



Wickham Place Plan Discovery Report

July 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

Town Team Movement and PLACE Laboratory acknowledge the Ngarluma people as the traditional custodians of this land and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise the special relationship and connection that Ngarluma people have with this Country.

We recognise the significant contribution the Ngarluma people have played in caring for Country.

For time immemorial they have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to these lands and waters.

Cover Image: City of Karratha

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Introduction

The Wickham Place Plan Discovery Report captures findings from previous engagement and documents that will inform the plan's development.. Building on this existing input, the Wickham Place Plan aims to set a community vision for the town over the next four years.

With a focus on implementation, it will establish a roadmap for achieving this vision together: residents, businesses, industry, organisations and the City of Karratha ('the City'). In particular, the Place Plan builds on recent community engagement for the City's Strategic Community Plan. The focus of that plan was City-wide, and while there was some town-specific engagement, further development is required to prioritise and then implement identified actions.

This Report reflects findings on the history and characteristics, the community values, visions and aspirations, and existing priorities for Wickham. These will then be tested and refined through community and stakeholder engagement to establish a clear set of actions.

Identified existing elements, priorities and planned initiatives are captured in a set of maps. Their content is recognised as preliminary - they are intended as a 'conversation starter' - and content will be refined as the project progresses, informing the final Place Plan and Implementation. Maps cover the following key areas:

- Existing Elements
- Environment + Landscape
- Culture, Community + Economy
- Infrastructure + Built Elements
- Recreation Amenities

This Discovery Report has been informed by a range of engagement processes and outcomes, studies, plans and initiatives. These include, but are not limited to:

- Wickham Boat Beach Foreshore Management Plan
- Wickham Structure Plan
- Strategic Community Plan engagement findings (2024-25)

About Wickham: history + characteristics

Wickham is located on Ngarluma Country, about 50km northeast of Karratha in Western Australia's Pilbara Region. Yindjibarni Country is located adjacent to Ngarluma Country, and Yindjibarni people also have connection to the Wickham area.

In 2005, the Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation, as the prescribed body corporate for Ngarluma, submitted a Native Title claim on behalf of Ngarluma people. They were granted Native Title in 2007. Traditional Owner occupation and ancestry stretches back at least 30,000 years in the area, with archaeological surveys of important cultural sites such as the rock art on the Burrup Peninsula (Karratha) providing an insight into this deep historical and spiritual connection to this Country.

Wickham forms part of the City of Karratha's 'Eastern Corridor', also comprising key locations of Ieramugadu (Roebourne), Point Samson, and historic Cossack. A central feature of life in Wickham, the Wickham Boat Beach Area is approximately 7km north (15 minutes drive) from Wickham town.

The town was named after John C. Wickham, Captain of the HMS Beagle, who surveyed the northwest coast in 1840. Non-Indigenous (European) settlement commenced in the 1860s, predominantly associated with pastoral leases. In 1866, nearby Roebourne became the first gazetted town site in the area.

The Wickham town site itself was not established until 1970, when the post war resources boom resulted in expanded development across the region. It was set up by Robe River Iron Ore Associates to provide housing and support services for employees of the Cape Lambert iron ore port, which was opened in 1972. Cape Lambert was established to process iron ore from mines in Pannawonica and is currently operated by Rio Tinto Iron Ore.

During the 1980s, Wickham underwent a process of 'normalisation', which saw an extension of responsibilities beyond those of the mining company. Although Wickham is still largely a company town for Rio Tinto's iron ore operations, State and local government authorities also began taking on a number of roles relating to services and infrastructure in the town. Land tenure and maintenance responsibilities vary, with parts of the town maintained by the City of Karratha, others by Rio Tinto, and others by both.

About Wickham: history + characteristics

Wickham remains largely a service town for the mining industry, and its community reflects this, with the majority of the resident labour force employed by the mining industry and a very high total employment rate of over 98%. Incomes are also high, with a median individual weekly income of \$1,680 compared to \$848 across Western Australia. Wickham's population is relatively young (median age 31) and predominantly male (57%), although there are an increasing number of young families.

A notable feature of Wickham today is its very strong sporting and community club network. The Wickham Recreation Precinct is the heart of the community and a focus of activity.

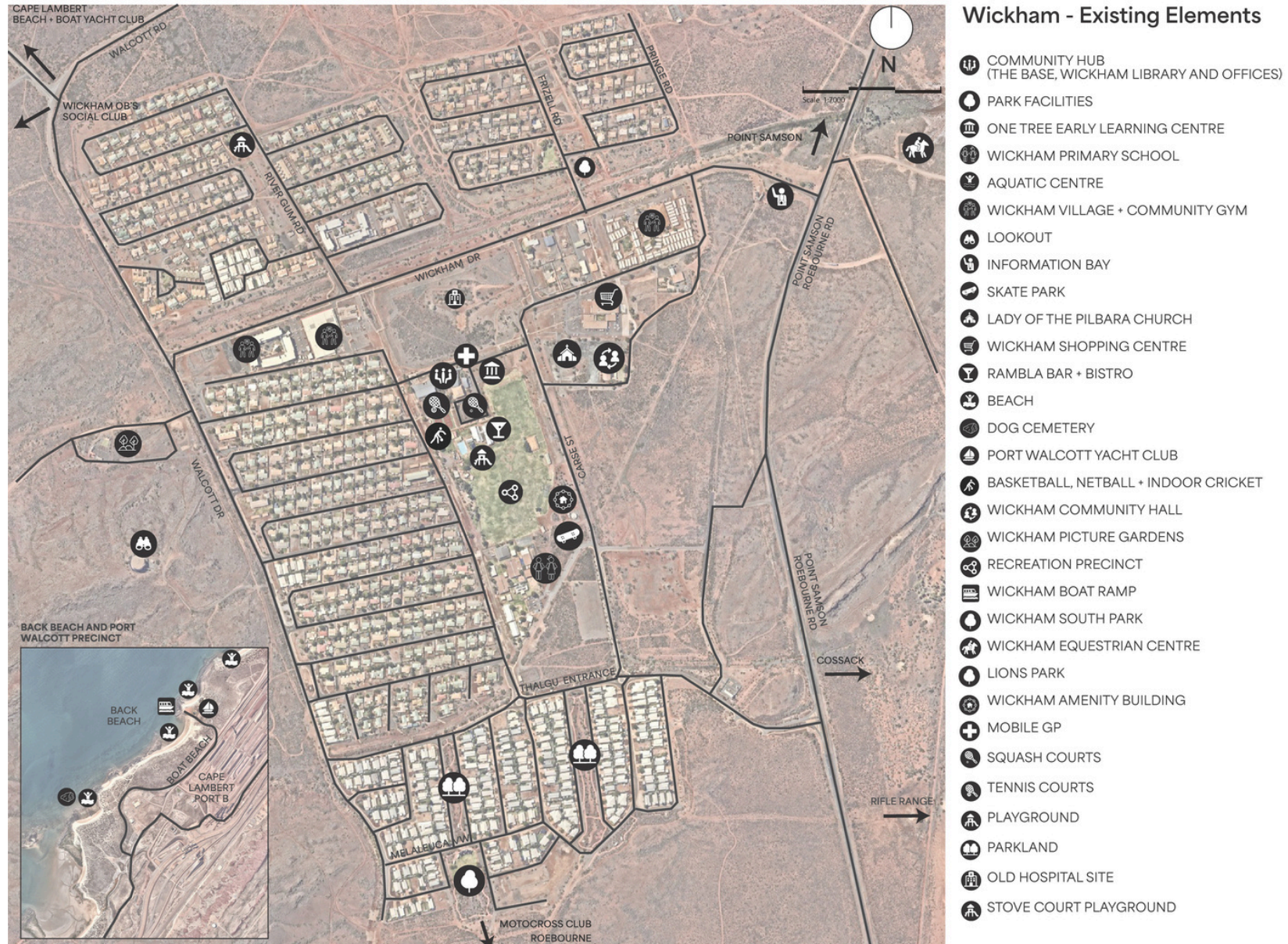
Also a key feature of the town's identity and its activity is the coastal area. Particularly the foreshore precinct around Wickham Boat Beach is of very high value.

Covered under the Native Title Determination, the Wickham Boat Beach foreshore area is well used and is generally well cared for as a result. The area provides for a wide variety of leisure activities, including: barbecues and picnics; beach camping; water sports; fishing; four wheel driving; trail bike riding; dog walking; dining at the Port Walcott Yacht Club; nature appreciation; and Traditional Owner cultural responsibilities and activities.

While the majority of visitors come from the local community of Wickham, this foreshore area is also well used by residents of the broader City of Karratha area, from Point Samson, Dampier, Roebourne and Karratha, with the majority of visitors to the foreshore area visiting once a week or more, particularly during weekends and at high tide.

Existing Elements

Key existing elements of Wickham identified through a review of documents are captured in map below. These form a basis for planning with community and stakeholders and can be added to or refined as the Place Plan project progresses.



Visions, Values + Aspirations

The community engagement process for the Wickham Place Plan will establish a community vision for the town, which will guide action over the next four years. Through this process, existing values and aspirations will be explored, and priorities identified and refined to achieve this vision.

Most recently, through community engagement workshops for the City of Karratha's Strategic Community Plan, a number of words highlighting what is most important for the Wickham community were captured as guiding aspirations. For Wickham, 'equality' was the most commonly used word for both general community and business groups.

"I WANT US ALL TO FEEL INCLUDED AND NOT LEFT OUT"

WICKHAM SURVEY PARTICIPANT. STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN VISIONING

Workshops identified the following words as key elements of the community's vision for Wickham:

- Community
- Connection
- Activated meeting spaces
- Sense of community through events, markets, etc.
- Healthy people and community
- Safe
- Active
- Variety in Wickham (community run sports facility);
- teams go to Karratha less come here; carnivals no
- longer here; drama, etc.
- Similar to metro e.g., health Services
- Equality
- Equal opportunity – employment; different people,
- Culturally, gender, etc
- Culturally inclusive/combined
- Affordable
- Housing opportunities (availability)
- Serviced
- Education
- Normalised and diverse economy – many more
- small
- businesses
- Not being as dependant on the resource sector
- Central hub – connected to global markets, tourist
- hub, etc
- Towns serviced the same

Environment + Landscape

The following are identified as existing priorities from past planning and engagement, and are a starting point for exploring priorities.



Environment + Landscape

Potential improvements previously identified by community and documents.

SPECIFIC LOCATIONS:

- 1 Install drinking fountains in parks and sporting locations as a standard feature.

TOWN WIDE:

- 2 Commence a tree planting program for more shade.
- 3 Keep Wickham clean and tidy through regular maintenance to remove glass and rubbish, and to maintain footpaths and grass in parks.

BACK BEACH + PORT WALCOTT PRECINCT:

- A Create a dedicated turtle watching area.
- B Protect vulnerable ecological and sensitive cultural areas, formalising vehicle and pedestrian access.
- C Implement signage strategy: Consolidate one foreshore area identity on uniform signage which clearly guides visitor use and access, and provides education on cultural and ecological interpretation.
- D Build relationships with Traditional Owners to ensure the cultural and environmental heritage of the site is acknowledged and communicated.

Culture, Community + Economy

The following are identified as existing priorities from past planning and engagement, and are a starting point for exploring priorities.



Culture, Community + Economy

Potential improvements previously identified by community and documents.

SPECIFIC LOCATIONS:

- 1 Promote tourism opportunities related to the coast/beach and sharing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stories, including those of the Seafarers Centre.

TOWN WIDE:

- 2 Dual naming.
- 3 Progress an annual tourism event for Wickham/Cossack/Samson with community groups, activities and food trucks.
- 4 Address the limited opportunities to socialise outside of sports clubs.
- 5 Explore facilities for arts and culture in Wickham.
- 6 Support and develop community events including markets, outdoor movies and concerts.
- 7 Provide a range of community events for different sectors of the community - both for families and for adults with no children.
- 8 Address the number of dogs roaming the streets.
- 9 Identify opportunities for employment and enterprise, including for young people.
- 10 Diversify the economy through more small businesses in shopping centre, retail opportunities, and affordability of leases.
- 11 Establish conditions for more childcare services, so that more local parents can participate in the workforce.

BACK BEACH + PORT WALCOTT PRECINCT:

- A Build relationships with Traditional Custodians (Ngarluma Peoples) to ensure the cultural and environmental heritage of the site is acknowledged and communicated.
- B Promote tourism opportunities related to coast/beach and sharing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stories, including those of the Seafarers Centre.

Infrastructure + Built Elements

The following are identified as existing priorities from past planning and engagement, and are a starting point for exploring priorities.



Infrastructure and Built Elements

Potential improvements previously identified by community and documents.

SPECIFIC LOCATIONS:

- 1 Create an attractive town centre.
- 2 Enhance the shopping centre.
- 3 Construct a shared path to Point Samson.

TOWN WIDE:

- 4 Improve night time lighting in public areas to enhance safety.
- 5 Establish more safe walking tracks to take prams, free from dangerous dogs.

BACK BEACH + PORT WALCOTT PRECINCT:

- A Provide visitor shelters, bins and seating .
- B Introduce a boardwalk/pathway from Back Beach car park to Bells Beach.
- C Provide public toilets screened amongst the dunes in an accessible position and well above the high water line.
- D Modernise Back Beach car park .
- E Upgrade the Back Beach boat ramp.
- F Rebuild/modify the Yacht Club building.

Recreation Amenities

The following are identified as existing priorities from past planning and engagement, and are a starting point for exploring priorities.



Recreation Amenities

Potential improvements previously identified by community and documents.

SPECIFIC LOCATIONS:

- 1 Review the opening hours of The Base to potentially support more youth engagement with this asset.
- 2 Install a hard shade structure over the multipurpose courts, including the tennis courts in the Recreation Precinct so that they are useable during the day in the hotter months.
- 3 Increase shade cover at Saylor Park, including over play equipment.
- 4 Introduce an intergenerational, all abilities playground at Saylor Park.
- 5 Address safety concerns through improved maintenance standards in parks and playgrounds.
- 6 Repair the oval in the Recreation Precincts (grass and reticulation), and introduce new amenities (pavilion/clubhouse) for local sports clubs.

TOWN WIDE:

- 7 Establish more age-appropriate play facilities, such as a pump track.
- 8 Add shaded seating to the pump track for spectators including parents and younger children.
- 9 Provide for more indoor play spaces and indoor activities for children during the hotter months.

BACK BEACH + PORT WALCOTT PRECINCT:

- A Introduce parking improvements to the Back Beach precinct near the boat ramp.
- B Progress a boat ramp upgrade, possibly with a floating platform.
- C Explore a dune boardwalk for universal access.
- D Explore a land based fishing platform.