

Customer Service
Land, Planning and Building Services Shopfront
GPO Box 158
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Mr Ponton

DA202341703 – Block: 1 and 4 Section: 35 – Woden CIT West Plaza

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal for the West Plaza which will deliver landscaping, modification of the road layout (including a shared zone) and public amenities including street furniture. Unfortunately, this DA is unimaginative and misses opportunities to activate the area. The WVCC opposes the new road that pushes traffic into the town centre by connecting Bradley and Bowes Streets.

The West Plaza should be a green cool park, a destination for events and markets to create activity in the heart of Woden. It should attract people to meet and socialise and catalyse businesses around it and the town square to create community. The site is protected from the winds in the town square and has more sun, and chance of success, than the Boulevard.

The road connection will take a significant part of the space and will cause a safety risk to pedestrians and cyclists. There has never been a connecting road and it will not be missed. It is not required when there are significantly better options for the space.

The CIT provides fantastic opportunities to advance the social, economic, and environmental aspects of the town centre, to create a contemporary urban hub for Canberra's south, a destination where students from across the region want to socialise and recreate. It is exciting that the new CIT will host the music program and arts program.

A multi-purpose arts area between the CIT and the West Plaza would provide a space for students and the local community to enjoy the benefits of music, visual and performing arts, bringing a day and night economy to help people feel safe. Unfortunately, Woden does not have a recreation precinct (outside of the big clubs) where we can have bands and local fun.

While we strongly support the Australian Government's \$10 million Youth Foyer; we do not support its proposed location due to its blank walls that will not foster activity in the heart of Woden.

The Youth Foyer is in the heart of Woden in the shadows of Grand Central Towers, it lacks privacy and comfort for vulnerable students. This DA proposes to put a new connecting road beside the students' accommodation, we were told that the cars would provide the passive surveillance desired at night. Consideration of the needs of the students for comfortable accommodation should have been the priority rather than finding a space that could be filled with a building.

Background

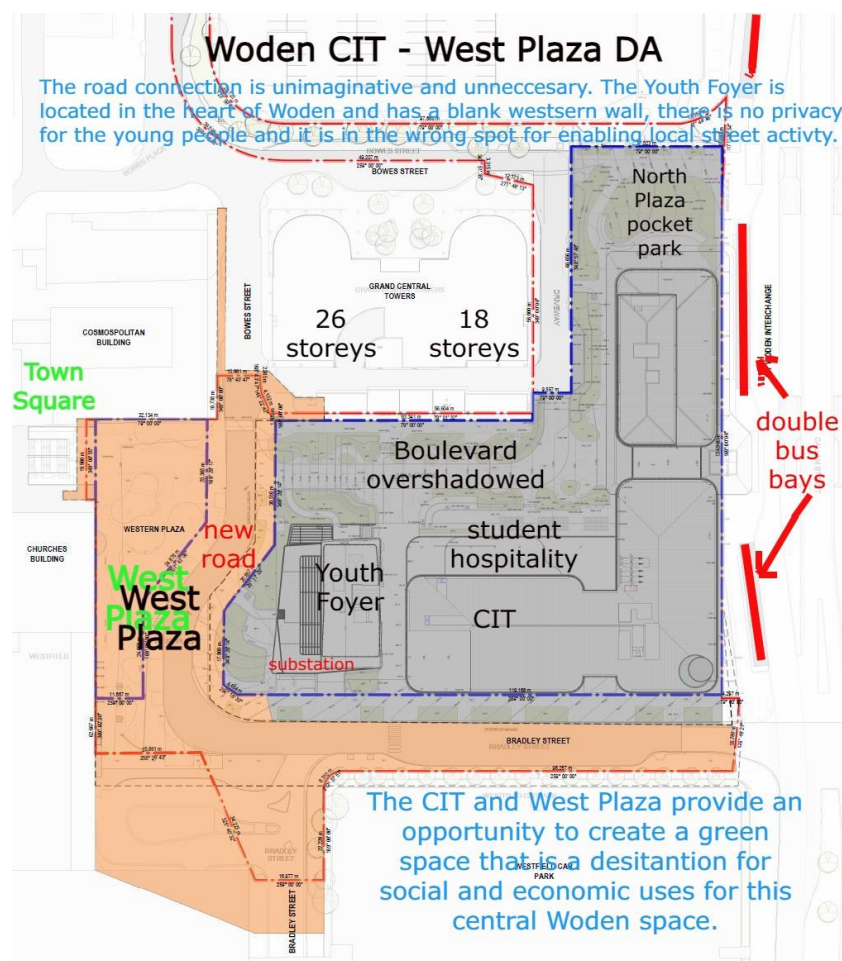
Over the past 15 years the Woden Town Centre has seen the closure of most of its recreation precinct and a lack of activity on its streets. The basketball stadium, bowling greens, tennis courts and YMCA have been replaced with residential towers and the pitch n putt, pool and ice rink are the next to be developed. The CIT was demolished, and we have never had an arts centre. People feel unsafe walking through the quiet core of Woden due to the lack of activity.

Development and population growth is well underway in the town centre. With around 30 towers built or earmarked to date. To create a livable, walkable urban hub, we need active places to walk to and therefore reduce our need for cars.

While the Government says Woden is getting a new Emergency building at the Canberra Hospital (servicing southeast NSW) and light rail, we also need social infrastructure to encourage people to meet and socialise.

Problem statement

- lack of active public spaces and community facilities in the core of Woden for students and the community to build relationships through meeting to socialise and be active
- lack of an ambitious vision and planning to support small businesses to set up hospitality and create a great destination around the West Plaza and Town Square
- high car dependency to access social, cultural, and recreational opportunities in other districts
- a lot of concrete leading to the perception of a concrete jungle.



The student hospitality is in the shadows of Grand Central Towers for most of the year and only open during the CIT term. It is closed for around three months, primarily over the summer when there is sun. People will move through the Boulevard and there is little hope of creating a destination and an attractive day and night economy at all times of the year. The planning is incredibly poor.

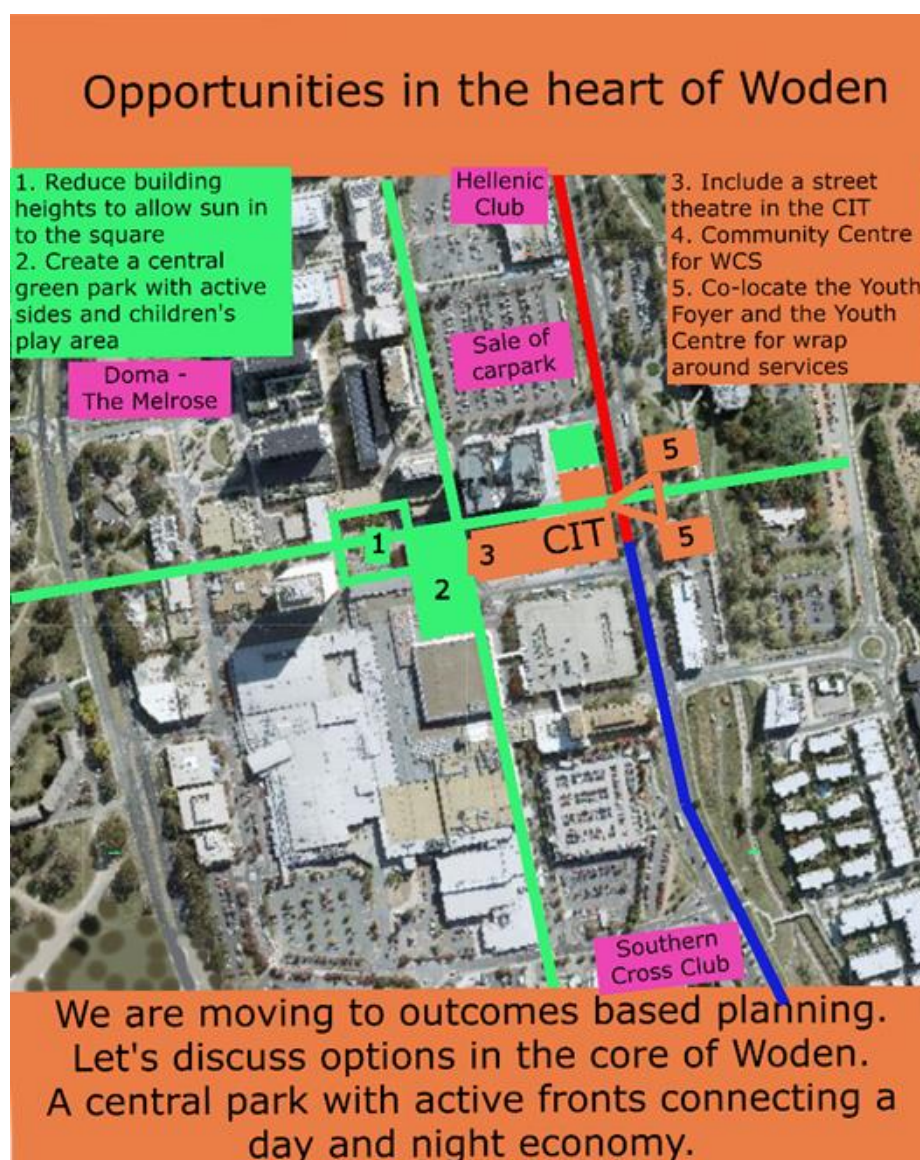
Opportunities in the heart of Woden

Planning great places means balancing competing priorities for homes, commercial activity, public (green) spaces and community facilities to create a destination – a place that people want to be.

- Reduce the building heights (28 storeys) around the perimeter of town square to keep the sun – retain at the current 3 storeys
- leverage the CIT and the Canberra Hospital to bring more education to Woden
- plan for public spaces and community facilities to promote social and physical wellbeing in the student and broader community
- include a multi-purpose arts facility in the CIT that opens up to West Plaza and enables the private sector to establish culture, events, entertainment, and markets – a destination - in the heart of Woden
- great cycle paths to help reduce car dependency
- include plantings to green the Town Centre to make it cool and attractive.

Before the car park between the CIT and the Hellenic Club is sold, a plan should be developed that looks at how the above opportunities can best be realised in the core of Woden. There are opportunities that can be taken up in the current planning review like reducing the building heights around the Town Square to retain the sun and including active fronts around the West Plaza (#2).

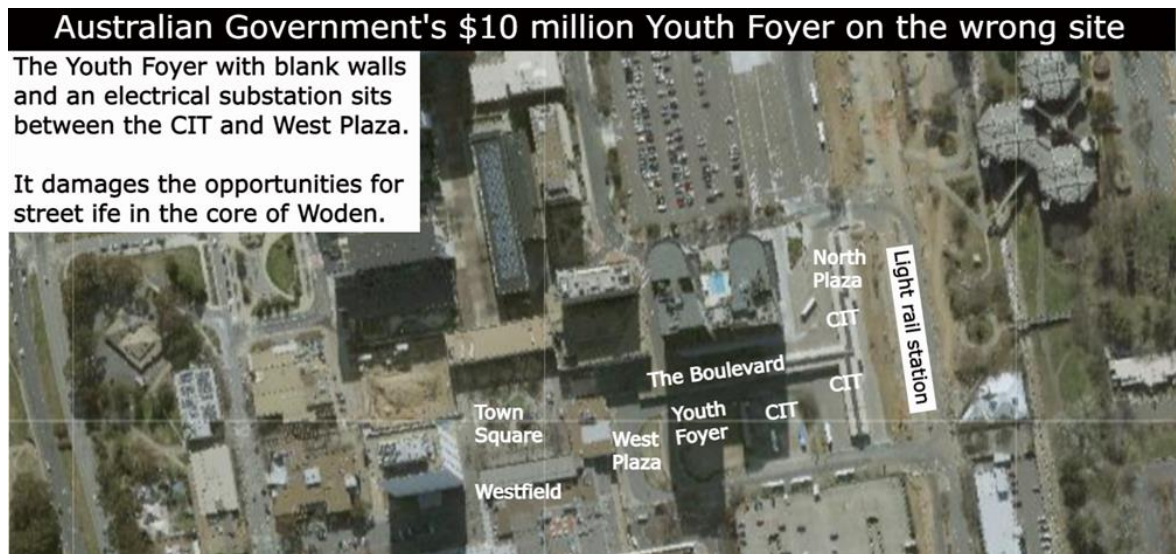
The Youth Foyer needs to be moved to a service area on the east side of Callum Street.



The north 5 on the map should be 4

Lack of vision and ambition

Unfortunately, the plans for the new CIT place the Youth Foyer (with blank walls and an electrical substation) between the CIT and the West Plaza and does not encourage a feeling of safety from activity in the core of Woden (the town square and west plaza) after 5pm and on the weekends.



Instead of the CIT music program being located in a space that opens up onto West Plaza to create activity, it will be on the 3rd floor and miss the opportunity to activate Woden's core.

Overshadowing

The ACT Government is planning for the active area to be the North Plaza and the Boulevard. While the North Plaza will be a sunny space, it is next to the bus interchange and too small for events and markets. It is not the best place to try and attract private sector activity. The Boulevard is effectively the path that connects the public transport interchange with the town square. It is always shown as sunny however it is in the shade of the 18 and 26 storeys of Grand Central, the small commercial sites at the bottom of the south side are yet to be leased. How does the CIT contribute to activity during 14 weeks of the year when the CIT bakery and café are closed?

See shadow diagrams at **Attachment A** which show West Plaza is a better option for sun and activation.

Explaining the opportunities

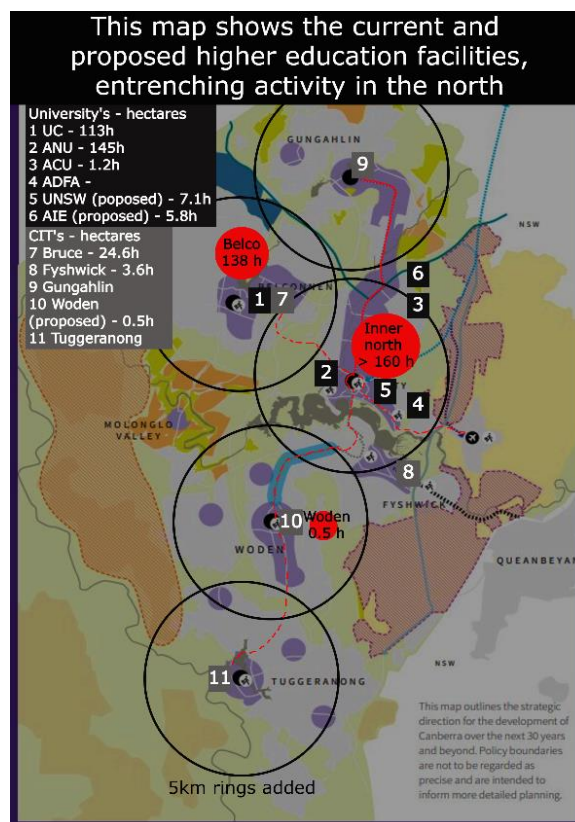
Capacity – future proofing for growth in higher education services

Land needs to be prioritised for more higher education and community facilities to create an attractive campus that attracts people to stay and socialise and support small business.

It and is interesting that there will be 5 universities in the Inner North on significant land holdings (>160 hectares), yet the Woden CIT will be lucky to have ¼ of a hectare and limited facilities for students.

The CIT needs to be futureproofed to ensure it has enough capacity to expand courses and offer some UC and AIE courses. The Watson AIE is not centrally located and the provision of these courses in Woden would facilitate greater take up by residents in the south. Similarly, UC could bring courses to Woden making them more accessible and leveraging synergies with the Canberra Hospital.

We have some great opportunities to improve the equitable access to our higher education and encourage participation



Ground floor

It is outrageous that the waste and loading dock is in the centre of the ground floor of the CIT. These logistical facilities should be located on the south side of the building on Bradley St, a place in the shadows that is of least value to activate.

The ground floor should be a great space for the students and the community.

Multi-purpose arts centre

The arts are important to a community and there is an inequitable distribution of facilities across Canberra, leaving a lack of opportunity in Woden. See **Attachment B**.

The ground floor of the CIT (opening onto West Plaza) provides a fantastic opportunity to create a space for the artists and musicians and bring creativity to the core of Woden. A meeting place for people motivated by visual and performing arts and music to create relationships and have the opportunity to collaborate and reach their goals. This facility would contribute to Revive: The Australian Government's new National Cultural Policy and the ACT Government's Statement of Ambition for the Art:

- 'Canberra is a city with a deep history and has always been a place for people who embrace arts, culture and creativity. This nourishes our individual and collective wellbeing, and connects our emotions, ideas, stories and heritage. This strength provides a platform and motivation to further improve our standing; our reach; and what we can achieve: an ambition for Canberra to be recognised as Australia's Arts Capital.'
 - Strategy 1 CREATE amazing art and culture. Everywhere, at any time, for everyone
 - Strategy 2 DEVELOP arts, cultural and creative industry, practice, and facilities. Supporting creation and culture at all levels, via any path
 - Strategy 3 PROMOTE our arts and culture. To attract artists, arts workers, visitors and investment.

Bradley St and Bowes St connection - Parking and traffic congestion -

The 6,500 CIT does not have student car parking. While public transport can be improved to attract people to change mode – from car to public transport – there will be occasions when students need to drive due to other commitments. To encourage student participation in learning, in addition to around 70 car parks for the 360 teachers, there should be more basement levels of parking for the students

Connecting Bradley St and Bowes St with a road through the West Plaza is not necessary. Slowing cars to 10km/h is one solution but it still directs traffic through our public space and creates a road crossing across the Boulevard. With the closure of Callam St, traffic modelling shows that more traffic will move through this connection making it a busy road and impacting on the public realm, this solution should not proceed.

With the significant population growth in the area from densification (including 30 high rise residential towers earmarked to date), traffic congestion is growing and parking is becoming more difficult. We request that traffic modelling be undertaken based on the forecast population of Canberra's south to ensure there will not be bottlenecks and queuing created around the town centre, and to ensure there is adequate parking.

Trees and the living environment

The ongoing development of the area is leading to increasing coverage of concrete and paving.

We are concerned about the lack of trees and greenery throughout the town centre for cooling and the risk of heat island effects. The students and residents in the towers need great cool places to go.

We would like to be involved in planning that looks at the opportunities to green the Town Centre.

Public spaces and community facilities

As you know, the Woden Town Centre has lost its recreation precinct. The basketball stadium, pitch n putt, bowling greens, tennis courts and YMCA have become residential towers. The pool closed and the ice rink is moving to Tuggeranong. The Phillip Oval is locked and not available to the local community which leaves us with the squash courts in our recreation precinct.

The lack of facilities is shown at **Attachments B, C and D**.

Planning for the upgrade the AIS, a new indoor sports facility at UC and the expansion of the Basketball ACT in Belconnen is unbelievably inequitable. The upgrade of a hall at the Garran primary school with one basketball court does not provide the facility needed to support and grow an indoor sports community.

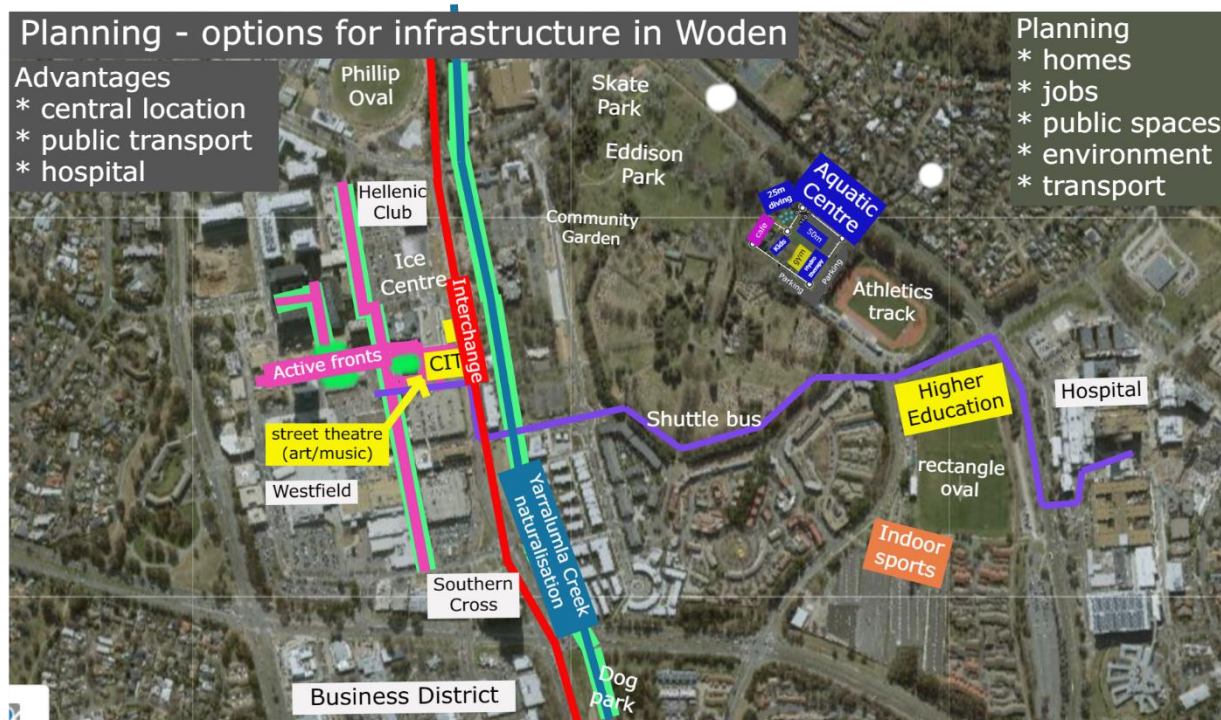
The Phillip pool is to be replaced with a 25m pool in a Geocon tower. On 16 January 2023, the Canberra Times reported that the ice sports community had wanted a site in Canberra's south and Minister Berry said there was no suitable site in the Woden area for this

Whaaat!!!

There is plenty of room in Woden for community facilities. Land should stop being sold (eg the big car park between the Hellenic Club and the CIT) until sites are identified to balance the competing priorities of homes, economic activity, public spaces, and community facilities.

To support the students and growing population in the region, we need convenient community facilities to encourage us to keep active. In addition to the physical and mental health outcomes, they can inspire and motivate people while fostering community pride. A centrally located facility in Woden is accessible by public transport and would support both the students attending the CIT and the local sporting clubs.

This diagram shows opportunities for connecting our major employment centres with Eddison Park. It shows options for a multi-purpose arts centre (street theatre), an aquatic centre and an indoor sports stadium.



This would support the ongoing densification in the suburbs and from residential towers.

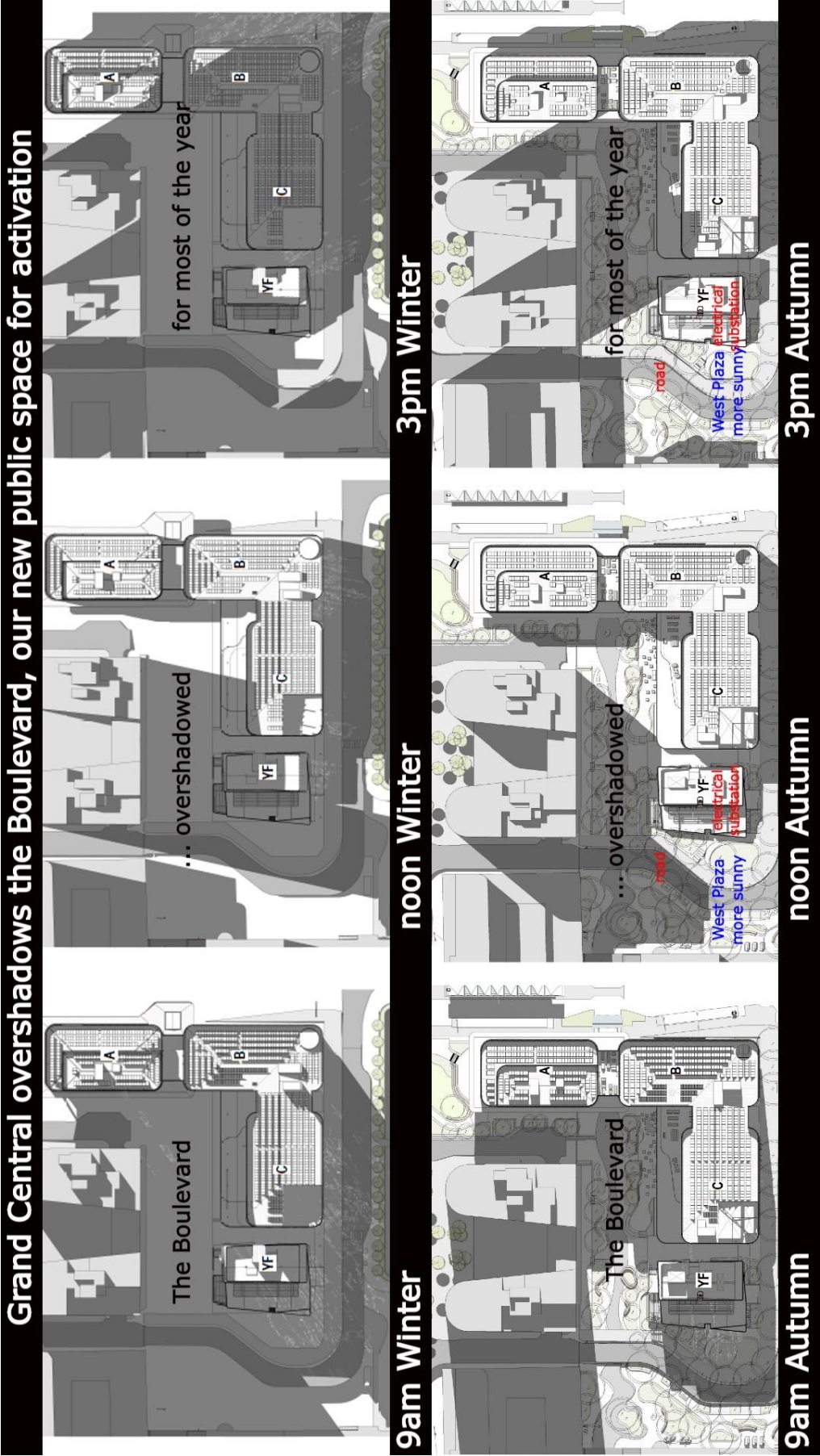
We call on the ACT Government to address the issues raised above for the CIT students and the broader community and:

- move the Youth Foyer to activate West Plaza with a multi-purpose arts space
- build and own a multi-purpose indoor sports stadium and an aquatic centre in the Woden Town Centre that can be hired at a reasonable cost by local community sports groups.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Carrick
 President,
 Woden Valley Community Council
 10 July 2023

Shadow Diagrams show the Boulevard will be in the shade for much of the year

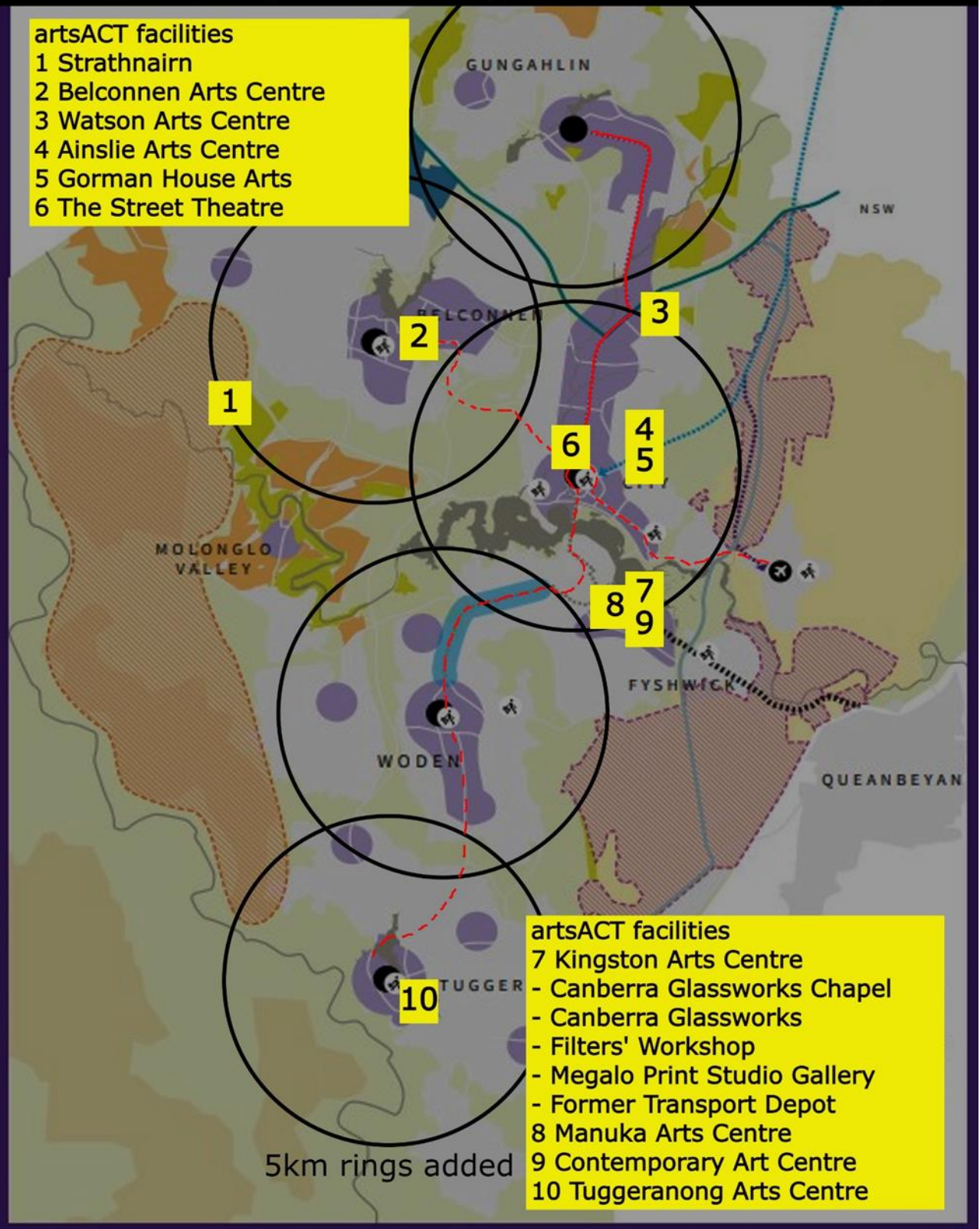


West Plaza has more sun through Autumn and Spring and is a better site to activate with a park.

This proposal lacks ambition for the social and economic development of Woden's core because active fronts on West Plaza would be better than the Youth Foyer with blank walls and an electrical substation.

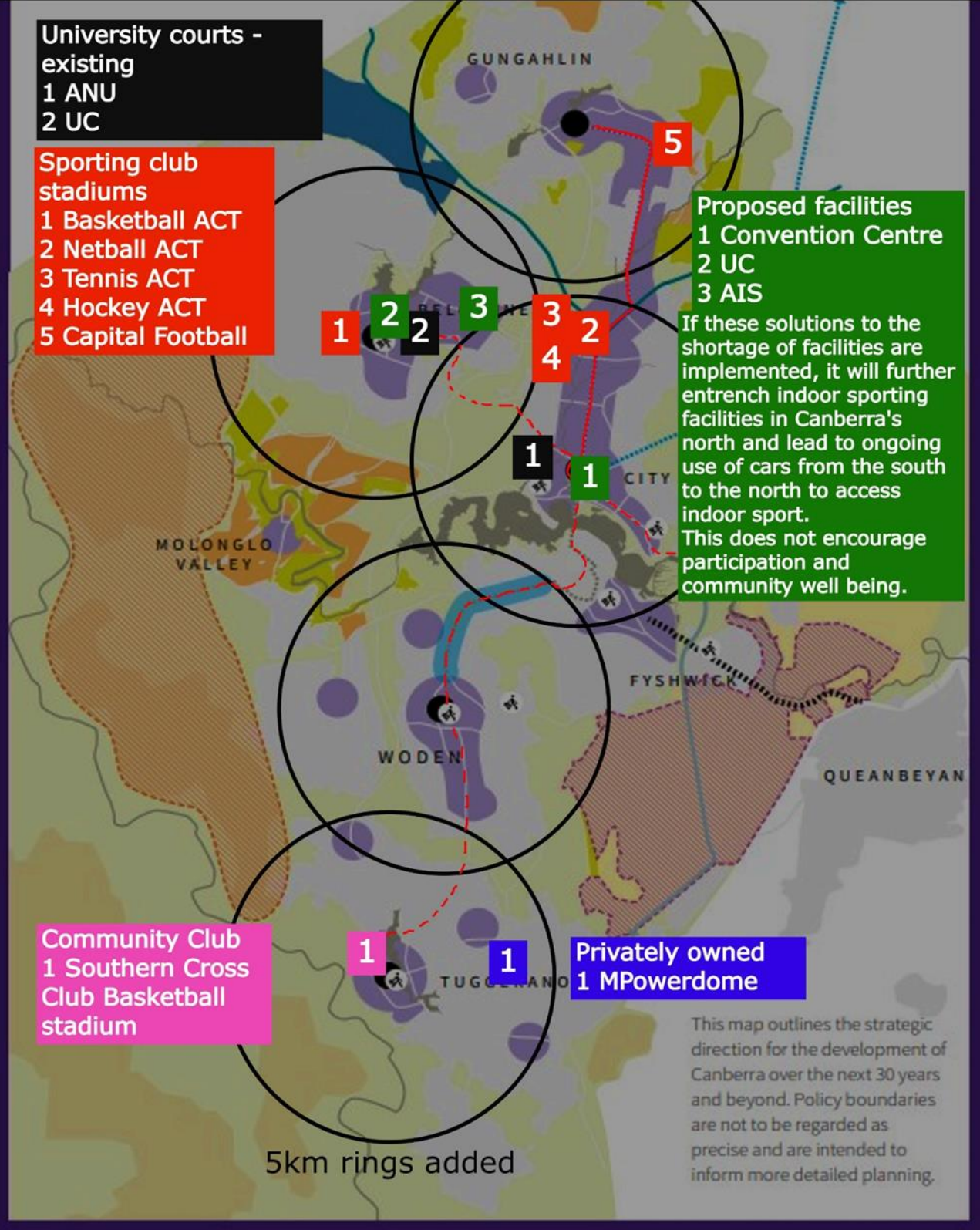
Location of ACT Arts facilities showing the inequitable distribution across Canberra

This map shows government artsACT facilities and the need for an arts centre to service people in the greater Woden region



Location of indoor sports facilities showing the inequitable distribution across Canberra

This map shows the current and proposed indoor sports facilities, entrenching facilities in the north



Location of government owned 50m pools showing the inequitable distribution across Canberra

