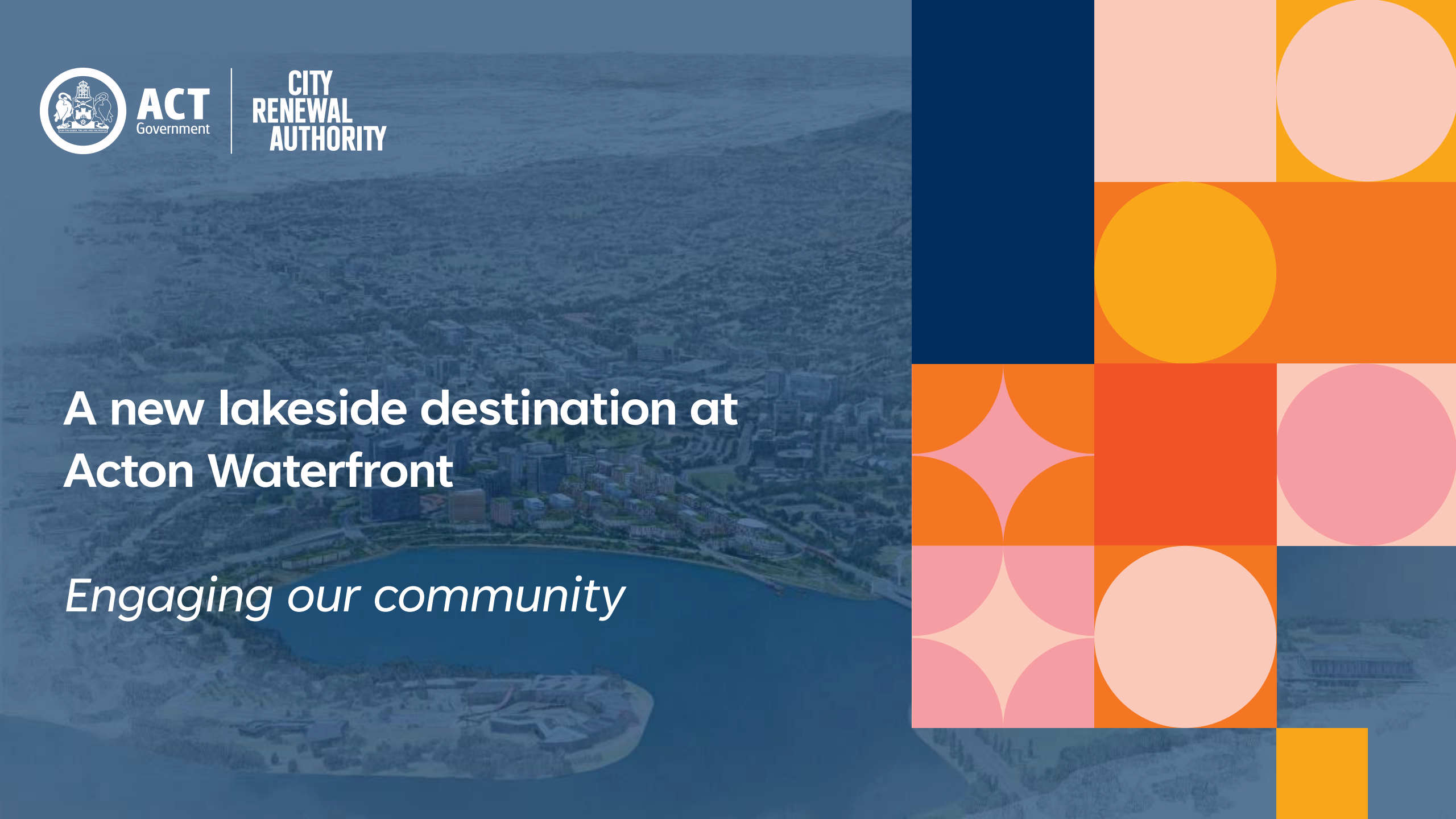
ACT Government | CITY RENEWAL AUTHORITY

A new lakeside destination at Acton Waterfront

Engaging our community



Contents

1. About the Acton Waterfront project
2. Engaging our community
3. Aspirations for the neighbourhood
4. Principles for creating a liveable neighbourhood
5. From plan to place: How we get there
6. Have your say



A new waterfront destination for all



We are building a more connected and lively lakefront at Acton. The Acton Waterfront project will:

- Transform the waterfront into a lively neighborhood that links the City Centre to the water and easy access to light rail.
- Create a walkable, mixed-use precinct where homes, shops, cafes, restaurants and cultural spaces will sit alongside generous parks and public spaces.
- Deliver a safe, accessible and engaging public realm that supports daily life, recreation and connection to nature.

Engaging our community

We’re inviting Canberrans to help shape the future of Acton Waterfront



We are seeking feedback on our proposed design principles and how well they achieve the vision for a lively, people-centred precinct.

To enable a more liveable neighbourhood, we want to understand from you what makes a great lakeside neighbourhood and how Acton Waterfront can best reflect Canberra’s lifestyle and identity.

The public consultation will run for six weeks, ensuring Acton Waterfront continues to be shaped by and for the people of Canberra.

We want to know

- How well do you think the proposed plan achieves the vision of a high-quality, lively, and authentic place for Canberrans?
- How effective is our proposed plan in strengthening the connection between the City Centre and the waterfront?
- What do you think is most important for creating a sustainable and lively mixed use waterfront precinct in Canberra?

Aspirations for the neighbourhood

A neighbourhood that brings everyday life to the waterfront

- The vision is to build a connected, sustainable and people-focused precinct that reflects Canberra's lifestyle and values.

- Designed for the long term, Acton Waterfront will showcase **design excellence, climate-responsive architecture** and **welcoming public spaces** that encourage walking, cycling and connection to nature.

- The Acton Waterfront will be a destination for memorable experiences—where people can enjoy diverse activities, vibrant public spaces, and a mix of retail, dining, and cultural offerings. It will support wellbeing, foster local business, celebrate culture and heritage, and provide a beautiful, sustainable neighbourhood for future generations.

- The new neighbourhood will support local tourism and economic investment by attracting visitors and showcasing Canberra as a thriving and connected capital city.



Building on previous design and planning



“West Basin will be a vibrant cultural and entertainment precinct on a waterfront promenade. The area will create a new city neighbourhood, extending the city to the lake with a cosmopolitan mixture of shops, businesses, cafés, recreation, tourist activities and accommodation.”

National Capital Plan

“A vibrant community supported by a mixture of land uses, building types, and facilities”

West Basin Guidelines

The aim of the Acton Waterfront Place Plan is to apply a best practice approach in creating a waterfront precinct that will be acclaimed for its design, sustainability and sense of community. It will be a precinct Canberrans will be proud of.”

Acton Waterfront Place Plan

Principles for creating a liveable neighbourhood



Creating a liveable neighbourhood starts with strong design principles – guiding how buildings, streets and public spaces work together to support community life sustainability and connection to the waterfront.

Principle 1: Active frontages



We’re creating lively, welcoming streets and spaces throughout the precinct.

Main activity areas will feature shops, cafés, restaurants, and entertainment venues that create a vibrant mix of uses. Connecting seamlessly with community spaces along the park promenade and in locations that link strongly to t he city

Other streets will include homes and workplaces at ground level to keep the area safe, active and inviting.

We’ll also include **cultural elements,** like artworks and First Nations storytelling in key locations, to celebrate local identity and make the public spaces feel unique and connected to Canberra’s story.

Principle 2: A mix of uses



A mix of uses to bring the neighbourhood to life

The neighbourhood will combine homes, shops, cafés, workplaces, and community spaces to create a lively and welcoming environment. This mix supports both residents and workers, making it easy to live, work, and enjoy the area—all within a connected and lively setting.

Principle 3: People focused and climate responsive streetscapes



Our street design keeps traffic slow and prioritises walking and cycling, while maintaining strong links to the park and neighbourhood. Key features include:

- Buildings and streets shaped to minimise overshadowing for sunlight and comfort.
- Building heights and street walls designed for a human scale, using materials that reflect Canberra's character.
- Park edges will stay quiet and easy to walk through, with service access only, so people can enjoy uninterrupted pedestrian connections to the precinct.
- A main vehicle route that still prioritises people I n public spaces.
- Laneways with thoughtful materials and landscaping will add character and soften the precinct, creating variety and a more welcoming feel.
- Durable, sustainable materials for long-term resilience.

Principle 4: Buildings that enable comfortable streets and light-filled indoor spaces



- Ensure building heights protect parks and public spaces from overshadowing, so they stay sunny and inviting, with maximum 4 storeys on the park edge.

- Preserve important views to Lake Burley Griffin and surrounding landmarks

- Respect the character of Commonwealth Avenue and its role in the National Capital setting

- Follow the National Capital Plan principles while improving public spaces—creating a welcoming, vibrant waterfront for everyone

- Build on the West Basin Precinct Code to ensure consistency with the vision for Canberra's National Capital

From plan to place:
How do we get there?

Challenges: What could be delivered under the current National Capital Plan?

- Current planning settings make it challenging to fully achieve the vision for a vibrant, sustainable precinct.
- The current planning allows for around 220 people per hectare, which limits opportunities for a lively neighbourhood.
- Housing options are less diverse under these settings.
- Some design outcomes can lead to challenges like overshadowing and reduced solar access.



Opportunity: A well-designed, lively place with experiences day and night



- Our plan supports more people and greater housing diversity for an active, inclusive neighbourhood.
- Slender buildings, narrow blocks, and upper-level setbacks improve sunlight, airflow, and reduce overshadowing.
- The design exceeds national standards for solar access, ventilation, and ensures public spaces receives adequate sunlight.
- Building heights are designed to create a lively precinct—lower near parks and open spaces, and taller near transport routes and future light rail stops.
- Strong connections between the waterfront and the City Centre through improved street design and movement links.

Proposed: Indicative layout & desired outcomes



- A continuous waterfront promenade for walking, cycling, and enjoying the lake
- Green spaces and play areas for families, plus flexible spaces for events all year round
- Buildings designed to frame the waterfront while keeping open views and easy access to the water
- Celebrating culture and history with public art and storytelling along the promenade

To achieve these benefits, we may need to seek an update to the National Capital Plan



We’re shaping a place people will love from day one—lively, inclusive, and unmistakably Canberra.

An update to the National Capital Plan will unlock density, diversity, and increase environmental performance to enable design excellence, aligned with major infrastructure.

The vision is for a neighbourhood that’s nationally recognised, globally admired, and locally cherished.

Have your say

Be part of the plan

Community input will help refine the final design before an NCP amendment is submitted for consideration. The community will have a further opportunity to provide design feedback through this process.

Community consultation will run for **six weeks from 4 November to 17 December 2025**, with several ways to get involved.

- **Workshop One:** *27 November, 10am–11.30am* at QT Hotel
- **Workshop Two:** *1 December, 5pm–6:30pm* (online)
- **Community Panel:** *2 December, 10am–2pm* (in person)
- You can also visit the **YourSay website** to learn more, explore the proposed design changes, and share your feedback online.



