Library and Museum Network Supporting Plan Summary

2025–2035

Community Infrastructure Strategy

The Community Infrastructure Strategy (CIS) provides a pragmatic, feasible, achievable roadmap for the equitable long-term provision (20 years) of community infrastructure over which council has primary responsibility, plays a role in delivering, or seeks to advocate for on behalf of the community.
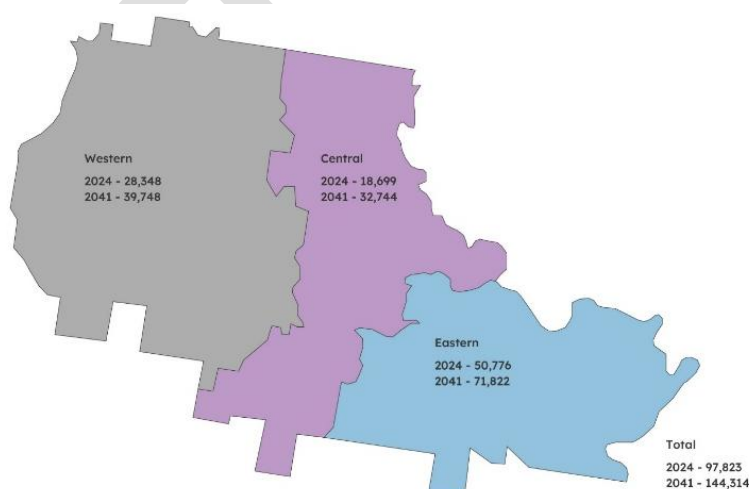
The CIS guides a holistic, integrated and evidence-based approach to the prioritisation, planning, design and provision of community infrastructure to meet the changing needs of a growing population efficiently, effectively and responsibly, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The five strategic priorities from the CIS are community identity, thriving communities, partnerships, shaping a shared future and delivering quality services.

Planning precincts

To plan and manage future growth within the city, three distinct local planning precincts have been identified and used across all supporting plans. These are the central, eastern and western precincts.

The local precinct approach will be guided by walkable neighbourhood principles where our residents can access most of their daily needs locally, without using a car. This approach aims to gradually shift away from a continuously expanding urban footprint to a focus on revitalising our existing centres and neighbourhoods.

Western
2024 - 28,348
2041 - 39,748

Central
2024 - 18,699
2041 - 32,744

Eastern
2024 - 50,776
2041 - 71,822

Total
2024 - 97,823
2041 - 144,314

Maitland population profile

PLANNING PRECINCT	2024	2041	DIFFERENCE	COMPOUNDING ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
Central	18,699	32,744	14,045	3.4%
Eastern	50,776	71,822	21,046	2.1%
Western	28,348	39,748	11,400	2.0%
TOTAL	97,823	144,314	46,491	2.3%

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Provisioning hierarchy

Hierarchy based planning guides where and what type and scale of community infrastructure is most needed. The hierarchy includes Local, District, Citywide and Regional. It is used alongside industry standards and guidelines, as well as service catchment and demand analysis.
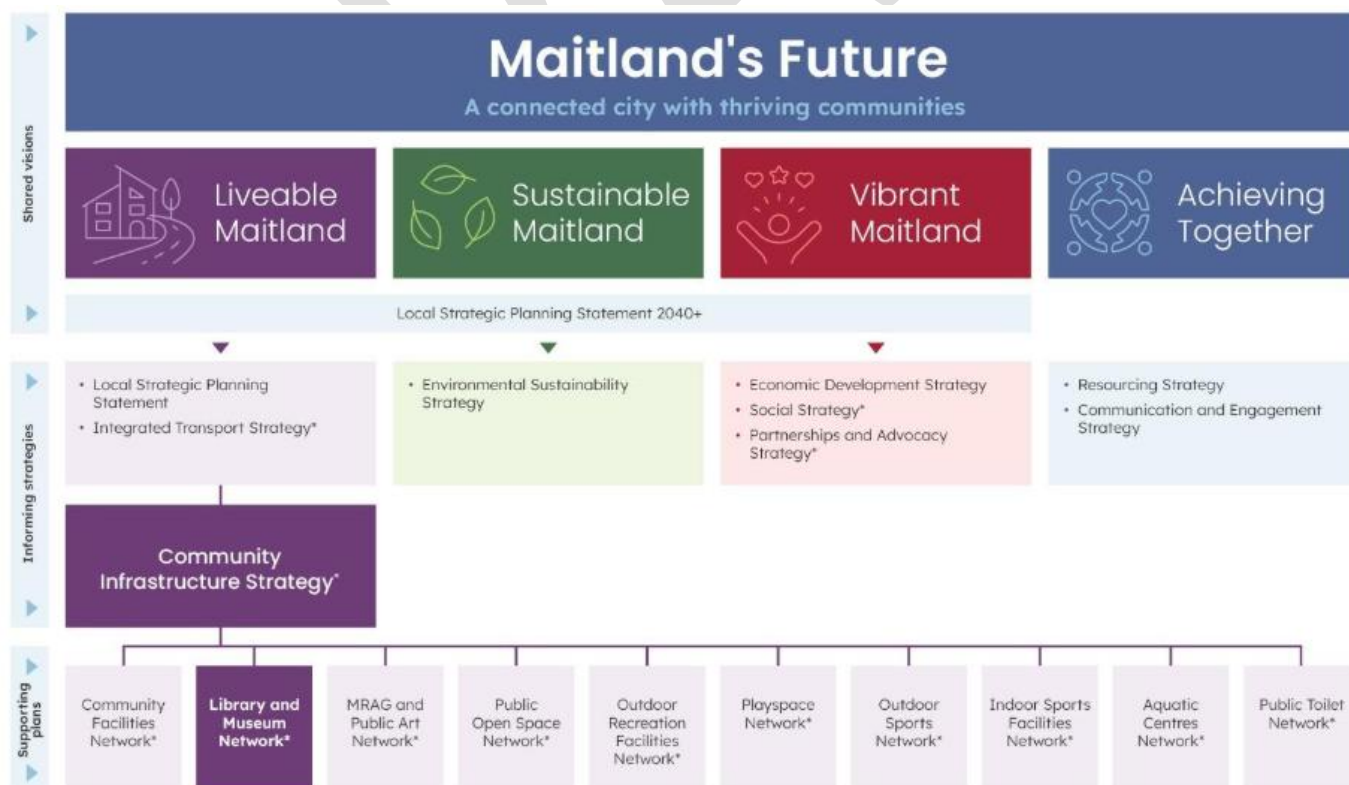
This approach ensures local facilities remain accessible whilst higher order facilities are strategically placed to meet evolving community needs. Most importantly, the hierarchy supports transparent and effective planning and serves our communities by:

- Distributing community infrastructure equitably
- Aligning provision with sound planning principles
- Meeting community expectations and demand
- Aligning current trends and guidelines
- Allowing consolidation and upgrades
- Reducing long-term asset maintenance by addressing oversupply
- Ensuring community infrastructure is sustainable and resilient long-term.

HIERARCHY LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Local	• Located within a 5-15-minute walk of residences
District	• Located within a 3-kilometre radius or a 10-15-minute drive of most residences
Citywide	• Serves the whole Maitland Local Government Area and is a 30-45-minute drive of most residences
Regional	• Key destination spaces that serve our communities and attract visitors from outside the Maitland Local Government Area

Strategic alignment

The Library and Museum Network Supporting Plan underpins Council's Community Infrastructure Strategy. Its relationship within the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework and with Maitland's Future, the Community Strategic Plan, is depicted below.

Library and Museum Network Supporting Plan purpose

To provide an evidence-based approach to planning, prioritising, designing, delivering and managing Maitland City Council's network of libraries and museums to ensure it contributes to our shared vision of a connected city with thriving communities.

Libraries and Museums play an important role in the social fabric of a society. Literacy is a foundation skill used throughout life to allow people to thrive socially, economically and gain access to work. Libraries are one of the key services to provide this. Museums collect, conserve and interpret human history and serve as inclusive spaces for cultural exchange and civic engagement.

Council's role

Council's role is to provide an accessible and inclusive network of library and museum facilities that promotes:

- literacy and learning
- strong social networks and safe places
- digital engagement
- mental wellbeing and longevity
- heritage conservation and preservation.

Current state – where we are now

Council's library and museum network operates within a broader network distributed within and beyond the Maitland LGA.

PLANNING PRECINCT	LIBRARY AND MUSEUM FACILITIES
Central Precinct	• Maitland Library
Eastern Precinct	• East Maitland Library • Thornton Library • Morpeth Museum
Western Precinct	• Rutherford Library

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Maitland City Council currently provides four libraries and one museum for the city's population. The current provision rate for libraries is one library per 23,899 residents, which is consistent to the Hunter-wide provision rate of one library per 23,360 residents. The museum provision rate varies considerably across the region.

Community engagement – what we heard

Council launched its library specific community consultation from 14 February to 31 March 2025 called 'The Future of Maitland Libraries'. This engagement asked the community to share how they currently use the libraries, what's working well, and what they would like to see in libraries in the future.

Some key findings of the community engagement were:

- East Maitland Library was the most visited (61%) with Maitland Library being the second most visited (33%)
- Maitland libraries are valued for
- their accessibility, lifestyle support and sense of community providing a place for learning, relaxation and social connection
- there is strong demand for extended opening hours, expanded programs, digital access and adult leng opportunities
- communication and accessibility remain critical for future growth
- satisfaction is high among users with 87 per cent of users indicating they would recommend Maitland libraries to others.

Between May and July 2025, Council engaged with over 670 community members, generating more than 1,100 contributions across surveys, mapping tools, and face-to-face pop-ups. Key insights included:

- libraries are at capacity. These spaces are valued as hubs for social connection and lifelong learning, but current facilities do not meet demand or need
- libraries provide free and low-cost opportunities for community participation and connection
- local history, heritage and storytelling are important

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Industry standards and trends – what we know

Maitland City Council's future planning for libraries and museums will consider the following guidelines:

- people Places: a guide for public library buildings in NSW
- the draft Cool Places Guidelines

Core library principles remain steady and provide a constant foundation for freedom of information access to all. Libraries are still about literacy, learning, stimulation, creativity and connecting people with each other however, they are also about virtual presence, digital content and specialised spaces. Some key trends insights include:

- **co-location**: larger library buildings co-located with other services create a hub or destination. Libraries are now seen as catalysts for urban regeneration, place making, showcasing technology and providing valuable foot-fall for neighbouring businesses. They are also used as co-working spaces and a sharing approach to life and workplaces
- **print and eBooks**: Print books are still being published, purchased and borrowed with Australians continuing to purchase more print books then eBooks
- **creative spaces**: libraries are including creative spaces within their buildings that include digital playpens, digital sandpits and maker spaces that foster learning, concentration, social interaction and problem-solving
- **information literacy and digital coaching**: this trend will continue in public libraries, particularly when it is important to navigate the overwhelming amount of information now available to community.

Museums in Australia have seen an increased focus on visitor experience and learning as well as public participation and access. Key trends insights include:

- **technology**: digitisation of images and digital integration are becoming increasingly popular
- **public participation**: there is a focus on providing more immersive and interactive experiences
- **accessibility**: museums are increasingly focusing on providing inclusive and accessible spaces and collections, providing experiences for the whole of community.

Future state – where we want to be

The future of libraries in Maitland align closely with the community facilities supporting plan. There is an increasing focus on co-location of community facilities and libraries, providing flexible spaces to meet the changing needs of our community. This includes rooms that can be booked for meetings, activities and events and spaces that can be used for study or work. Libraries are increasingly more than books, they provide an integral space for community connection and socialisation and future facilities need to be designed with this in mind.

When looking at the future of museums in Maitland, there is a focus on heritage conservation and opportunity to provide spaces that can display collections and provide public participation and access.

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Indicative costs and land requirements

Cost estimates, excluding escalation, contained within this supporting plan are based on staff expertise and experience.

> **Key points relating to costs include:**
>
> - estimated investment required over 10+ years: $66,500,000
> - average annual investment required: $ 6,650,000 per year
> - a range of external funding programs provided by NSW and Australian Government agencies are likely to be required.

Funding

Funding for the delivery of future Maitland libraries and museums will include:

- council revenue
- development contributions
- voluntary planning agreements
- Australian Government grants
- NSW Government grants
- sale of surplus council land or assets
- establishment of a Community Infrastructure Reserve Fund.

How we get there

To achieve the planning objectives in the supporting plan, a staged approach will be applied over a 10-year period. An indicative schedule of works for the short (one to four years), medium (five to eight years) and long-term (nine to ten years) will be developed. It is anticipated that a number of actions or activities will be simultaneously undertaken, subject to resourcing.

The planned actions will be published in our Delivery Program and Operational Plan each year. The timeframe of actions being completed will depend on resourcing and funding availability.

Delivering Maitland's Future
A connected city with thriving communities
Delivery Program 2025–2029 | Operational Plan 2025–26

Commence within four years — Short Term
Commence within eight years — Medium Term
Commence within ten years — Long Term

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