design celebrates transformation and ascent, drawing on the textures of geology, the colours of ochre and stone, and the shifting rhythms of light. It becomes a place of gathering and cultural exchange—grounded in Country, connected to sky, open to all, and alive with story.

Key Aspects:



Connecting Skies, Mountains + Waterways



Celebrating Colour and Texture



Transformation and Ascent



Restoration + Reflection

Rooted in the cultural significance of Water Country, inspired by the Molonglo River’s enduring presence, the theatre becomes a space for gathering, renewal, and quiet celebration. Inviting moments of pause—before and after performance—where reflection flows like water through community. Light, texture, and sound echo natural rhythms, creating spaces that nourish connection and honour Country.

Key Aspects:



Community and Gathering



Theatre and Celebration

3 Design Principles

3.2 Designing with Country

3.2.4 Of Place - Topography and Geology



"Not a lot of it, but enough to tell us that humans had been using that rock shelter from 25,000 years ago."

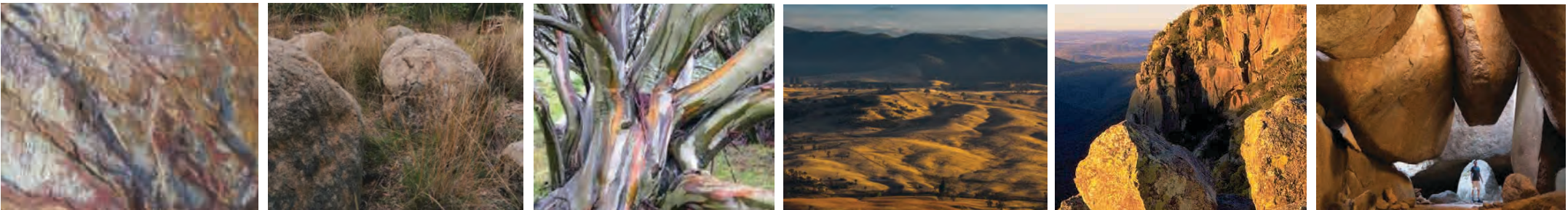
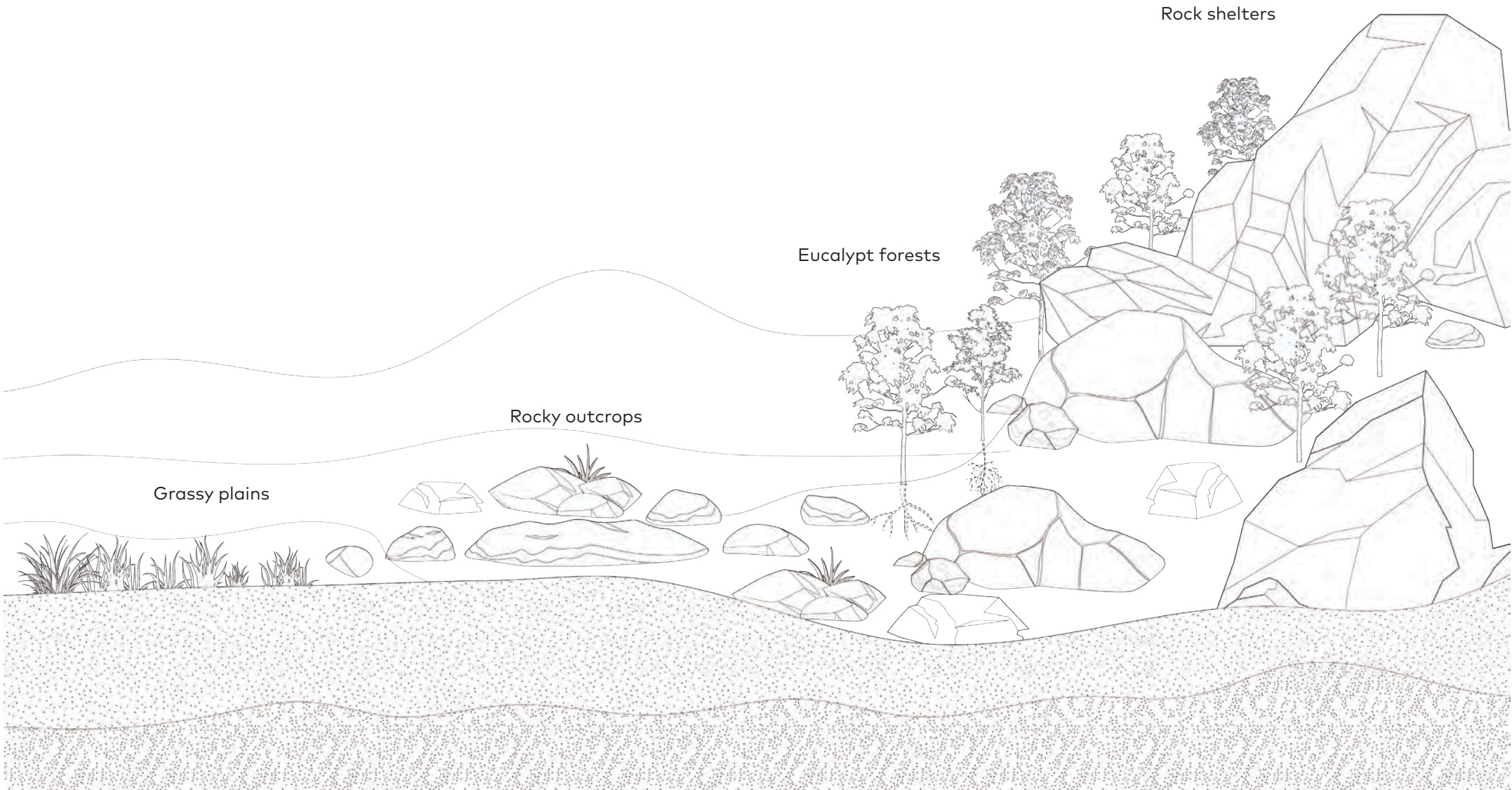
"The earliest tools and charcoal ... was dated to 25,000 years – right up to historic times at the end of the 19th century. The 1890s."

Dr Flood on ABC News on ACT's Birrigai Rock Shelter

The journey through the building is grounded in Canberra's distinct topography and ecology in its surrounding landscape—Brindabella Ranges, Black Mountain, Mount Ainslie, Namadji, Birrigai. Each landform condition is rich with story and meaning, offering a canvas for expression by local First Nations voices.

Drawing from the geology stratification beneath and the ecologies above, colours, textures, and movements of keystone species are integrated into the spatial experience, echoing the terrain—layered, living, and responsive.

Transitioning from the grassy plains of the Monaro and wide geological outcrops, one is gathered into the foyer, travelling along ridgelines with large areas to host people within sheltered landscapes. Light permeates halfway up the tree and snow gums are banded with the transitions of light, colour and the seasons. The transition into the auditorium is like stepping into a clearing, sitting in it amongst the grass, held within it, with the stage as fire.



3 Design Principles

3.2 Designing with Country

3.2.4 Of Place - Topography and Geology

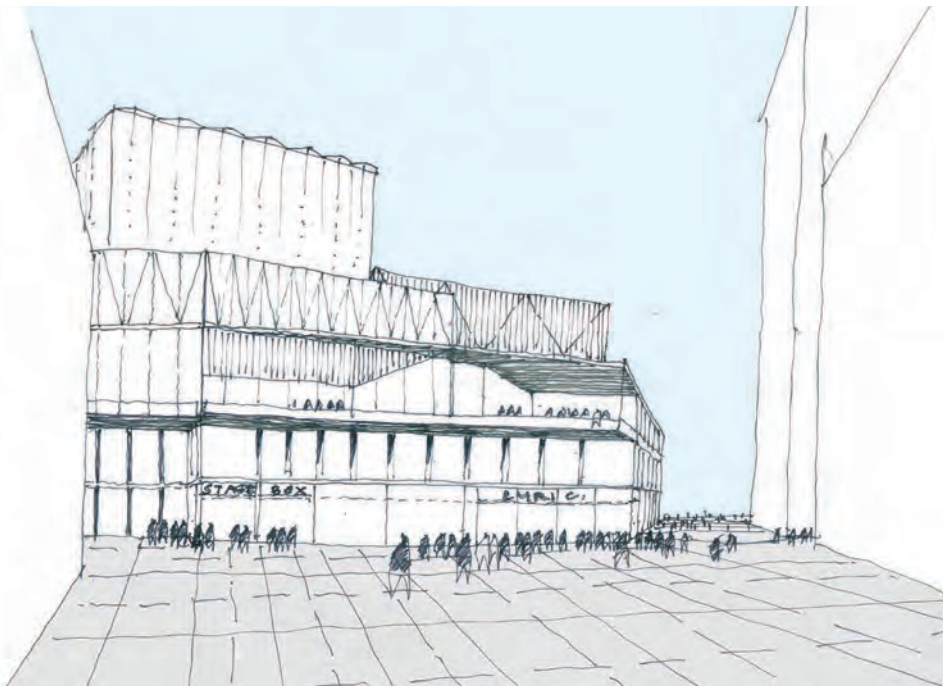
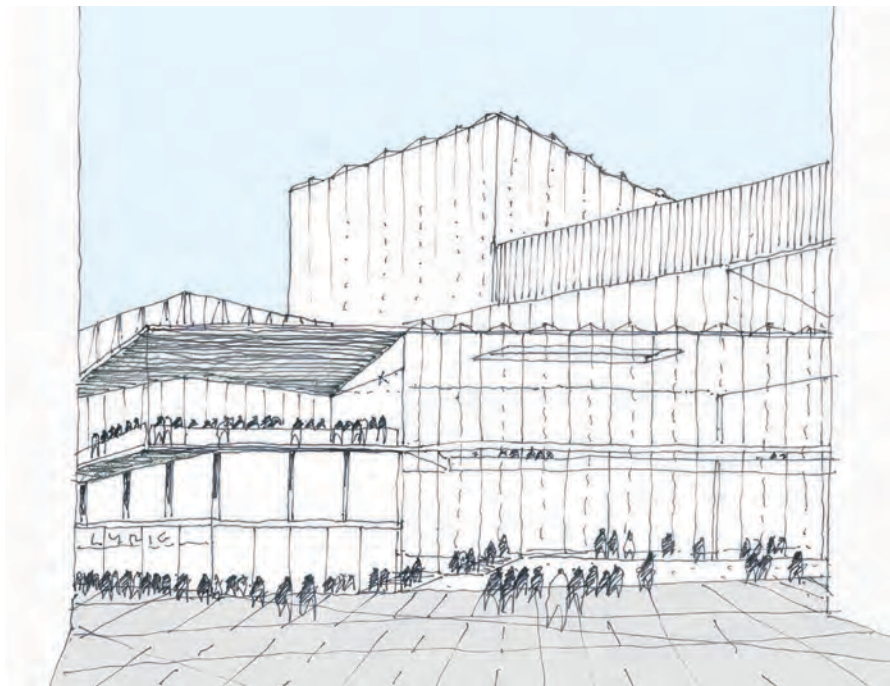
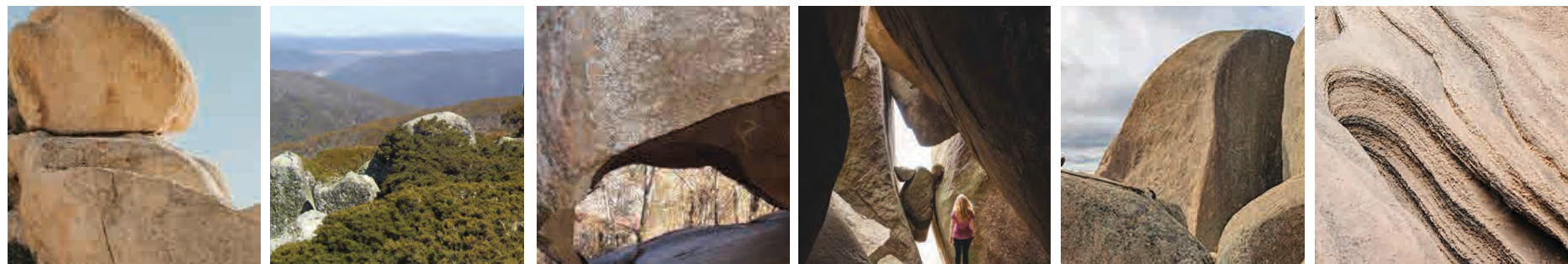
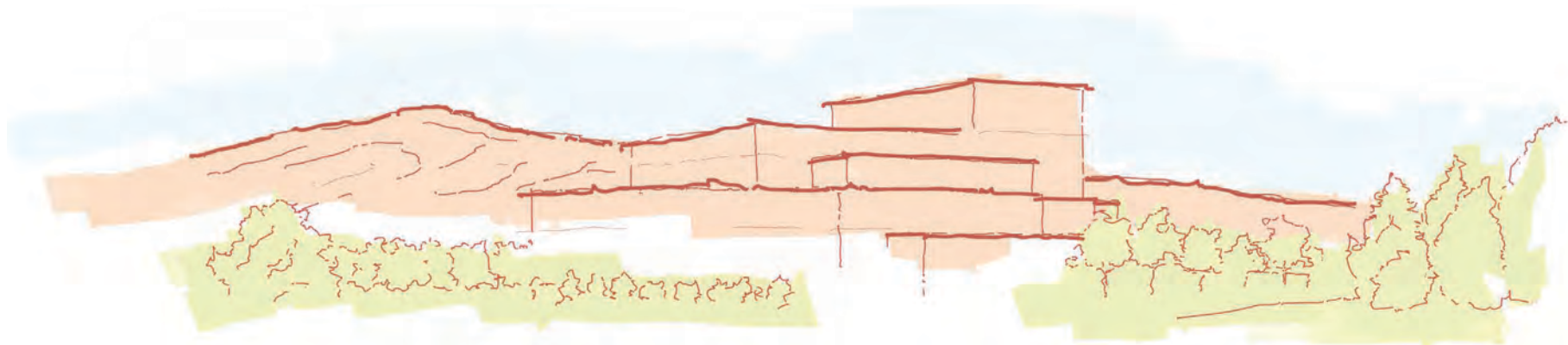


Layered geology reinforcing Canberra's bedrock character of deep time - ruptured, stratified, assembled like geological matter.

The building presents itself as a sculptural ensemble of rock-like forms, reminiscent of the mountainous topography of the context, thoughtfully arranged in a dynamic interplay of solid volumes and open voids. The envelope will evoke the texture of a faceted stone, drawing the rippling of wind, dappled light through glass in to reflect natural layers of erosion over deep time.

Earlier geological strata — Camp Hill Quartz, Black Mountain Sandstone, and State Circle Shale — form the buried foundations of Canberra and echo through its built forms. Limestone outcrops along the Molonglo River and the Birrigai Rock Shelter, one of the oldest sites of human occupation in the region, anchor the city to a deep temporal horizon where stone and story interlace. Beyond the basin, the granite tors of Namadgi National Park rise as monumental outcrops, weathered yet enduring, shaping both horizon and memory.

The façade draws on these rocky precedents: its textures reference the fractured faces of quartz and sandstone; its layers mirror the stratification of shale; its solidity recalls the limestone outcrops and granite tors. The building becomes a contemporary outcrop — both a cultural shelter and a geological marker — grounded in Canberra's deep time and enduring landscape.



3 Design Principles

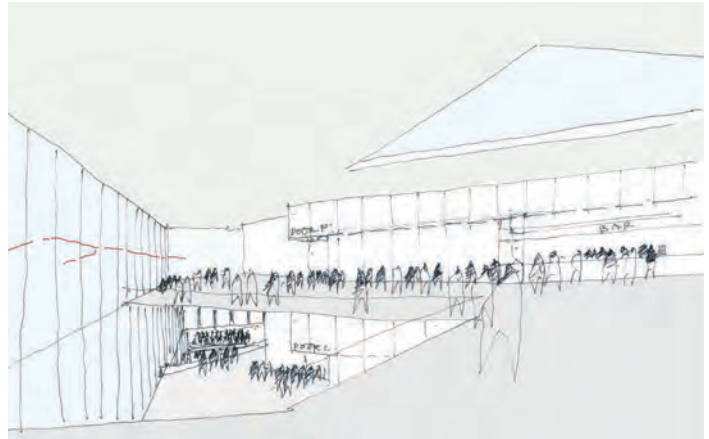
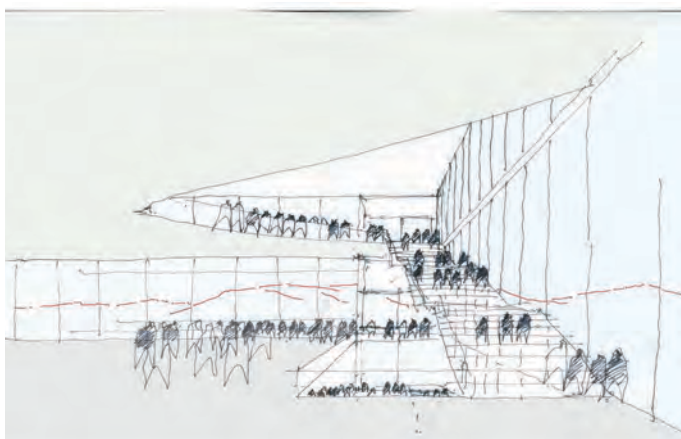
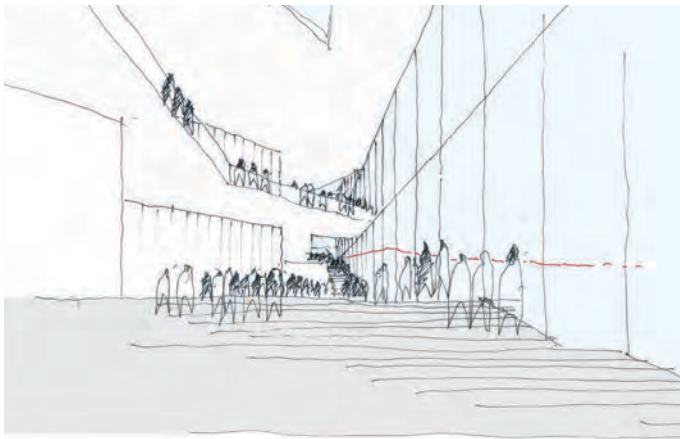
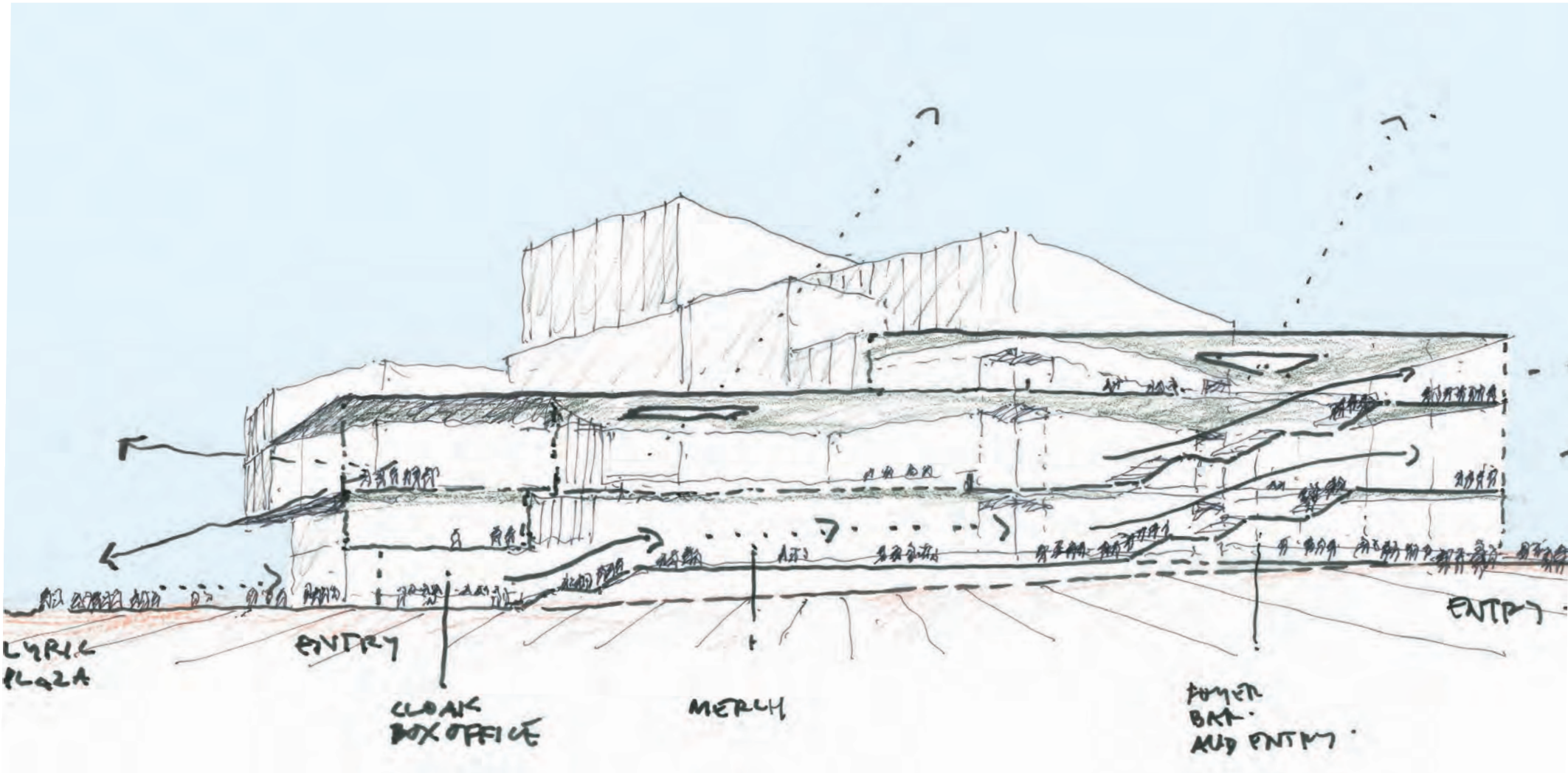
3.2 Designing with Country

3.2.5 Design Narrative - Transform and Ascent



The main stair and skylight act as a ceremonial spine for the building, drawing visitors upward in a sequence. The stair is framed and illuminated by the skylight, which pours daylight deep into the interior and traces the rhythm of ascent. Moving upward becomes a journey of transformation, each landing a pause in the narrative, each step guided by light as if moving toward revelation.

As visitors climb, orientation is reinforced by framed outlooks—moments where the architecture opens to the wider landscape. Long, deliberate views reach outward to Black Mountain, Mount Ainslie, and the Brindabellas, embedding the building in its topography and memory. These sightlines root the journey in Country: Black Mountain as a green anchor of the city, Mount Ainslie as a ceremonial vantage, the Brindabellas as a shifting backdrop of distance and weather. The stair thus becomes a line of dialogue between interior transformation and exterior orientation, binding personal movement to collective geography.



3 Design Principles

3.2 Designing with Country

3.2.6 Immersed in Country

The arrival experience for the theatre patron is orchestrated as a slow processional ascent from the east entry to the auditorium seat. This movement enhances and echoes the transformative power of theatre in taking one away from the mundane day-to-day, to the theatrical world of fantasy.

As one traverses east to west, an elongated framed view is formed towards the main foyer stair and sky beyond. The volume of the building opens from initial compression at the lower ground entry, then progression through a double, then triple height void.

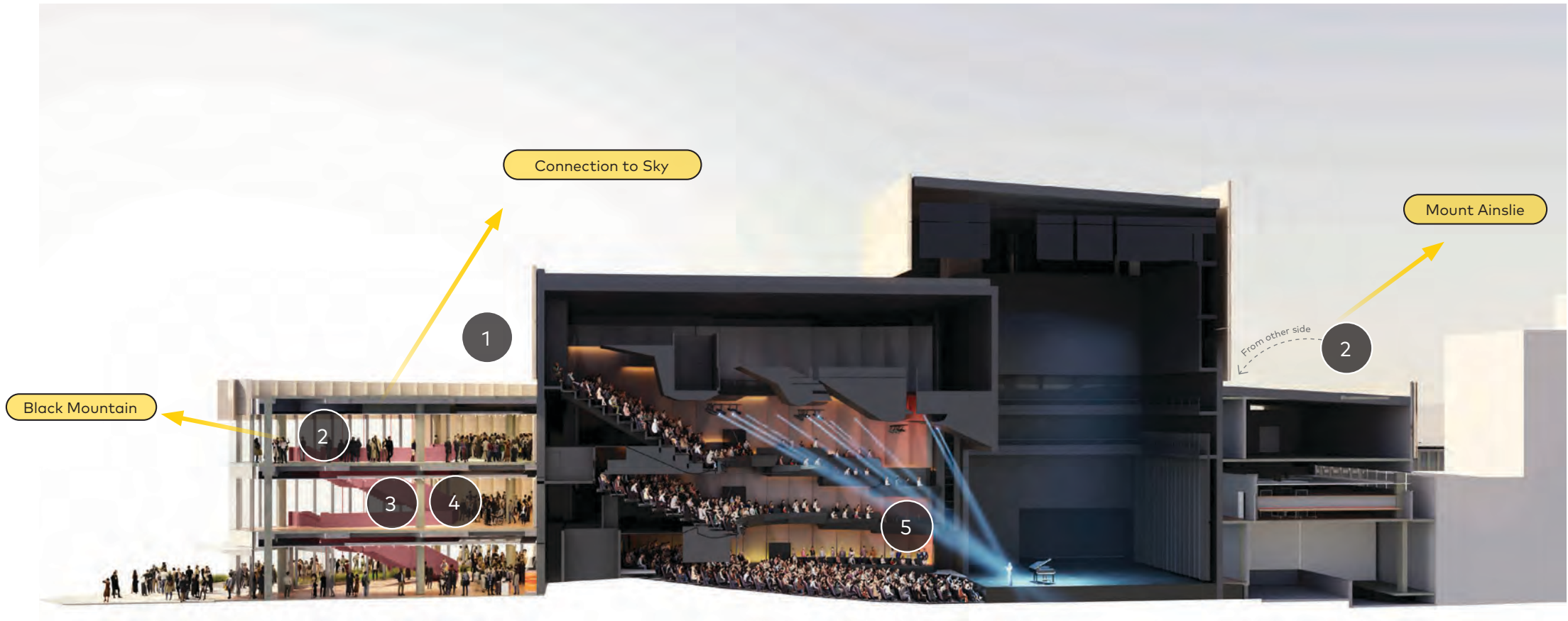
An ascent occurs from lower ground to ground level mimicking the striations of Canberra geology, and finally via a generous steel foyer stair coloured to reflect the stone hues of that geology.

The north façade is serrated in form, consisting of solid and glazed elements orienting the patrons view westward.

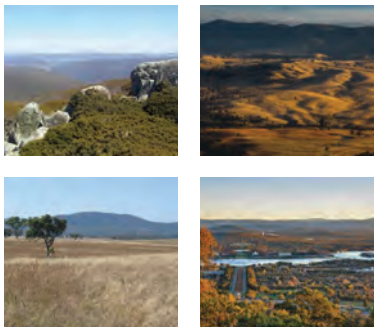
As one ascends the main stair, a pause at the top of each flight gives a moment of connection for the patron to orient oneself within the City – via a vista over Northbourne Avenue and City Hill; connect oneself to Country – via a broad unencumbered vista towards the horizon line of the Brindabellas and Black Mountain.

A vista to Sky Country is ever present through a triangulated oculus positioned over the main stair in a triangulated foyer space foregrounding the auditorium.

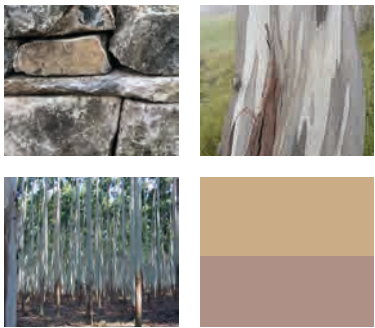
On turning towards the auditorium, a sense of orchestrated anticipation is built by a processional architecture, the patron enters the world of the theatre, transformed.



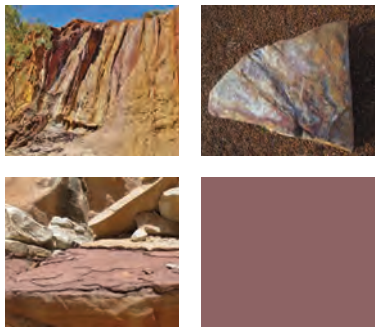
1 Building as sculptural ensemble of rock-like forms and stratified geology connecting to Namadji



2 Apertures visually connecting to Black Mountain, Brindabellas and Mount Ainslie



3 Material junctions celebrating seasonal light and colour transitions



4 Textures celebrating local stone colours and geological textures

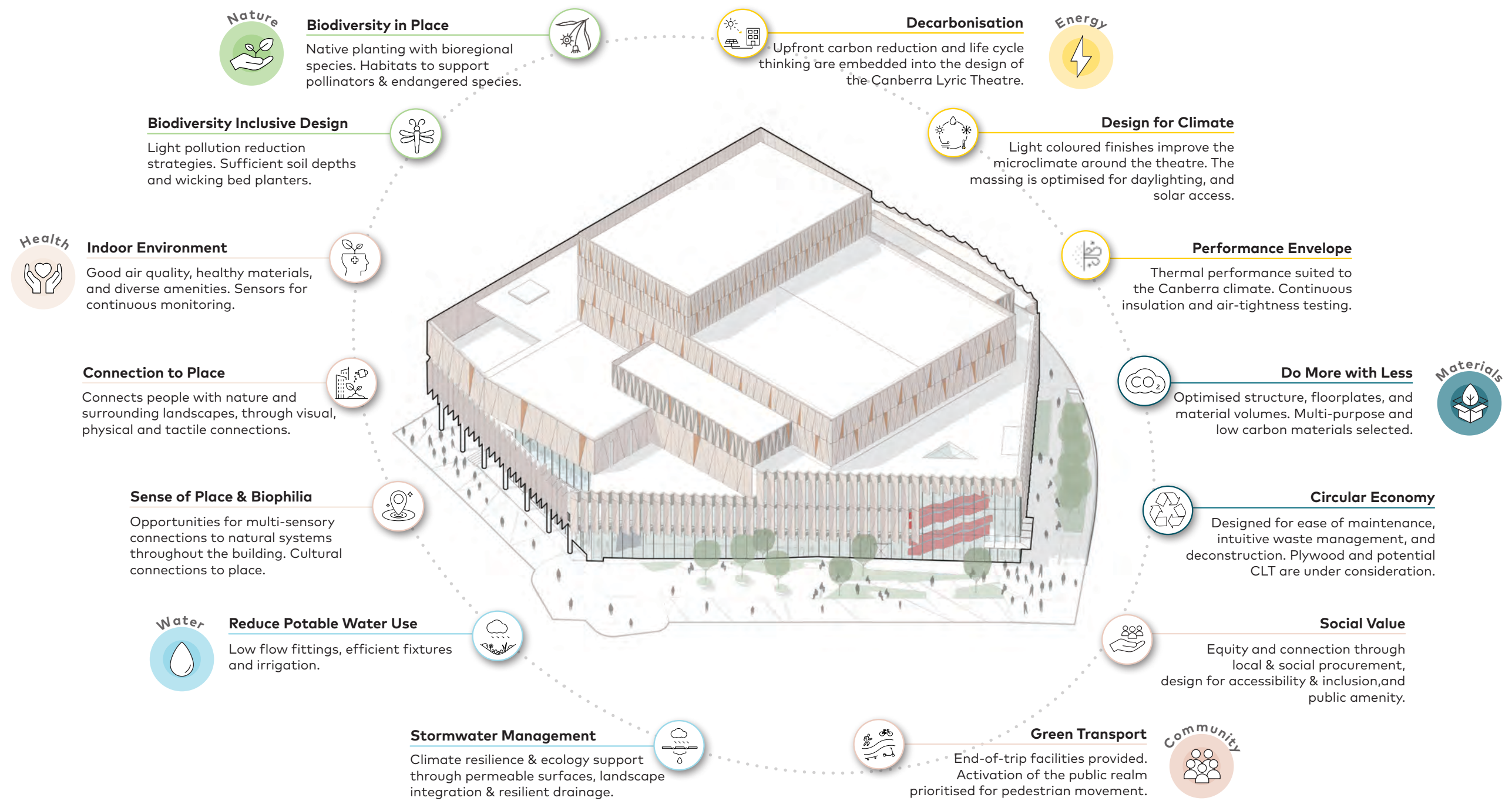


5 Transition from geology to clearing - auditorium as a living hearth of storytelling

3 Design Principles

3.3 Sustainability

3.3.1 Strategy



3 Design Principles

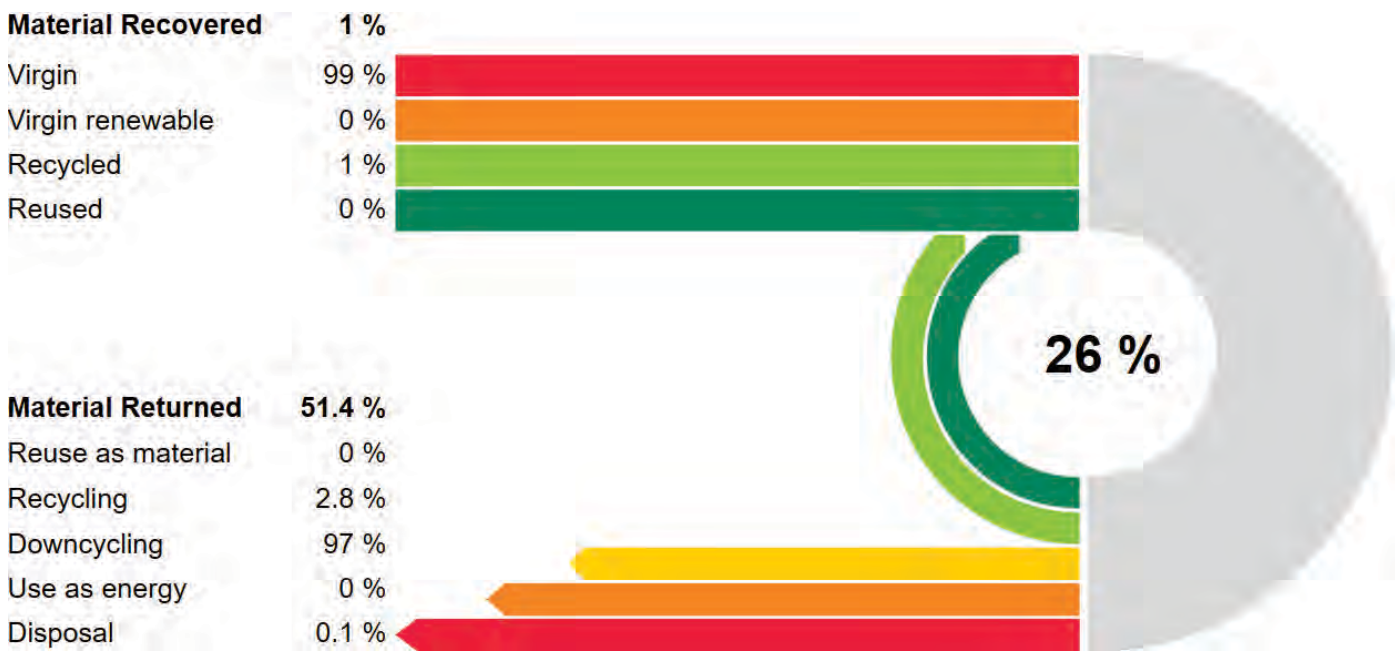
3.3 Sustainability

3.3.2 Analysis

Circularity

The **Building Circularity Potential** represents the total material circularity of the in-use materials for the project as well as end-of-life handling. It is calculated as the average of circular material inputs and materials outputs. The calculation is mass-based.

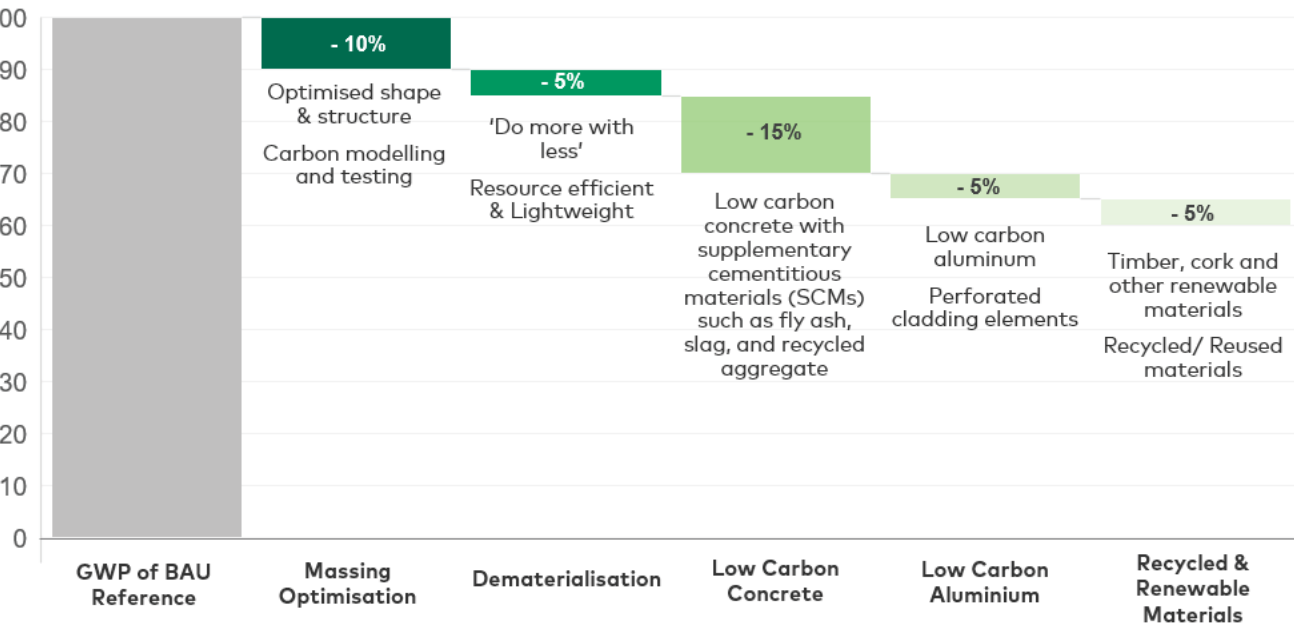
Given the large amount of concrete mass in the project, renewable and recycled material inputs will need to be prioritised, as well as down-cycling of concrete to aggregate at the end-of-life stage.



Decarbonisation Pathway

Embodied Carbon will be tracked through design development and be informed by carbon and circularity assessments.

The graph below showcases decarbonisation strategies being explored for Canberra Lyric Theatre.

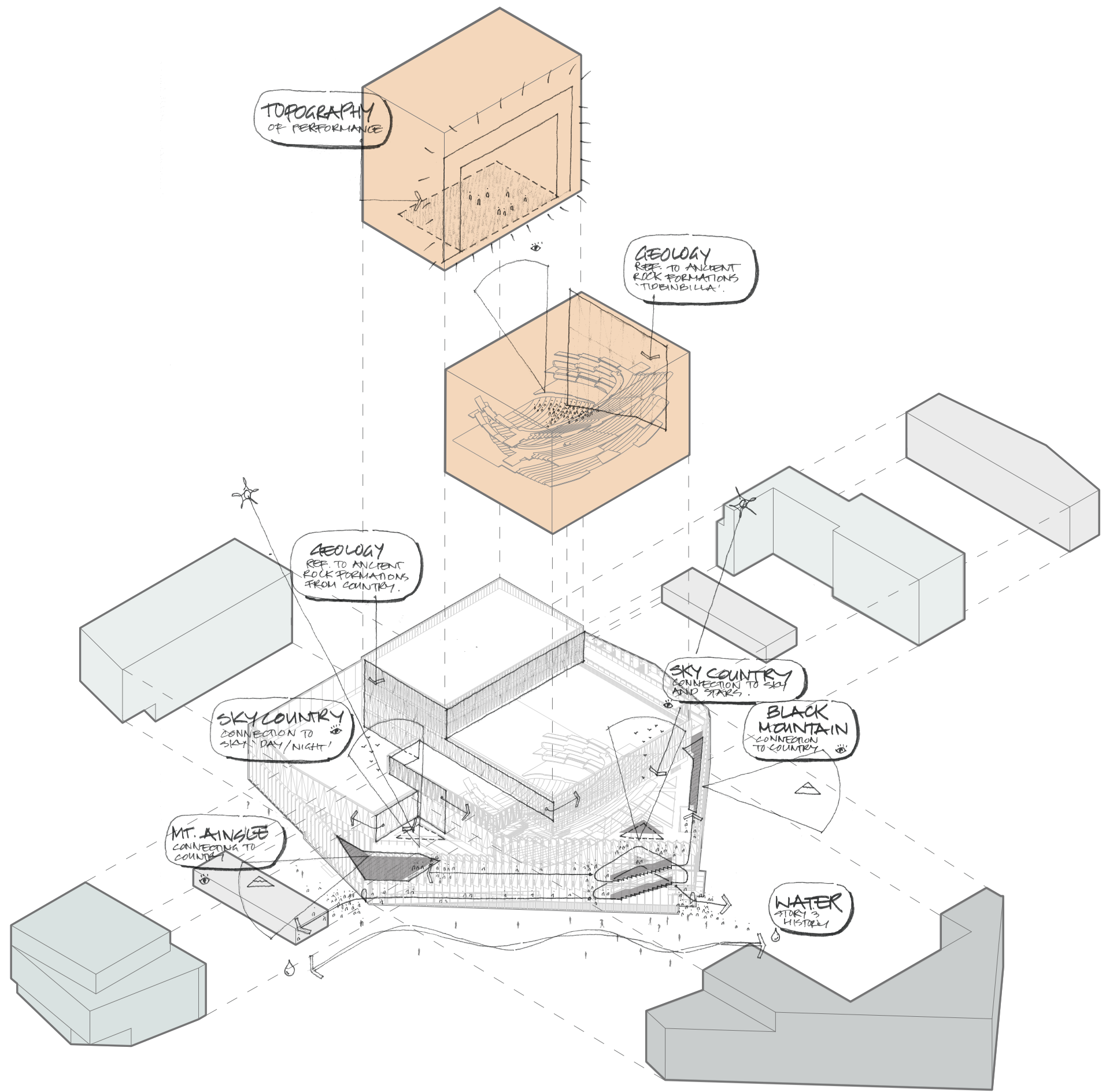


3 Design Principles

3.4 Functional Brief Overview

The Canberra Lyric Theatre is an exercise in programmatic expression, whereby the Auditorium and Stage, as the largest volume is centralised in the scheme, with supporting elements wrapping and enveloping the form to create a series of layered volumes.

Overview of Areas	
Public Areas	
Main Lobby	
Ticketing	
Catering	
VIP / Break-out spaces	
Retail	
Function / Corporate Entertainment	
Education / Outreach	
Auditorium And Stage	
Main Space Auditorium (c. 2,000 seats)	
Main Stage	
Technical Accommodation	
Get-in	
Technical Areas	
Plant and Services	
Performer Areas	
Dressing Rooms	
Performer Shared Toilet & Shower	
Support Accommodation	
Practice Rooms	
Staff/Administration Rooms	
Technical Staff	
Administrative Areas	
Stage Door	



3 Design Principles

3.5 Canberra Lyric Theatre - Massing Strategy

1

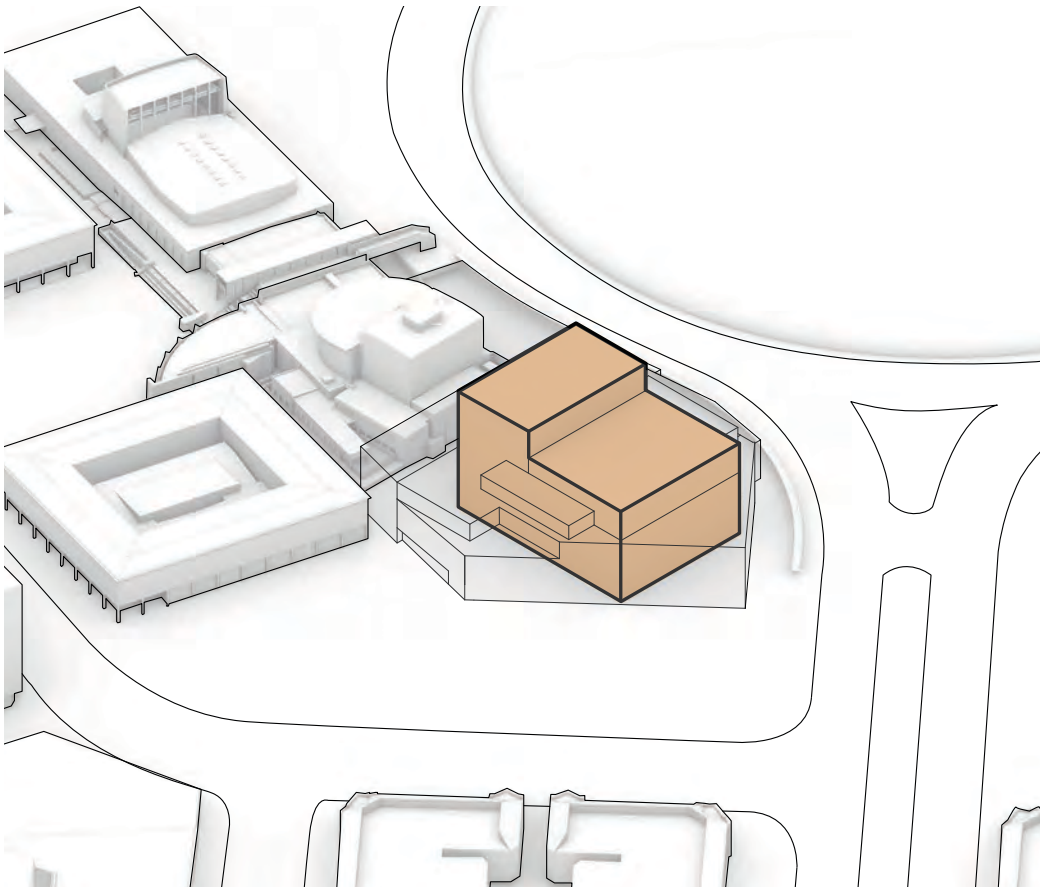
Site the Auditorium and Stage

The Auditorium and Stage are the largest volumes of the brief and generally fit in only two orientations. This composition was selected to create a continuation of expressed fly towers along the CCCD axis.

2

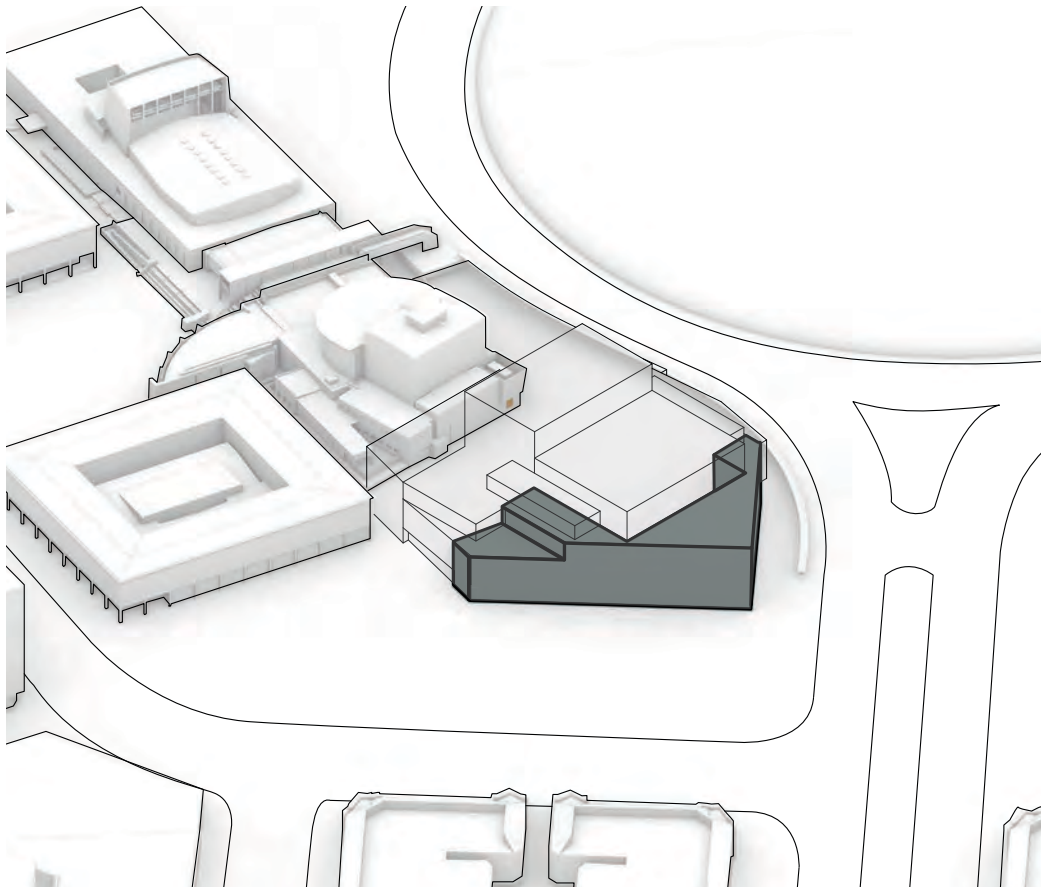
Respond to significance of the Main Avenue Approach Route

This decision enables a generous public foyer providing visual activation along Northbourne Avenue.



1

Site the Auditorium and Stage



2

Respond to significance of the Main Avenue Approach Route

3 Design Principles

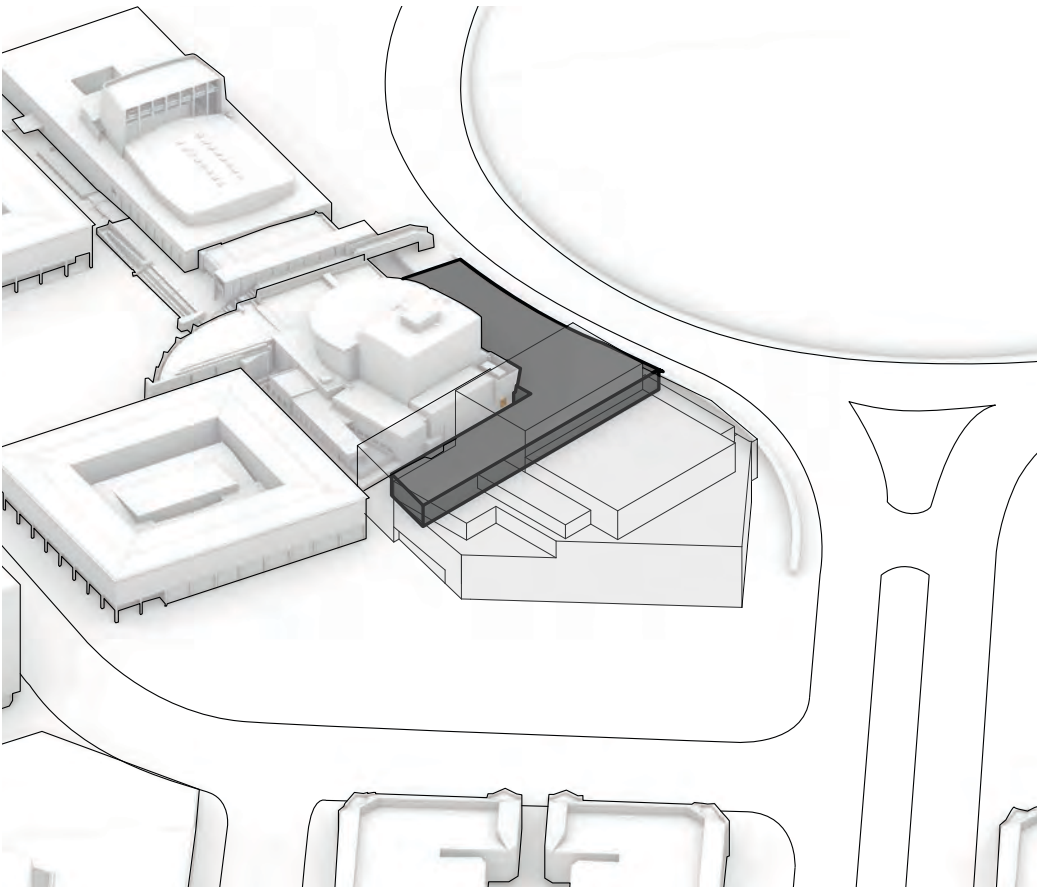
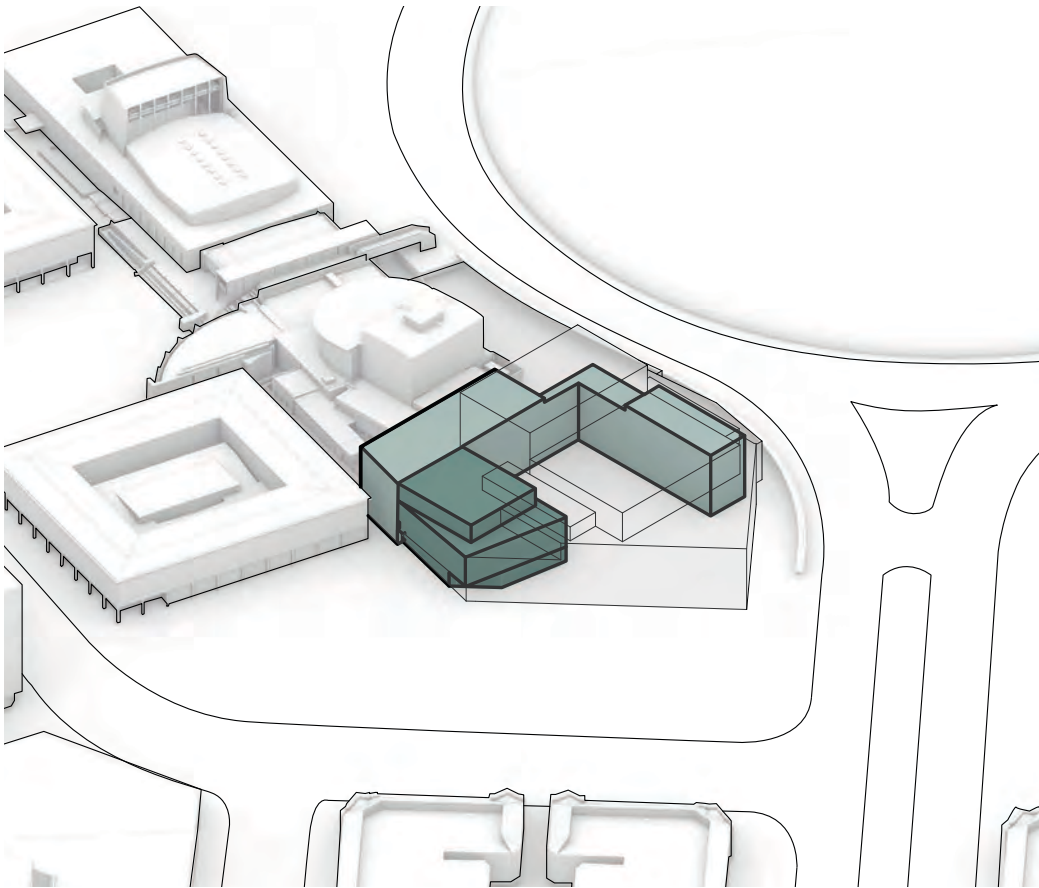
3.5 Canberra Lyric Theatre - Massing Strategy

3 Maximise public realm outcomes along Knowles Place

Active uses including rehearsal rooms are located along Knowles Place, to provide activation and enlivenment of the main pedestrian axis of the CCCD.

4 Discretely and efficiently manage serviceability

The slope of the site has been utilised to discretely tuck a shared loading dock between the Playhouse and Lyric theatres. Consolidation of this zone enables greater pedestrian safety and returns area back to the public realm.



3 Maximise public realm outcomes along Knowles Place

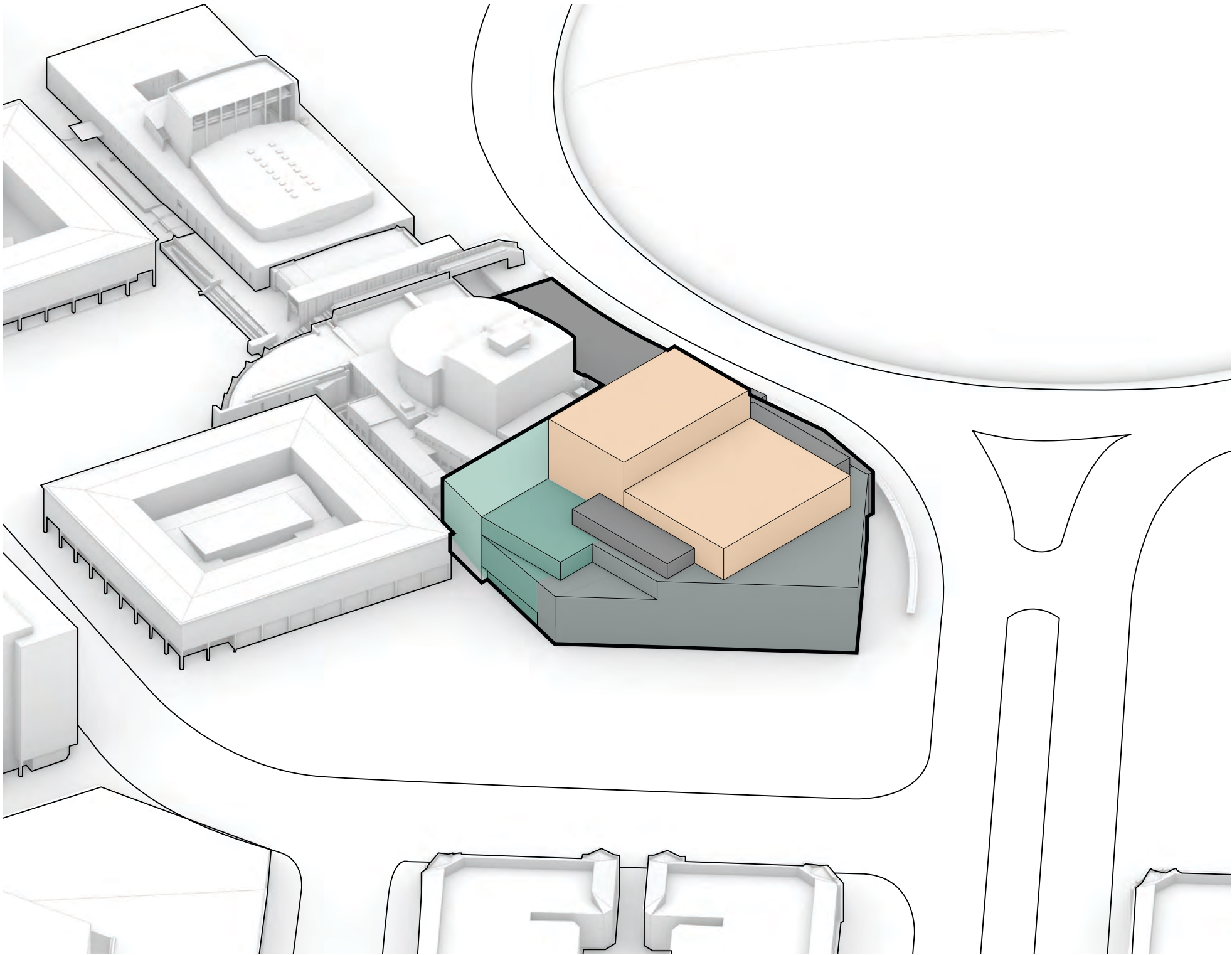
4 Discretely and efficiently manage serviceability

3 Design Principles

3.5 Canberra Lyric Theatre - Massing Strategy

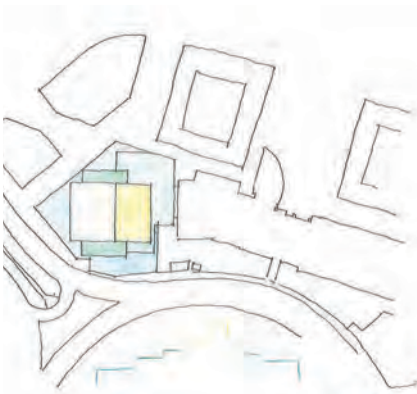
Overview

- Site the Auditorium and Stage
- Respond to significance of the Main Avenue Approach Route
- Maximise public realm outcomes along Knowles Place
- Discretely and efficiently manage serviceability

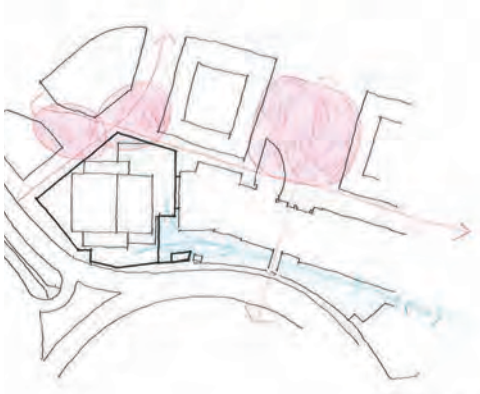


3 Design Principles

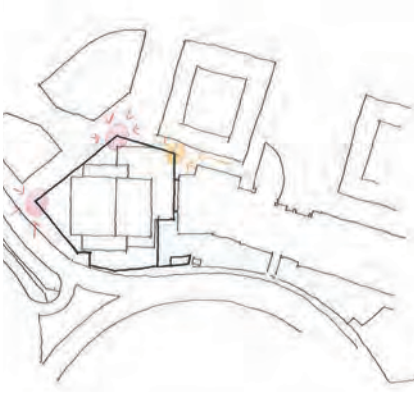
3.5 Canberra Lyric Theatre - Massing Strategy



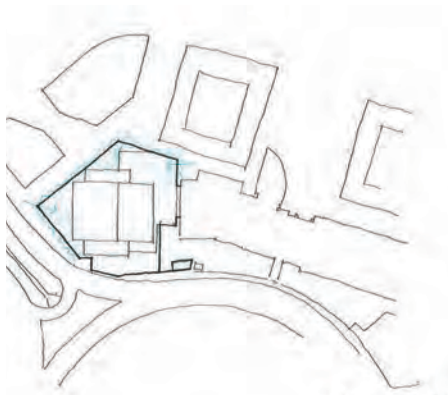
Orthogonal & Stepped Built-Form



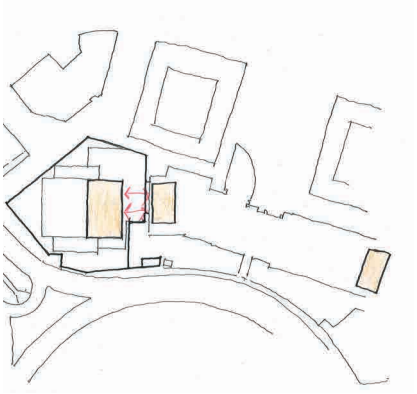
Entry Points in Key Corners



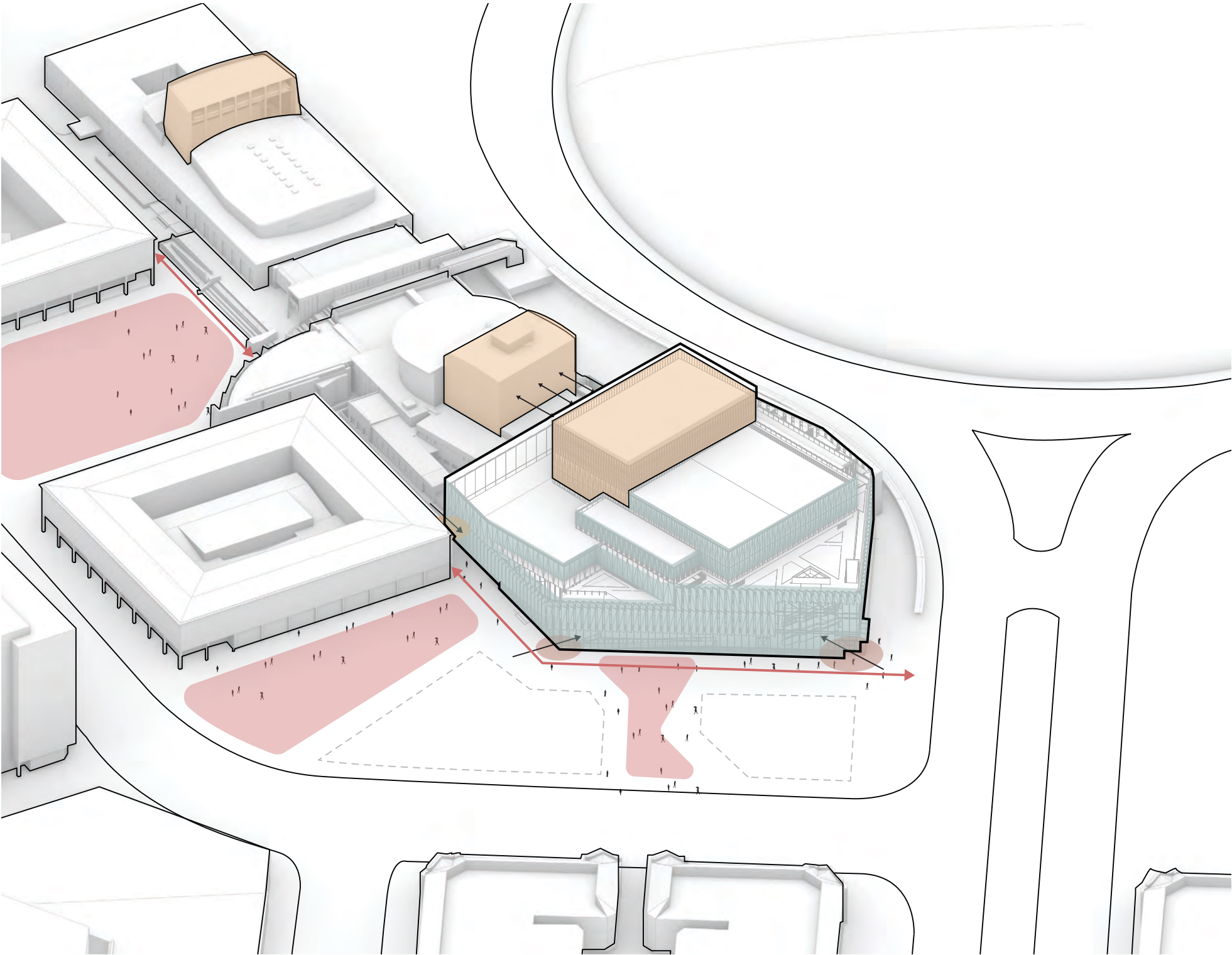
Reinforcing Precinct Masterplan Structure



Transparent FoH Façade to Public Entry



A "Family of Flytowers" with Lyric; Parallel & back-to-back with Playhouse



Civic Response

RENDER VIEW FROM CITY HILL LOOKING NORTH EAST



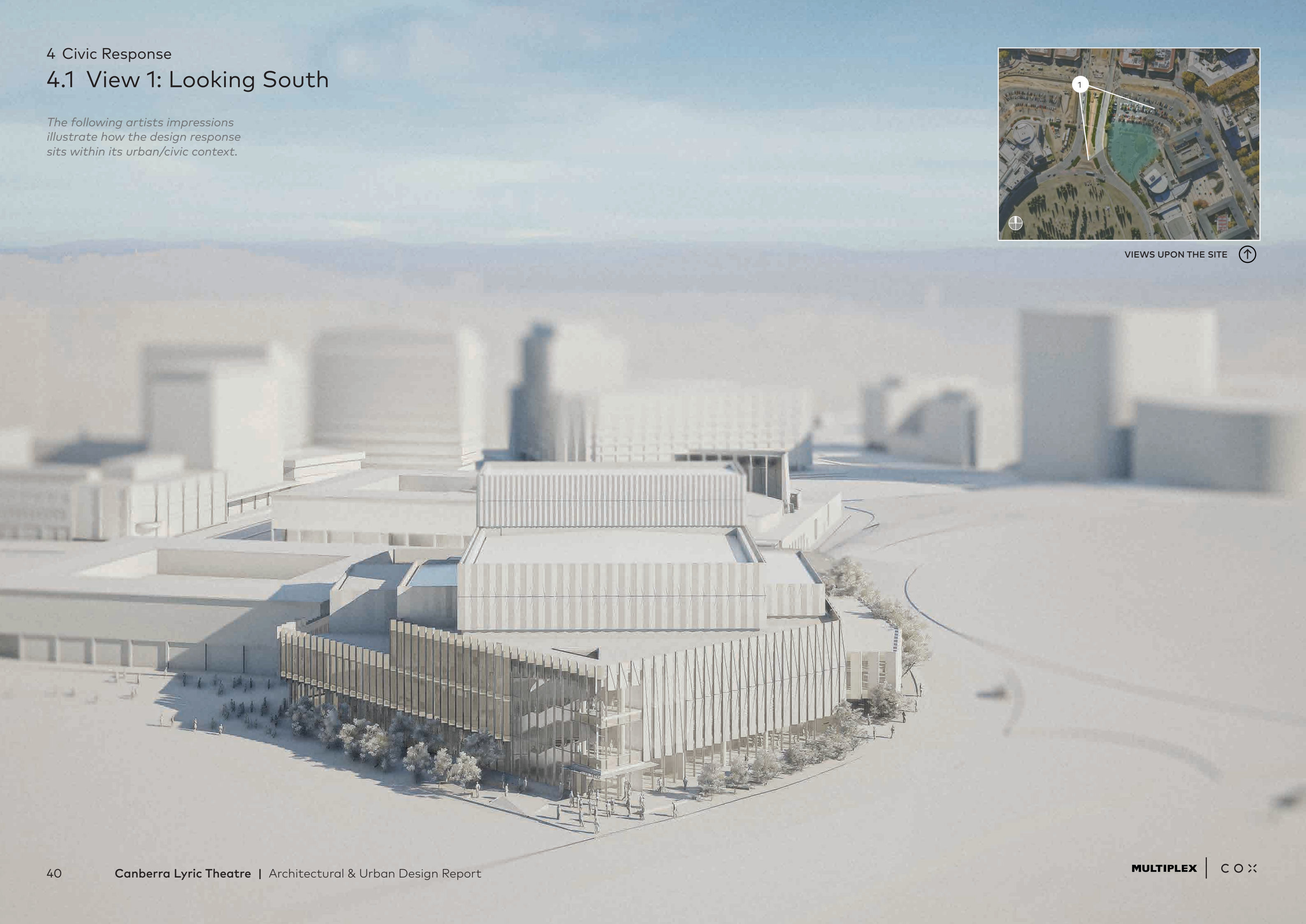
4 Civic Response

4.1 View 1: Looking South

The following artists impressions illustrate how the design response sits within its urban/civic context.

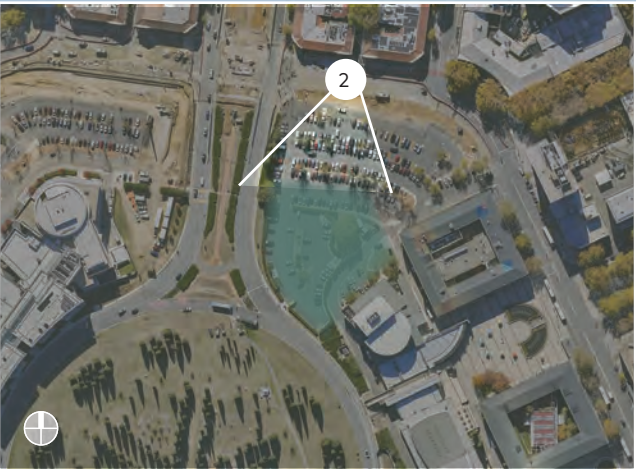


VIEWS UPON THE SITE

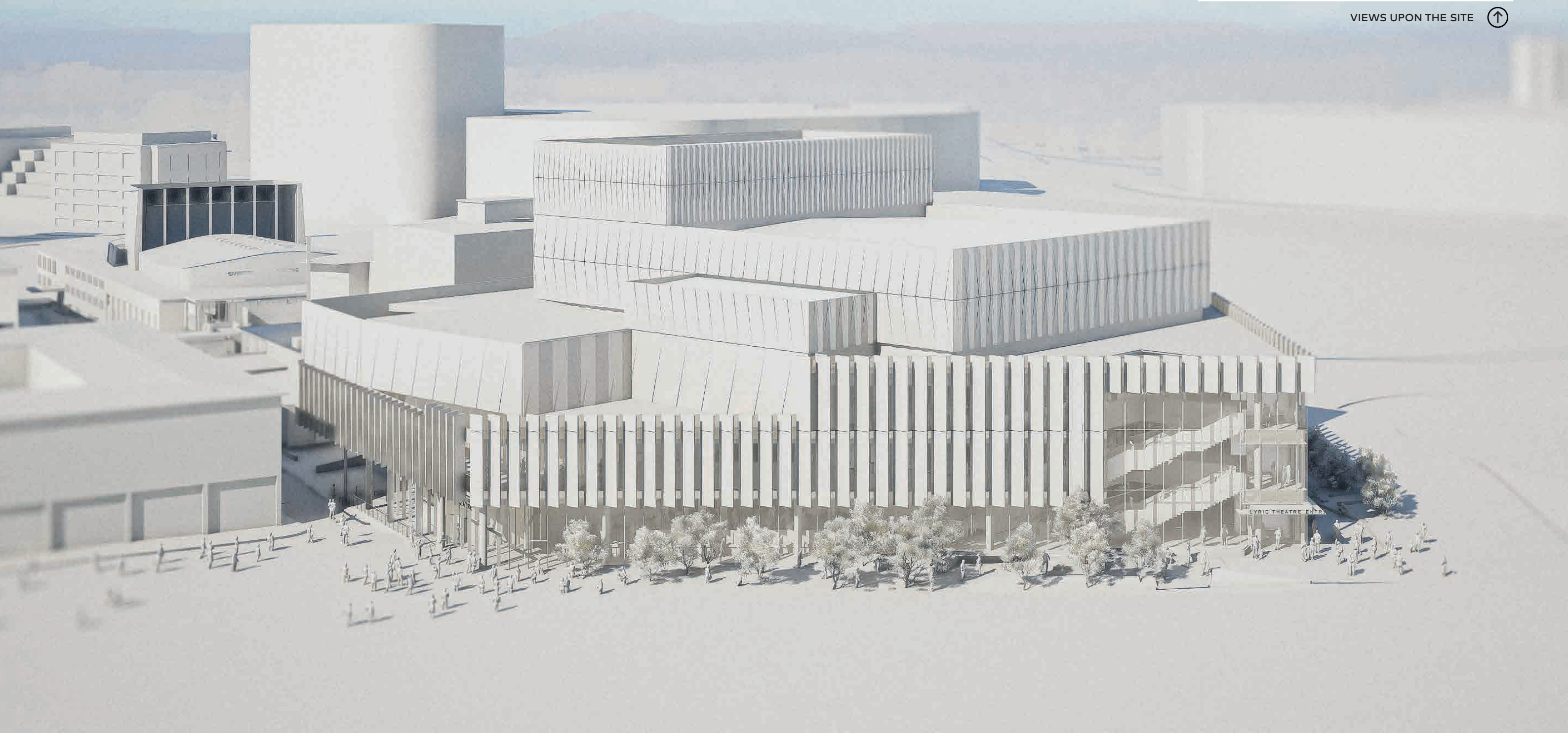


4 Civic Response

4.2 View 02: Looking South-West

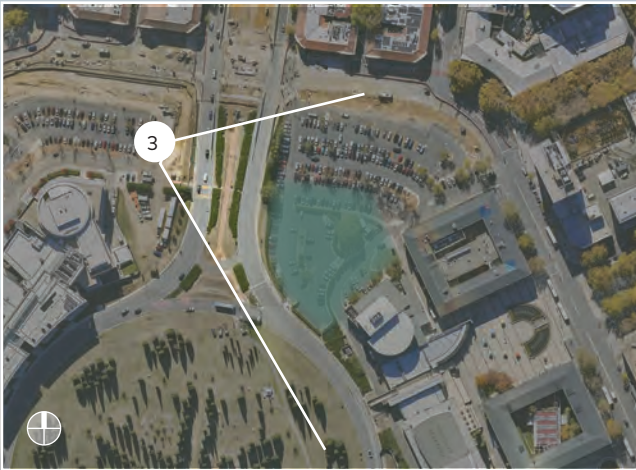



VIEWS UPON THE SITE



4 Civic Response

4.3 View 03 : Looking East



VIEWS UPON THE SITE 



4.4 Views From Vernon Circle & City Hill



1 LYRIC THEATRE FROM ALONG VERNON CIRCLE - VIEW 1



2 LYRIC THEATRE FROM ALONG VERNON CIRCLE - VIEW 2



3 LYRIC THEATRE FROM ALONG VERNON CIRCLE - VIEW 3



4 LYRIC THEATRE FROM CITY HILL - VIEW 1



5 LYRIC THEATRE FROM CITY HILL - VIEW 2



6 LYRIC THEATRE FROM CITY HILL - VIEW 3

Public Realm

RENDER OF THEATRE ENTRY ON THE
NIGHT OF A SHOW



5 Public Realm

5.1 Connections + Constraints

Noting the future development intentions for the precinct, the Canberra Lyric Theatre considers suitable orientation of primary entry points and public gathering spaces .

Analysis of environmental conditions enable informed development of spatial hierarchy and weather mitigation requirements throughout the precinct.

Legend

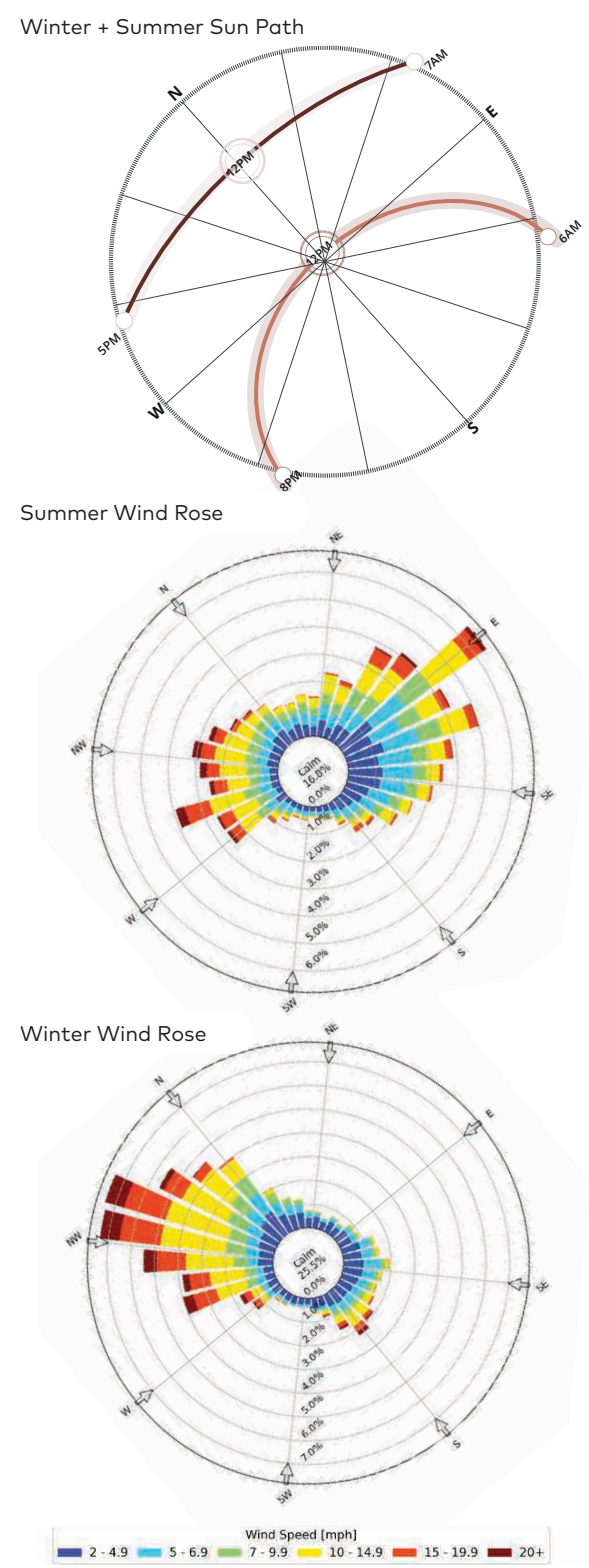
Public Interface / Activation

Optimal Solar Access

Wind Direction

Pedestrian Circulation

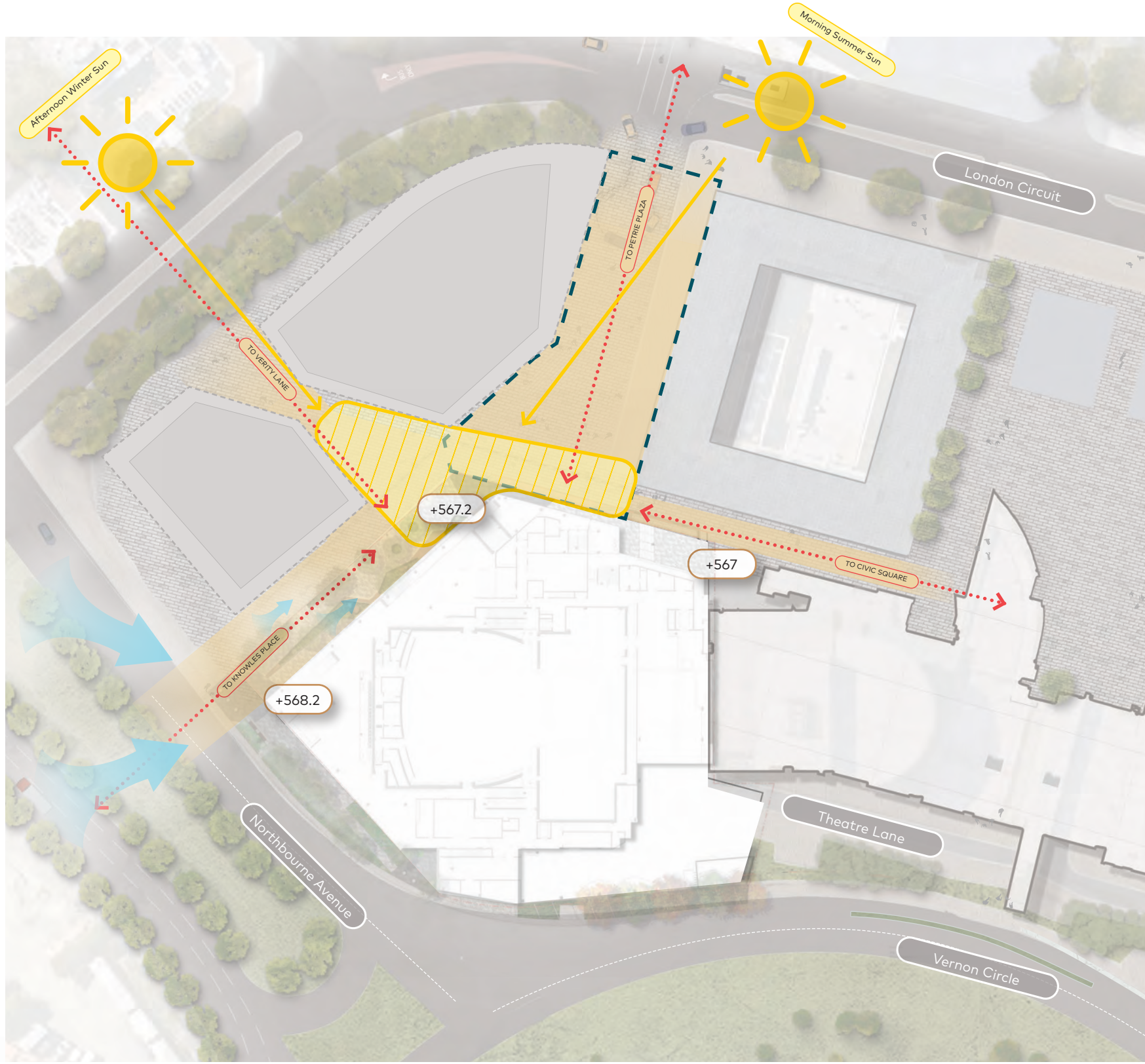
Shared Zone



Appx.
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Refer:

Landscape
Arcadia



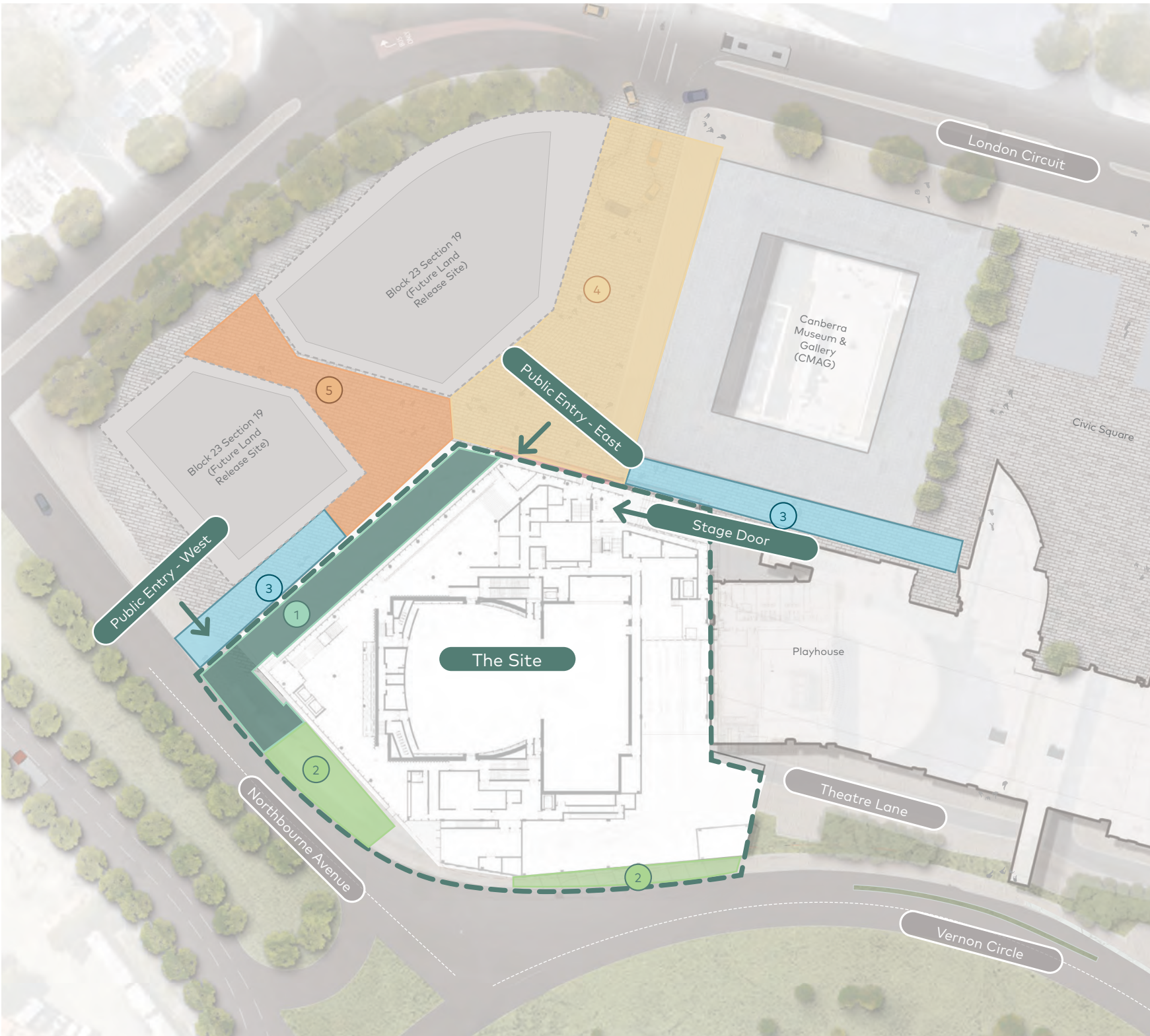
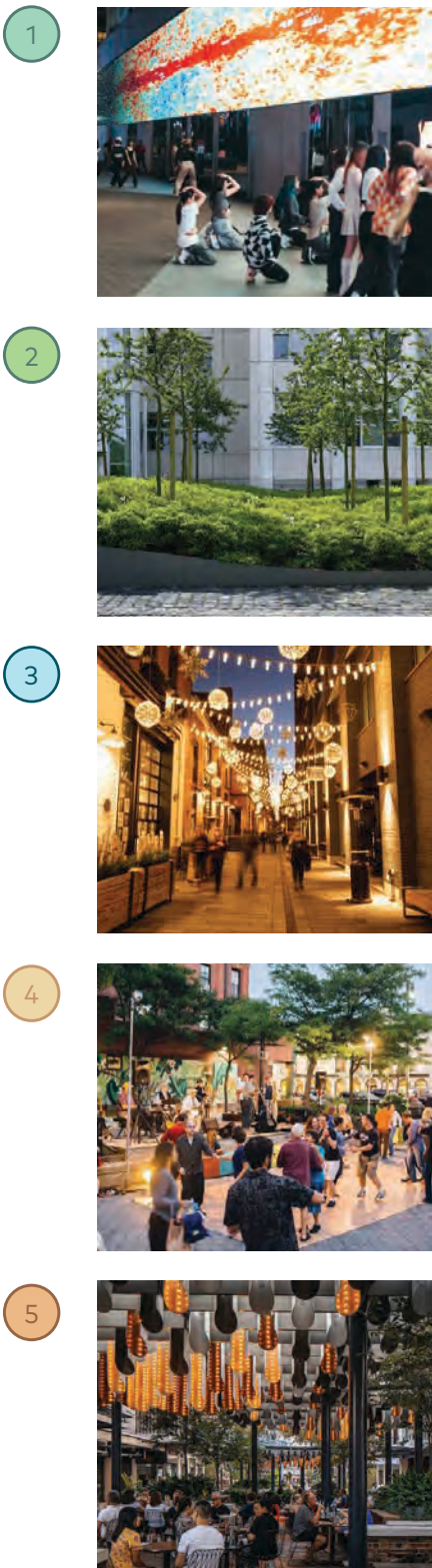
5 Public Realm

5.2 Precinct Structure

The precinct is envisaged to include public outdoor dining, landscaped pedestrian links and gathering spaces.

Each zone is provides a different character and spatial quality, informed by environmental conditions and connectivity between the main entry points of the Canberra Lyric Theatre and broader context.

Canberra Lyric Theatre (Subject of Works Approval)	
1	Limelight Alley
2	Green Façade (Vernon Circle)
Future Stage/s: Precinct Upgrades (not included in this Works Approval)	
3	Knowles Place
Future Stage/s: Surrounding Works (not included in this Works Approval)	
4	Lyric Plaza
5	Foodies Lane



Appx.
D

Refer:
*Landscape
Arcadia*

5 Public Realm

5.3 Concept Landscape Plan

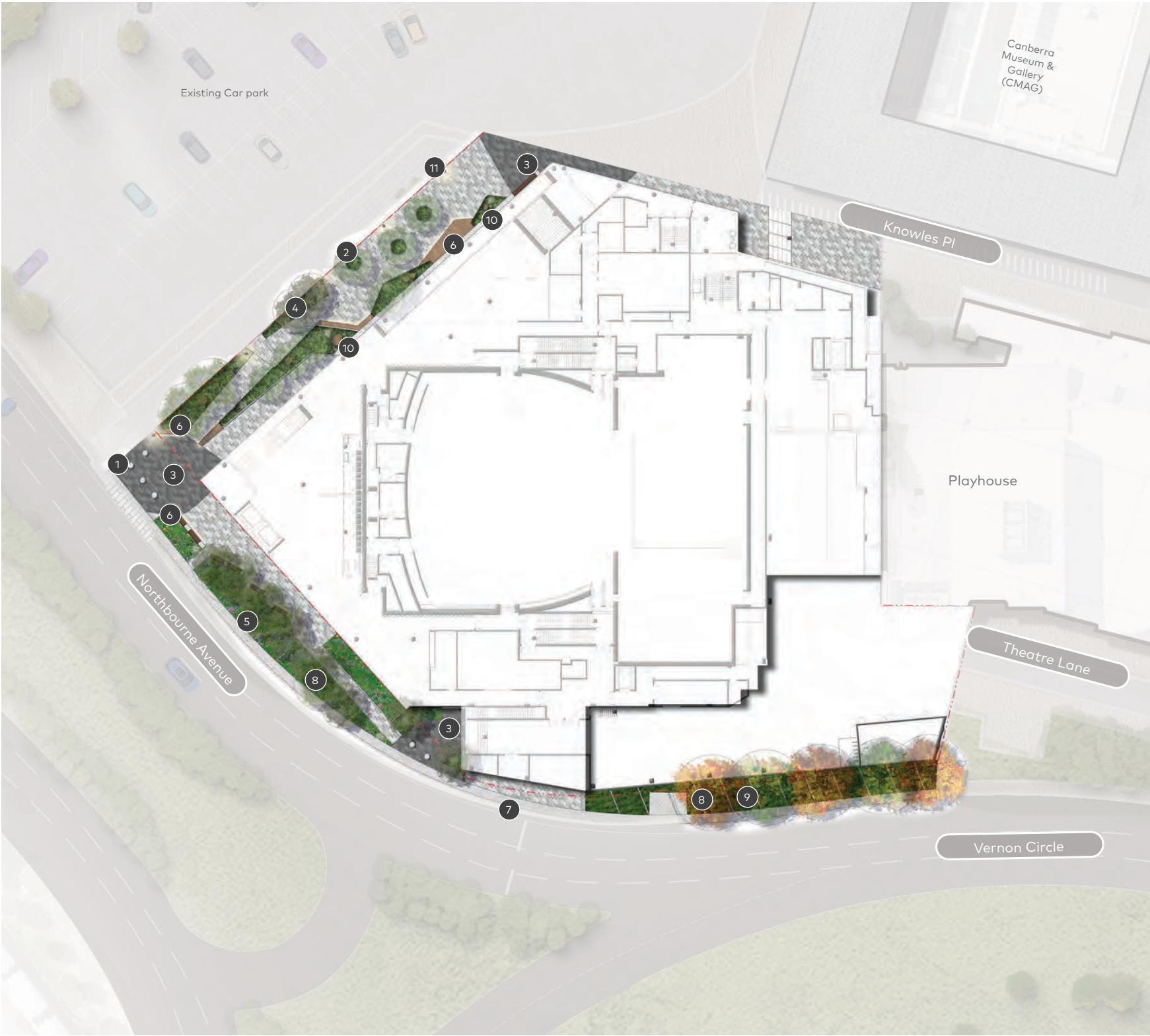
The landscape concept is founded in numerous design studies and with consideration to a broad array of stakeholder inputs and design drivers. Studies into thermal and solar comfort, anticipated pedestrian movements, flexible event space, breakout and activation, universal accessibility and, in particular, adjacent future interfaces have been considered to create spatial structure and diversity in the public realm delivery.

The public realm delivery along the northern architectural façade, which we've temporarily labelled as Limelight Lane for the purpose of creating an identity, integrates carefully placed landscape planting beds to assist with achieving grading functions, particularly from the western foyer and northern façade egress. A landscape kit of parts along the length of the northern façade aids to conceal level differences between the glazing line and the grading of the public domain. The eastern portion of Limelight Lane is predominantly flat and comprises movable planter/furniture elements to allow temporary event and external performances to occur adjacent a raised bench.

Other features of the landscape design include a breakout space to the western interface with seating and native landscape buffering to Northbourne Avenue. The Eastern façade is predominantly hardstand to serve function aspect of the primary foyer space and stage door access. The existing verge path connecting Northbourne Ave and Vernon Circle will be retained and/or reinstated cognisant of future condition/alignment of these roads pending agreement. All spaces are intended to be linked with a consistent hardscape and materials palette, however with final patterning, selections, and treatments subject to final confirmation in collaboration with other concurrent works within the Canberra Civic and Cultural District.

The approach along the Vernon Circle interface is to screen the loading dock wall with a combination of native vegetation buffer and a climber growing against the all. With Street trees shown as Japanese Elms to match the installation/approval of other recent works associated with S100 and S19 works approval submissions. Other than this, the intent is to create landscape character zones through a diverse native species palette.

Legend	
1	Concrete Sphere Bollards
2	Feature Planting pots that are movable
3	Tonal feature paving for entry nodes
4	Canberra grassland mix
5	Native landscape buffer
6	Integrated wall and timber seating scattered throughout
7	Existing Concrete Path to be kept or reinstated
8	Blade paving within planting to reflect architecture
9	Planting buffer to loading dock
10	Locally sourced feature boulders within the garden beds
11	Smart poles to create programmable lights and patterns



Appx.
D

Refer:

Landscape
Arcadia

5 Public Realm

5.4 Universal Accessibility Strategy

The level changes around the Architectural façade have been a key driver for the spatial configuration of the public domain. The intent is to create broad, relatively flat, areas external to the primary entries and ensure paths of travel from egress points are intuitive and unobstructed.

From the western foyer entry the public domain grades down at maximum walkway (1:20 max.), without the need to introduce ramp infrastructure (tactiles and handrails). The purpose of this is to maximise the usable cross-grade compliant plaza space to the eastern portion of Limelight Lane which is intended to align with future public/private plazas of Lyric Plaza and the future Block 23. Interfaces between existing and future conditions to these plazas and Knowles place are subject to ongoing confirmation and the respective designs are developed.

A length of maximum 1:20 path is provided to balance the level change between the western façade and the existing Vernon Circle verge path levels, with the existing verge path access being retained.

Other landscape features including lighting, signage and other wayfinding are shown indicatively in the landscape concept, but are subject to future detailed Works Approval consideration.

Legend

Areas that are relatively flat

Areas less than 1:40

Areas less than 1:20 and greater than 1:40

Main Entry Point

Egress Point

