

STAGE 6: URBAN PLACES

Case study: Urban dynamics in Central Maitland

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The following case study of Central Maitland has been designed for this syllabus dot point in the Urban Places topic of HSC Geography:

- a case study showing one of the urban dynamics listed above, operating in a country town or suburb.

My students spend four to five lessons in class learning about **urban renewal** in the **country township of Central Maitland**, before conducting fieldwork around the town. Their final HSC course assessment task then involves completing a stimulus booklet with observations and photographs and bringing this into class to write an extended response to the question: **“Analyse how ONE urban dynamic of change operates in a country town or suburb”**. We spend a lot of time in class unpacking the implications across the three categories of social, economic and environmental through watching short clips and reading media reports (links are included in each section below). If you would like a copy of the assessment task or other resources on this topic, I am happy to assist on the email address provided in this article.

Overview and spatial dimensions of Central Maitland

The country township of Central Maitland, located in the Hunter Valley region of NSW, is approximately 167km north of Sydney. The Wonnarua people are the traditional land owners of the Maitland area and their lands extend throughout the Hunter Valley. Central Maitland is one of the Hunter's fastest growing towns, with 2400 residents in 2018. The area offers a semi-rural lifestyle with an abundance of small acreage lots and hobby farms flanked by period homes and the Hunter River. Like many country towns, the main street of Central Maitland was in long term urban decay from the 1980's up until 2014 as younger shoppers chose larger retail complexes such as Stockland Greenhills. Urban



Maitland satellite image. Source Google Earth Screen capture

renewal programs in the last five years have seen the area become more popular with younger families.

In Central Maitland, four key urban renewal projects have recently occurred:

1. Opening of The Levee retail area as a shared pedestrian and vehicle zone
2. Construction of the Riverlink building
3. Cultural renewal through new modern dining and festivals
4. Riverside Plaza renewal

Each section starts with a dot point summary of the urban renewal program. Secondly, there are websites students access in class to complete the implications activity.

The Levee Shared Pedestrian Zone



Levee Central Maitland . Source: <https://www.theleveemaitland.com.au/information/the-shared-zone/>

1. Opening of The Levee retail area as a shared pedestrian and vehicle zone

- In October 2015, stage one of the Central Maitland renewal plan was completed when shopping strip “The Levee” in High Street was opened to traffic at a cost of \$9 million, funded by the *NSW Government Restart NSW Resources for Regions* program.
- The Levee has become a shared pedestrian and vehicle zone, with previously decaying pavement removed and new modern pavement and pedestrian and vehicle tracks installed.
- *Comment from Maitland mayor Peter Blackmore:* “The Levee is an important part of the revitalisation of Central Maitland and the return of traffic through the precinct will support new opportunities for retail, entertainment, leisure and the night-time economy.”
- This will be the first time the public will be able to drive vehicles through this section of High Street since it was closed in 1988 for the development of the previous “Heritage Mall”.
- The one-way, westbound road runs between Bourke and Elgin streets and the speed limit is 10km/h.

Class discussion

What are the implications (impacts) of the shared pedestrian zone at The Levee?

1. Economic
2. Social
3. Environmental

Mapping

Identify the location of the Levee Retail area on the satellite image

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k75ImjKmiC4>

<https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/3425736/the-levee-opens-to-traffic-photos-video/>

<https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/4830379/levee-is-states-no1/>

Riverlink building



Source: Maitland Mercury – <https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/5356660/the-riverlink-building-has-officially-opened-at-maitland/>

2. Construction of the Riverlink building

Designed by CHROFI architectural Firm – John **Choi**, Tai **Ropiha** and Steven **Fighera**.

- Stage two of the Central Maitland urban renewal plan was completed in April 2018. It includes the construction of the new Riverlink Building which will connect High Street to the banks of the Hunter River. This replaces three commercial buildings that were in a state of decay.
- Stage two has also involved the creation of a public open space, new amenities, a cafe, and footpath and cycleway upgrades along the Riverside Walk as well as the planting of native trees to provide shade.
- Work on the Riverlink Building, a key part of the \$9.92m second component of The Levee Development, commenced on Monday 24 October 2016. The project costs are being met through grant funding from the *NSW Government Restart NSW Resources for Regions* program.

Class discussion

What are the implications (impacts) of the Riverlink building

1. Economic
2. Social
3. Environmental

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fK2FV47EeaE

<https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/5970568/more-awards-for-maitland-riverlink-building/>

<https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/5565083/local-flavours-in-new-riverlink-restaurant-space/>

Mapping

Identify the location of the Riverlink building on the satellite image

Riverlights Festival



Source: Maitland Mercury – <https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/5697034/riverlights-festival-lands-this-weekend/>

3. Cultural renewal in Central Maitland

Historically, Central Maitland shops and events primarily catered for Caucasian European culture with a focus on being a “Heritage Mall” that celebrated European settlement of the Maitland area. To cater for the changing demographics and lifestyles of contemporary society, Central Maitland has introduced a number of new cultural initiatives that point to a more progressive future including:

- Encouraging more culturally diverse restaurants such as “Beud” that opened in 2017 and brings a new form of distinctive Korean and Japanese cuisine to Central Maitland.
- New modern cafes such as Xtraction Espresso have opened in Central Maitland. This particular café sells vegan food and new forms of coffee to attract younger customers to the retail precinct.
- Holding produce markets twice a month in The Levee that offers fresh seasonal fruit and vegetable produce as well as local meats, eggs, organic bread and honey.
- Introducing new annual festivals, including The Riverlights Multicultural Festival, with 11,000 people attending in 2018 to see local representatives from 20 different countries demonstrate their food and artistic culture such as a dance troupe from South Sudan. Additionally, the “Aroma Coffee & Chocolate Festival” had more than 10,000 people enjoy coffee from local roasters and a range of chocolates, local wine from the Hunter Region and street food. The annual “Taste Festival” is also attracting new customers to Central Maitland. For example, part of the 2017 Taste festival was the “Pumpkin Precinct”, where people could buy fresh locally-grown pumpkins and learn new ways to prepare the produce.
- Another significant cultural change was the gentrification** of the former Empire Hotel to now become the “Pourhouse”, which offers unique craft beers. This has attracted a younger and higher socioeconomic demographic to Central Maitland.

** Gentrification is a process of renovation of deteriorated urban neighbourhoods by means of the influx of more affluent residents.

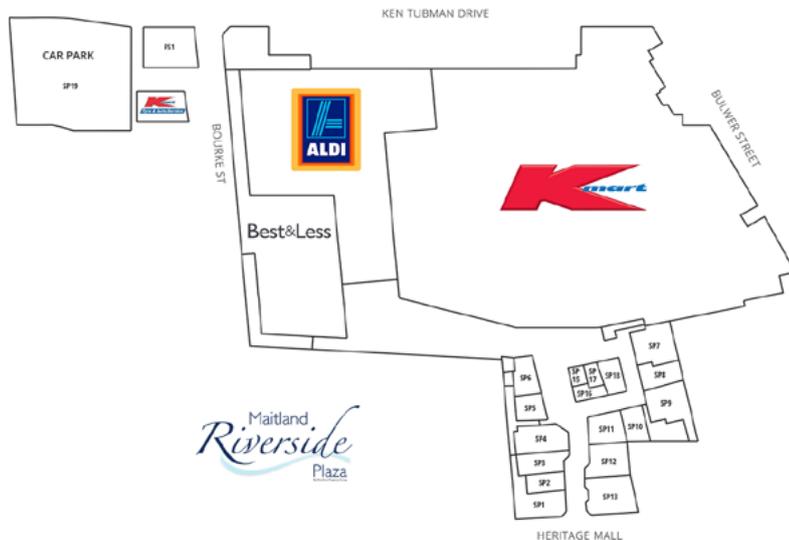
Class discussion

What are the implications (impacts) of Central Maitland’s cultural renewal?

1. Economic
2. Social
3. Environmental

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXFgysFmtV4>
<https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/5700370/thousands-visit-riverlights-multicultural-festival-photos/>
<https://www.maitlandriverlights.com.au/>
<https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/4392954/now-you-can-add-korea-to-the-levee-food-scene/>

Riverside Plaza layout & Aldi at Riverside Plaza



Source: Panthera Group – <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bfb391f0dbda3e7f01954a7/t/5c52ac0070a6ada661478218/1548921860117/MRP+Availabl+e+Tenancies++290119.pdf> Source: Aldi at Riverside Plaza. Source: Maitland Riverside Plaza. – <https://www.maitlandriversideplaza.com/aldi>

4. Renewal of Riverside Plaza Shopping Centre

- Formerly known as the Hunter Mall, the new Riverside Plaza in Central Maitland is aiming to renew through new modern retailers and design features that attract families to the area.
- The centre has undertaken an \$8 million upgrade to shops and internal finishes designed to encourage shoppers back to Central Maitland.
- The floor space of some shops will be reshaped in key areas to improve the flow of the centre and allow for four new casual mall leasing areas (seen in pink on the diagram below).
- Major retailers who have entered into long term leases at Riverside Plaza include Aldi, Kmart, Best and Less and Super Cheap Auto. 21 smaller speciality retailers are at the centre, including “Toto Sushi”, that also forms part of the cultural renewal of Central Maitland.

Class discussion

What are the implications (impacts) of Riverside Plaza’s renewal?

1. Economic
2. Social
3. Environmental

Mapping

Identify the location of the Riverside Plaza on the satellite image

<https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/5673914/foodies-delight-coming-to-the-plaza/>
<https://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/4783833/sneak-peek-at-maitlands-new-aldi-photos-video/>
<https://www.hospitalitymagazine.com.au/wok-this-way-set-to-open-in-maitland/>

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The program includes Shark-tank style presentations, interactive cultural activities and knowledge sharing, mini workshops, Q&A sessions and a trashion parade!

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GEOGRAPHY SKILLS WORKSHOP

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Wednesday 18 September – Holiday Inn, 355 Hume Hwy, Warwick Farm

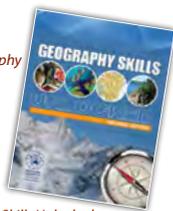
Time: 8.30am registration, 9.00am – 3.30pm

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Presenters

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- Ms Sharon McLean, Vice President, GTA NSW^{*}
* Sharon is an experienced classroom teacher, with a thorough understanding of the skills students are expected to demonstrate and the pedagogies required to teach them effectively.



Cost

GTA NSW members \$250 & Non-members \$280

Registration cost includes a complimentary copy of *Geography Skills Unlocked*.

Registration

Online workshop registration opening soon

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Find out about the AGTA Geography Unlocked series – www.agta.asn.au/Products



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A flexible anywhere, any time online learning opportunity through Open Learning

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The purpose of the course is to build teachers' understanding of these core concepts. By completing the learning activities participants will demonstrate their capacity to use three of the concepts – place, space and environment – to create engaging Geography lessons.

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The Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA) has published the book with Dr Grant Kleeman, one of Australia's leading Geography educators, acting as coordinating author.

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Geography Fieldwork Unlocked features 34 inquiry-based fieldwork activities developed by a team of experienced Geography educators. Section 1 of the book introduces the reader to inquiry-based fieldwork. It also provides guidance in developing fieldwork action plans, research methodologies, and data collection tools and approaches. It also provides guidance on the presentation and communication of fieldwork findings.

Section 2 features nine fieldwork activities for primary students (Years F/K–6). Each of these activities has been designed to develop students' conceptual understanding and the skills associated with inquiry-based learning.

Section 3 showcases 25 fieldwork activities aligned to the topics studied by students in Years 7–10.

Each fieldwork activity is framed by one or more inquiry questions. They also feature: a statement of expected learning; a list of the equipment needed to successfully complete each fieldwork activity; a short introduction; background information that contextualises student learning; pre-fieldwork activities; and detailed step-by-step instructions on how to complete each fieldwork task.