



LONGFORD, TASMANIA

PLACE ACTIVATION PLAN

Creating a great place and destination



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Prepared by Village Well for Northern Midlands Council 11/11/2015



A Wonder of Opportunity...

Longford has the DNA, charm and potential to become a unique destination and experience. This plan, with the backing of the community, will deliver a new vision for its future success and prosperity.

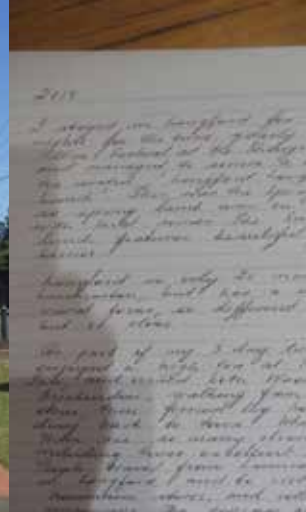


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INTRODUCTION

Located in Northern Tasmania, a short drive south of Launceston, Longford is a well-established heritage town and agricultural service hub. A strong opportunity exists to capitalise on the historic architecture of the town and reinvigorate the original town centre as a local civic anchor as well as an attractive area for serving tourists. This place will become a new heart of Longford; a vibrant town centre with a refreshed identity, a place to be experienced, and a cherished community hub.

“Longford is only twenty minutes from Launceston, but has a wonderful rural focus, so different to the city, but so close.”

Our Approach

Village Well's process involved working collaboratively with The Northern Midland's Council (Council), the Longford community, and Transport Planners from MRCagney to envision the best approach to reinvigorate Longford through a dynamic and integrated placemaking process.

Village Well facilitated two intensive visioning workshops and a walk of the town with community leaders to draw out local knowledge of the area, their expertise and shared experience in order to develop concepts to activate and position the town as a unique destination.

This report has been generated from the information gathered in the workshops and from Village Well's extensive experience in placemaking. The outcome of this process is as follows:

- An aspirational vision and set of guiding principles for Longford, with particular attention given to the main street.
- A summary of short, medium, and long term place activation ideas and directions, which are deliverable and affordable.
- Place governance models to maintain momentum and long term success.

It is intended that this report presents a high-level vision and plan for Council and the community to guide the ongoing activation of Longford.



What is Placemaking?

Great places embrace people with active public spaces, human scale elements and engaging points of difference. They are successful socially, environmentally, and economically because they put people first.

Placemaking, therefore, is the art and science of making authentic, vibrant and resilient places that are valued by their communities and admired by visitors. It is a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to planning and developing places that involves understanding the culture and qualities of a place and the wisdom of its community.

With the collaboration between many stakeholders, the placemaking approach articulates a shared vision to ensure the 'place' is embraced by all.

Placemaking incorporates and influences other traditional areas of place development, including master planning, urban design, social and economic development, community engagement, landscaping, marketing and brand/logo development, retail mix, arts and culture and sustainable development.

It builds community goodwill, giving investors and businesses confidence, enabling innovative solutions and creating places that people love. People stay longer, spend more and care for the place more.

Central to the success of Longford will be a holistic placemaking management and strategy approach that puts people and place first.

Placemaking at Longford

Longford has the right "placemaking DNA", or "good bones", including its charming heritage architecture, rich colonial and racing history, parks and gardens, and proximity to Launceston, major tourist attractions, and the river.

How to use this document

This **Place Activation Plan** will become the 'place lens' for Longford and sets a new placemaking benchmark in order to brief all stakeholders and the larger community.

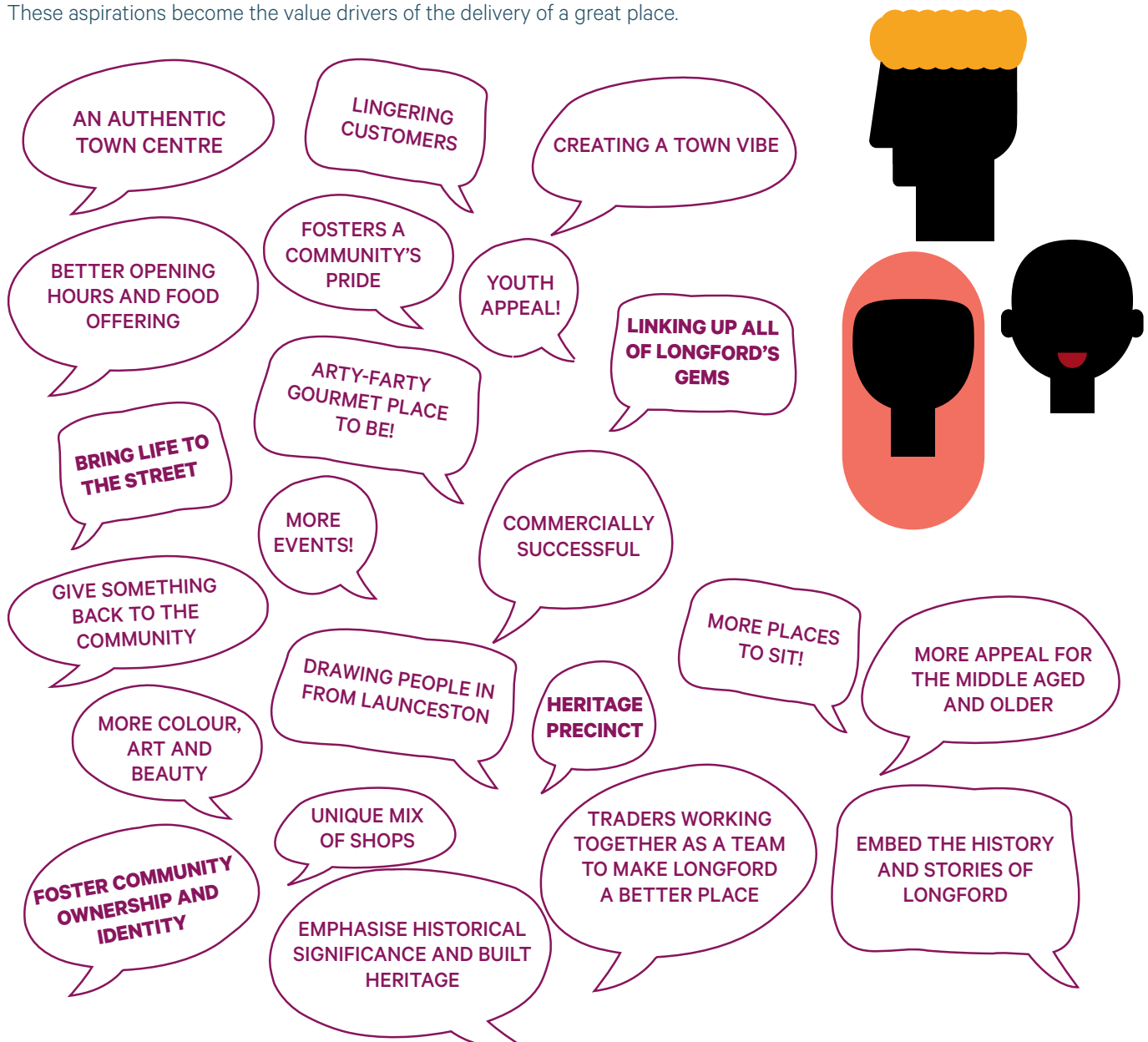
It is intended the plan will be used as a high-level guide to inform on the ground works, events, and any activity relating to the reinvigoration of Longford.

PART 1: WORKSHOP SUMMARY

This section provides a snapshot of the key findings from the Placemaking Workshops. They represent the thoughts, aspirations and ideas generated by the project team and have been used to assist in the development of **Part 2: The Vision** and **Part 3: Place Activations**.

1.1 Aspirations for Longford

These aspirations become the value drivers of the delivery of a great place.



1.2 Longford's Identity

These words and phrases become a source of inspiration for the design, delivery and marketing of this special place.



1.3 Personality Exercise

The personality traits and values set the tone, positioning and overall experience of the centre in the future.

Longford will become:

Proud cheerful, beautiful, colourful

Energetic youthful, fun (Wow!)

Eccentric unique, individual, quirky, different, (Woof Woof!)

Involved dynamic, connected, interesting

Excited manic, busy

These values become the key drivers of the place experience. They should inform the future branding, signage and marketing of the place identity.

1.4 Top Opportunities and Challenges

These opportunities and challenges provide hints for potential changes.

OPPORTUNITIES

Reinvigorating and beautifying the town centre:

adding street trees, showcasing heritage, displaying art, creating a place loved by locals and tourists alike, activating the street, supporting successful food and beverage, and boutique operators.

Strengthening and diversifying trade: creating a point of difference, supporting local retailers, vendors, artists, artisans and quirky enterprises.

New food experiences: providing casual and a refined mix of fresh, fast, healthy, local, easily accessible, quality food and excellent coffee from morning to night.

Collaborating: tapping into community networks, farmers and market organisations, and sporting clubs. Partnering Council and the community with retailers, local operators, businesses, artists, artisans, historians, and tourism boards.

Events: Increasing the weekly, monthly, seasonal and annual events such as markets, festivals, and races. Have a big event.

Improving the pedestrian experience: Connecting open spaces, increasing access to the river, and making the main street more appealing for foot traffic. Beautifying footpath, amenities, showcasing history, improving signage.

Drawing in visitors from Launceston: capitalising on Longford's proximity to Launceston, the airport, tourist routes, and position in the region. Better utilising existing sights and attractions to draw in weekenders and day trippers based in Launceston.

Embracing Longford's history: promoting and showcasing existing colonial and recent historical elements and incorporating these with the local palette to reaffirm Longford's identity.

CURRENT ISSUES

A fragmented main street: the town is lacking a heart, the commercial centre is split and the original town centre is in decline.

Launceston draws trade: locals are drawn to Launceston to spend their money and leisure time. Longford's leakage to Launceston needs to be blocked

Staying the course of decisions made: a perception that council is unable to commit and deliver on decisions.

Hours of opening: many businesses are closed evening and night, in particular there are few eating options open at this time, which is disappointing for locals and hinders tourism trade. A need for consistent hours.

Keeping relevance for younger generations: the perception of Longford as boring and lacking energy. A need for the place to be engaging for youth.

Communication between council and businesses: council and businesses based in the town centre need to collaborate to deliver on common goals for the benefit of the entire town.

Apathy: a number of community members feel a sense of hopelessness about the state of the town that they love. Rebuilding a sense of community pride is vital.

1.5 Ten Great Things - that make Longford special in the future:



1. Visit the incredible World Heritage listed Woolmers and Brickendon; the big ticket items on the outskirts of Longford are these existing gems, revealing a fascinating story locals are proud to share. Visitors are charmed by the genuine experience.

2. Meet friends for coffee, breakfast or lunch; the local roastery is rumoured to have the best coffee in Tasmania since an award winning barista moved to town. In the Heritage Precinct tables and chairs sprawl onto the footpath to make the most of the sunshine, this is the best place to sample delicious artisan foods or simple fresh eats.

3. Visit the motoring museum; Longford's motoring history has never been so accessible and appealing since the recent motor museum opened. Rev-heads and tourists alike pour over the stunning machines on display and become immersed in the stories of crashes, characters, and victories during Longford's Grand Prix and racing glory days.

4. See great local artwork; changing gallery window displays, revolving exhibitions and occasional cool arty pop-up stalls have become a feature of the heritage precinct that is becoming well known in Tasmania's art scene.

5. Take the heritage walk; in the Heritage Precinct and along the main street significant colonial buildings feature speakerboxes revealing a unique story at the push of a button. Along the way, murals, art and flowering rose bushes adorn the shady tree-lined streets.

6. Enjoy a day out at the weekend markets selling everything from pies to pottery

7. Cycle, walk, or kayak along the river from Mill Dam to Longford, or out Woolmers Estate

8. See live music each weekend in the local bar

9. Visit the beautiful open gardens around town

10. Enjoy a fine dining experience in one of Longford's beautiful colonial buildings



TOP 5



PART 2: PLACE VISION

The draft Place Vision, developed by Village Well in response to the workshop and place context research, captures what the place will mean to the broader community and how it will be experienced in terms of public spaces and related commercial and community activities.

2.1 Place Vision

LONGFORD

‘Connecting our vibrant community and celebrating the gems of our history’

Longford has reawakened, reconnected and rediscovered itself, and outsiders have taken notice. Local pride, a sense of belonging, and strengthened connections are seen physically through artwork, murals, a history embraced, and the original town centre has been reclaimed. ‘The Precinct’ is a new social destination deeply connected to its community. Al fresco dining spills from its restaurants and cafes serving fresh food, while galleries regularly buzz with new exhibition openings. Active day and night and throughout the year, events such as markets, festivals and music programs keep the Precinct and the town energised.

Turning toward the river, the town has a new area for play, integrating the town’s outlying gems into a single experience. Celebrating the convict, colonial, and motor racing heritage with contemporary culture and people, the retelling of the story of Longford has produced a newfound sense of local ownership and interaction. Apart from having excellent things to do, see, and eat, it is the combined experience overall that make Longford a memorable, cherished destination.

2.2 Guiding Place Principles

The Guiding Principles support the aspirational Place Vision, capturing the core values from the vision workshop. The Principles will help to steer decision making and focus placemaking efforts.



ACTIVE DAY AND NIGHT

The newly invigorated town centre provides a platform for music, art and activities, all which feature in a continually evolving program of events. New traders in the Heritage Precinct are selling locally produced food, antiques, art, local products, and the best coffee in Tasmania, day and night.



FOSTERING COMMUNITY PRIDE

Carrying the Longford story into the public arena, beautifying the town centre with art and softening the streetscape with greenery. Regular community-run events, murals, art galleries, decorations, and small details speak of the Longford story. Reinvigorated, beautified, activated Longford is a diverse, welcoming place embedded with identity locals are proud to own.



DIVERSITY

Longford's success lies in delivering diversity - a diversity of things to do, foods to eat, places to sit, people to watch, attractions to enjoy. The streetscape is various, broken up by trees, colour and public artwork. A range of events features festivals, markets, music, and fresh local produce is available through the changing seasons. Locals and visitors know there is something for everyone in Longford.



CONNECTED

A deeper connection to place for locals, allowing visitors to connect with an authentic local way of life, and bringing together all that Longford has to offer into a single experience is crucial. Shade trees, places to sit and a more pleasurable pedestrian environment connect the town's elements. Local context is conveyed through signage, branding and art. New walking and cycling tracks connect the town with its outer gems - Brickendon, Woolmers, and the river.

PART 3: PLACE ACTIVATIONS



The following section provides detailed descriptions of the key place experiences and associated attributes and activities that were developed in the workshop. Three broad themes, Reposition, Reconnect, and Refresh, help to establish a new direction for Longford. The recommendations are divided into short, medium and long term initiatives, while some are highlighted as priority activations for their potential impact.



- REPOSITION -

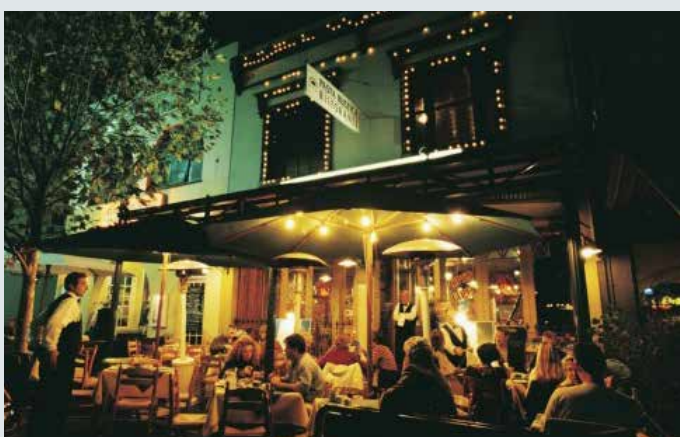
THE HERITAGE PRECINCT

New Heritage Precinct: Original Town Centre

The unique point of difference in the repositioning of Longford is emphasising Longford itself; a history-laden, artistic, country place to meet, shop, discover and entertain. Rediscovering its village roots,

Longford has revived the street for people, becoming a dynamic pedestrian-friendly town. Anchored by the colonial buildings surrounding heritage corner, which has become a vibrant retail hub, 'The Precinct' has become an active day and evening social destination for quality food, art and culture. The main street is now a welcoming strip for the foot traffic of shoppers, and the story of Longford is revealed along the way.





Short Term Activations - 0 to 12 months

- Utilise empty shop windows as temporary, revolving art galleries, showcasing local artwork for free.
- Commission a series of murals on blank walls between Union St. and High St. ***PRIORITY PROJECT*** Priority Murals should include on the side of the old Brown's Store in Wellington St, and Park Side Antiques on Archer St.
- Invite young, local artists to create permanent Murals. Themes could include the infamous Lex Davison crash through the pub, a portrait of the late Rocky Tresise, and a series of quirky portraits of Longford's infamous characters and stories. Work with local historians to create a list of key people in Longford's history as inspirations for the murals.
- Additionally, dedicate some walls for annually changing murals, inviting Tasmania's best visual artists to showcase their work. Collaborate with artist bodies, UTAS Centre for the Arts, the City of Launceston team involved in the traffic light box art program, and curators of Brave Art Gallery.
- Organise a community blitz to beautify the street, involving the community, artists, and youth; essentially harnessing community skill, passion, talent, and a sense of ownership (see: <http://www.communityblitz.org.au/>).
- Further beautify the main street with hanging planter baskets, large potted plants, flower boxes and wheel barrows filled with planted flowers. Collaborate with local businesses for ongoing care.
- Collaborate with TasTafe and offer hospitality students free temporary food and beverage retail space in the Precinct.
- Partner with landlords and use vacant shops for temporary pop-up stores for newcomers with little initial capital.
- Install awnings that respect heritage character.
- Build a community long table in Christ Church gardens.
- Provide dog's water bowls and tie up posts in front of cafes, install doggie bag dispensers around town, create an off the leash area in the village green (Woof Woof!).

Medium Term Activations - 1 to 2 years

- Improve the food offering in the town centre by working with existing traders and incentivising new traders through competitive grant schemes, and free training on hospitality and visual merchandising. Investigate state grants, tourism funds and other grant award options. Emphasis should be on delivering excellent food and beverage, al fresco dining, increasing opening hours into the night, and local produce. ***PRIORITY PROJECT***

Medium Term Activations cont...

- Plant deciduous street trees, shading the footpath in summer and letting the sun through in winter. *PRIORITY PROJECT*
- Mobilise the main street activation team to network with existing and potential future retailers to achieve a retail experience consistent with the vision.
- Conduct visual merchandising workshops involving council, traders, and landlords.
- Investigate methods for increasing the variety of accommodation options, including budget and backpacker accommodation.
- Dedicate floor space in the Precinct for art galleries.
- Convert section of the village green into Tasmania's first 'all-abilities' park and playground.
- Additional retail options to introduce include: home wares store, collectors emporium, yoga studio, wine bar, gourmet butcher, trendy cafés, an excellent patisserie, deli, fresh fruit and veg retailer, clothing and craft shops.



Long Term Activations 2 to 4 years

- Implement a traffic management plan that includes traffic calming measures along the main street to improve the overall pedestrian experience. Street tree planting, changes to on-street parking and a network of pedestrian crossings and bicycle lanes, plus cycle-friendly infrastructure should be adopted. *PRIORITY PROJECT*
- Investigate creating a new motor racing museum hosted in multiple venues walking distance apart. It is recommended the museum is integrated into the existing urban fabric in the centre of town, adding to the pedestrian experience. Potential venues include the vacant Parkside Antiques, or next to the original Brown's Store and other vacant buildings nearby. Contact the national Automobile Museum of Tasmania to offer an alternative location for their museum. Source historically significant display cars from existing owners by collaborating with motor enthusiast clubs and locals, for example Wayne Double, owner of a 1962 Bruno Carosi replica Jaguar. Seek sponsorship from prominent motoring enthusiasts such as Lindsay Fox. Ensure interior and exterior of the museum compliments the heritage palette of Longford. *PRIORITY PROJECT*



Street trees: providing shade,
softening the street and
calming traffic

Art exhibition
openings and
reasons to linger

Murals and public artwork
beautify and intrigue

Outdoor dining



Longford's Heritage Corner reimagined with an emphasised public realm

New seating near
points of interest

Cycling signage
and bicycle lanes

Pedestrian
crossings

- RECONNECT -

RECONNECTING LONGFORD

Creating a unified experience: Stringing together Longford's gems





Reinvigorated Longford expresses an underlying sense of connection. Its history is exhibited in the public arena, while visible artwork and greenery convey contemporary culture and civic pride. The town is reconnected to the river, a new destination for leisure and play. The World Heritage and colonial elements have an improved relationship with Longford, yet it's the passage through the town that inspires wonderment; a journey of discovery, as fascinating stories are revealed on the way. This is a connected place. A place where locals are proud to linger, and visitors relish in the authentic village atmosphere.




Short Term Activations - 0 to 12 months

- Build and manage a 'place experience hub' in the Heritage Precinct, promoting the town, events, and the best of its food and activities. This includes providing a community noticeboard, 'what's on' signage, and a place to meet and discuss the latest and greatest in Longford - connecting the town's community, and providing information to locals and visitors.
- Install more formal and informal seating along the main street in shaded and partially shaded spots.
- Invite food van operators to utilise Mill Dam and the Village Green on hot and sunny days.

Medium Term Activations - 1 to 2 years

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the river from the town, particularly on Lyttleton and Archer streets. Provide wayfinding maps with destination routes on interpretive signage. 
- Tap into the adventure tourism market and investigate options for kayak and canoe hire for day use between Mill Dam, Longford and Woolmers. The caravan park and Woolmers could partner, coordinating the hire, storage and pickup of kayakers/kayaks. 
- Connect to Launceston's tourism channels including kayaking, cycling and outdoor clubs and retailers.
- Create a heritage walk around town using wayfinding and utilising existing historical tourist information (see examples next page). 
- Install "U-Turn Round" (pictured next page) interpretation audio boxes next to historically significant buildings around town, each revealing a colourful story or significant event.
- Employ a branding agent to help build a cohesive identity for around town and a strengthened online presence.
- Install newly branded welcoming signage upon entry to Longford. New branding direction should also inform aesthetic of wayfinding signage. 
- Construct bicycle lanes to encourage cycling through the town centre and improving Longford's image as a weekend destination for cyclists.
- Investigate initiating affordable bicycle hire outlets - backpacker accommodation could be a source.
- Improve the permeability of Christ Church gardens by removing small sections of the hedge along Wellington St., and add seating under existing trees closer to the street.
- Construct a pedestrian crossing between the Village Green and Christ Church gardens. Investigate other areas where crossings will improve Longford's internal connectivity.

Long Term Activations - 2 to 4 years

- Create new backcountry walking, cycling and horse riding tracks along the river, to better connect the town with its outer gems - Brickendon, Woolmers, Mill Dam and the river. 





Examples of "U-Turn Round" audio devices embedded into sculptures



- REFRESH -

EVENTS

Active, Authentic, Inclusive: A place for everyone

Longford has transitioned into an active town. Large annual and seasonal events draw in Tasmanian and interstate visitors, while regular and weekly events draw in locals and northern Tasmanians from Launceston and neighbouring towns. Genuine, interesting and fun, Longford's events have become a key feature of its identity - charming and vibrant - providing locals and visitors alike with a variety of things to see and do. Whether you are a motoring enthusiast, artist, cyclist, foodie, tourist, history buff, weekender, or the outdoorsy type - there's something for everyone in Longford!

“Events and programming are the glue that makes a place great and come alive.”





Regular Events

★ PRIORITY PROJECT ★

- Develop a weekly Saturday farmers and antiques market, anchored around fresh, quality food and beverage, locally produced goods and kooky collectables. The Village Green and spots around heritage corner are suggested venues.
- Foster a live music scene, encouraging hotels to develop a weekly live music program. Learn from the Bridge Hotel, Castlemaine, Vic.
- Investigate weekly or monthly music performances in Christ Church using the antique organ as anchor for the regular event. Invite well established bands, including big acts, from a range of genres to play their music with a different take utilising the organ's distinctive sound. Collaborate with the UTAS Conservatorium of Music, The Republic Bar in Hobart, MONA and other organisations that form a crux in the Tasmanian live music scene to brand and build momentum around the event. Encourage talented local musicians to be involved and network.
- Encourage the expansion of ghost tours, which include evening meals at new restaurants.
- Investigate running regular genealogy and history classes at the library.

Seasonal Events

- Develop a program of seasonal food festivals that showcase the best regional and Northern Tasmanian produce throughout the year. Premium meats, wine, seasonal vegetables including potato varieties, dairy products, honey, abalone and rock lobster are some fresh foods that could serve as anchors.
- Host a food, wine and cheese festival over the tourist period, featuring Tasmania's best cheeses and liquors.

Annual Events

- Expand the existing Festival of Roses and incorporate it into the Longford township, featuring additional events and flower displays in the town centre and surrounds. ★ PRIORITY PROJECT ★
- Encourage the expansion of the Longford Revival motor show, with the aim to make it one of Australia's best motoring festivals. Investigate extending the event over a week, including closing off the main street for a revolving display of show vehicles leading up to the racing events on the weekend. Tastefully integrate the festival into the town centre, capitalising on the town's rejuvenated amenity, make the Motoring Museum the central hub of the event.
- Develop a weekend annual Colonial History Festival in the summer period. Ideas and themes include: closing the main street for market stalls; excellent food including colonial foods and cooking workshops; hosting a working blacksmith; pop-up actors in colonial dress including bushrangers, convicts, statesmen, and pioneering women that recite events and act out scenes in the street; evening projections of stories and convict characters featured on buildings; a series of Tasmanian Indigenous and colonial themed films screened in the Village Green; horse and cart tours; and energetic, traditional live music. (See examples of festivals in small heritage towns, e.g. SA History Festival, Hahndorf SA; Daylesford VIC; Mildura River Rockfest, VIC)
- Investigate a potential water sports festival and/or swimming and kayak race utilising a section of the river between Woolmers and Mill Dam.
- Collaborate with artist bodies and UTAS to host an annual art competition featuring Tasmania's finest up and coming artists.



PART 4: PLACE MANAGEMENT

Central to the progress and continued momentum of the project to achieve the Place Vision is the mobilisation of the Main Street Activation Team

4.1 Main Street Activation Team

The purpose of the Main Street Activation Team is to be the champion for change, ensuring the place experience of Longford reflects the vision and place story, and to consolidate the events management environment. This also includes actively developing relationships with internal and external groups to enhance the Longford experience and aesthetic. It is imperative that this leadership group be established and given the support and assistance to deliver the initiatives of the Place Activation Plan working with Council and other supporters and enablers of the plan.

Place Management Roles and Responsibilities



Longford Main Street Activation Team Quick Wins Implementation Roadmap

Key actions	Time	Cost estimate \$	Longford Main Street Activation Team Member	Details
Events: Community Main Street Makeover (beautifying, painting, cleaning, pop-ups, planting flowers, makeover shopfronts and empty shops)	One weekend - during the 2015-2016 Summer	5,000	James Cornes	
			Sue Anne Cornes	
			Julie Iles	
			Linus Grant	
			Karen Bell	
Heritage: heritage signage and wayfinding, heritage walk, historical information and gathering material for stories.	12 months - start Jan 2016	10,000+	Dee Alty	
			Margaret Stebbings	
			Terry Goldsworthy	
Arts: Local artist competition, public art gallery, exhibitions, artist workshops, artisan/ makers workshops, art in vacant shops, murals.	12 months - two years, start Jan 2016	30,000 - 50,000 +	Robert Henley	
			Annabelle Sandes	
			Philip Wolfhagen	To be invited
			David Lake	To be invited
			Michael McWilliams	To be invited

NB. The authors acknowledge funding has not yet been secured to enable the full implementation of the quick win implementation road map. Until the Activation Team can secure funding from Council and/or external funding sources and/or the private sector, the Activation Plan Champion will work with the Activation Team to implement initiatives achievable without cash contributions.

The Activation Plan is a working document and the AP team, with the endorsement of the AP Champion, can choose to develop implementation plans for any of the initiatives in the Place Activations (pages 12-26) at any time, and seek the resources required to implement the initiative(s)





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