PRECINCT 5
COMMUNITY PRECINCT

The boundaries
This precinct is bounded by Antill Street to the North, Phillip Avenue to the east, the Dickson stormwater drain (a tributary of Sullivans Creek) to the south and Cowper Street to the east. The open space south of the concrete drain that is located east of Hawdon Street, west of Dutton Street and north of Majura Avenue, is also included in this precinct. This open space is often referred to by the locals as the “Hawdon Street Park”.

Existing character
This precinct offers community, recreational, sporting and entertainment areas. The neighbourhood perceives that the busy road of Cowper Street alienates this precinct from the main retail and commercial areas of Dickson. The sporting fields, the playground abutting Majura Avenue and the ribbon of pines and eucalypts running from the playing fields to Cowper Street provide an open space amenity and aesthetic value for those living or walking in this area.

There are four distinct areas within this precinct:

1  THE COMMUNITY FACILITIES AREA (Rosevear Place/Section 72):
   This area is classified as Entertainment, Accommodation and Leisure under the Territory Plan. It has a number of community based organisations operating there. Within the Community Facilities area exists the highly valued swimming pool, a community centre (Majura Community Centre), tennis courts, a bicycle museum and an art gallery and artists’ studios, a putt putt mini-golf course, a motel, and a tourist attraction known as the Planetarium. There is also a Jehovah’s Witness centre (Kingdom Hall), and the Salvation Army. Vehicular access to these facilities is via Cowper Street or Rosevear Place. Whilst the area is valued for its community facilities, the development of Section 72 has lacked a comprehensive plan that takes into account for example, interconnections within the section and ease of access for pedestrians in the area.

2  EDUCATIONAL FACILITY:  The Dickson College is a government high school. This is located on part of Section 76 on the corner of Antill Street and Phillip Avenue.

3  THE DICKSON DISTRICT PLAYING FIELDS (also located on part of Section 76). This is highly valued by the community and is used not only by locals, but by people from the surrounding region. The urban open space containing the Majura playing fields is recognised as playing an important local as well as metropolitan role, serving as a venue for young people’s organised sport as well as the neighbourhood open space.
4 THE CONCRETE DRAIN AND HAWDON STREET PARK – SECTION 73: The concrete drain is a tributary of Sullivans Creek. This section – the concrete drain and Hawdon Street Park – is valued by the community for both its recreational and aesthetic amenity. During the peak periods when sporting events are being held at the Dickson District Playing Fields the Hawdon Street Park is used as a "spill-over" for warm ups and practice. The locals also use it for a number of other non-organised recreational purposes. The play equipment located at the southern end of this open space is also well utilised and appreciated.

Issues

The Community Facilities area: A criticism of the Rosevear Place area (Section 72) raised in a number of collaborations, is its isolation or physical separation, particularly from the shopping precinct and from the Dickson residential area. Vandalism is an issue in the area and can be attributed to the isolation of the area. This isolation may be due to the nature of the area’s boundaries (the busy Cowper and Antill Streets, as well as the concrete drain and the district playing fields) and the strict application of land use policy. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic does not pass through this area, limiting people’s awareness of the range of facilities at this location. The area has an unusual character, stemming in part from the range of established uses and a poor public environment.

The concrete drain that forms the southern boundary to this precinct, is recognised for its flood safety engineering necessity, but more could be made of the amenity that the Creek offers the residents and wildlife of the neighbourhood. Enhancements to Sullivans Creek and its tributaries have been investigated and actioned by the Sullivans Creek Catchment Group. Both the community and ACT Government have supported their work because benefits have been realised both environmentally and aesthetically.

Community values/aspirations (identified by participants at the Planning Together Workshop and via other collaborations)

RANGE OF FACILITIES

- Local community groups and activities
- Support for families and people with disabilities
- Opportunities for learning for everyone

OPEN SPACE

- A more attractive and better maintained Dickson stormwater channel corridor
- Create habitats for native animals and plants to attract wildlife into the precinct
ACCESS
- Well maintained pedestrian and bicycle paths that connect areas within Dickson and also to other parts of Canberra
- Easy access to a variety of community facilities (eg pool, parks, shops, tennis courts, natural space etc)
- Good access to public transport (regular, frequent, convenient, efficient)

IDENTITY AND BUILDINGS
- High quality and sympathetic architecture to maintain and give identity to this neighbourhood character

Future character
This precinct requires clearer and improved access routes to and through the area, which will provide stronger connections and links to the retail and commercial precinct. It is anticipated that this precinct will continue to provide a range of appropriate community facilities, entertainment/recreation/leisure options, opportunities for social interaction and education. Additional uses that support and are demonstrably mutually beneficial to these core uses will be considered where benefit can be established.

With regard to the Dickson District Playing Fields, there is potential to support the Majura Fields through the provision of amenities and expanded facilities as well as recreation facilities that can be located in the adjacent community area.

A future concrete drain creek corridor that is a more natural feature, protects the neighbourhood from flooding, provides an enhanced habitat for wildlife and is a safe and pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists will be a desired outcome. ACTPLA is in the process of finalising a consultant report "Review of Infrastructure Planning for Sullivans Creek Catchment". The objectives of this study include identifying possible sites for wetlands and stormwater retardation basins. These will assist with management of water quality and peak flow rates and potentially provide opportunities to remove sections of concrete lined channels and replace them with more aesthetic and sustainable alternatives. The report identifies a potential site for a wetland and retardation facility on the channel along the section that divides Precincts 2 and 5 immediately east of Hawdon Place. If this facility were to be installed at this location, it would also offer the potential to modify the section of channel from Hawdon Place to Northbourne Avenue. This would help to achieve the objective identified for those affected precincts (1, 2, 4 and 5) in Dickson, in terms of improving the environment along the channel corridor. Issues regarding the beautification of the concrete drain would need to consider the hydrologic requirements of this waterway to prevent increased flooding.

With regard to the Community Facilities area (Rosevear Place/Section 72), the creation of better access, particularly pedestrian, in addition to a clearer route through the area, will improve the physical links to surrounding areas and help to reduce its isolation. It will also assist to increase awareness and contribute to improving the image and identity of the area. Future development, including public environment works, should contribute to this stronger identity. Developments that display their uses or contribute to an outward identity and define space within the precinct, such as the streets and pedestrian routes, will help establish an improved identity. Regard to safety and security will be important.
Consolidating the uses in the area and encouraging outward interaction of uses (including both daytime and night time activity) will boost the profile of the area and have positive benefits to safety and security. One strategy may include clustering community/amenity uses (eg young people’s provision, artist studios/gallery, sports and cultural uses) to create a hub of sociability and activity. New sport and leisure uses that more actively support and service the regular events at the district playing fields could be encouraged, particularly on Hawdon Place. The area could be positively supported through more continuous active daytime use. Employment uses (particularly community based) should be encouraged.

A desirable future will see this precinct having strong connections and links to the retail and commercial precinct. The precinct will provide a range of entertainment options and opportunities for social interaction. A stronger identity and image for the area will be developed through improvements to the environment and consolidation of uses.

Planning Strategies to ensure this future character is achieved

- Undertake a design study of the precinct to specifically address the concerns and issues of the neighbourhood

PARKS AND PLACES
- Maintain and enhance the existing areas of open space that forms part of this precinct
- Enrich biodiversity and encourage wildlife by planting native trees and shrubs where this is appropriate

STREETS
- Maintain and enhance landscape setting and protect street trees

SAFETY AND SECURITY
- Maximise links between public places and spaces, particularly the concrete drain and the district playing fields
- Siting and design of buildings should address the street to maximise views to the street and pedestrian/cycle paths
- Ensure adequate pedestrian lighting on major routes

CONNECTIONS AND MOVEMENT
- Ensure clear, easy access networks for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles in the area, particularly from the commercial retail precinct
- Provide safe road crossings for motorists and pedestrians/cyclists

BUILDINGS
- Diversity of design solutions should be encouraged in the Community Facilities area
- Create neighbourhood specific built forms
QUALITY
- Ensure a clear definition of private open space and public open space

IDENTITY
- Work towards strengthening the image and identity of the Community Facilities area

Ideas to explore/be considered from the Moving Forward Together Workshop and through the Dickson Interim Community Reference Panel

- Enhance the Dickson Stormwater drain (a tributary of Sullivans Creek) catchment and make more aesthetically pleasing.
- Make better use of existing open space by increasing range of use, improving amenity, facilities and upgrading and rejuvenating existing open spaces.
- Do a planning/design study for Section 72 to create a better environment and improve links and connections to surrounding areas.