Part 3: The Ten Waterfront Strategies
The following ten strategies detail how the Apia Waterfront will be developed over time to fulfil the goals and vision of this Plan. These strategies are based on international best-practice guidelines for waterfront development, localised to suit the Samoan context. They highlight what currently works well in the waterfront and what could be improved to drive tourism and economic growth, as well as attract more locals to the waterfront.

The policies in Part 4 and the capital works projects in Part 5 of this Plan will help to implement these strategies.

1. Create a continuous ‘necklace’ linking coastal activities and attractors
2. Preserve and highlight Samoan heritage and culture
3. Encourage a diverse economy along the waterfront
4. Provide a well-designed and attractive public domain for locals and visitors
5. Establish a people-oriented environment
6. Partner with community and business to ensure long-term sustainability
7. Implement efficient and safe traffic/parking strategies
8. Protect the environmental quality of the waterfront
9. Ensure future buildings, public spaces and infrastructure are resilient to climate change
10. Enhance significant views and vistas along the waterfront

WATERFRONT GOALS

- Reflect a unique Samoan experience
- Create an inclusive, clean and safe waterfront
- Enhance public domain for community uses
- Support opportunities for business initiatives
- Connect people to the sea

WATERFRONT STRATEGIES
Strategy 1: Create a continuous ‘necklace’ linking coastal activities and attractors

The waterfront is a geographically significant part of Apia located along the town’s northern coastal foreshore. However, some areas are disjointed or disconnected from adjacent areas. This strategy aims to improve connections by linking coastal activities in the four waterfront areas and creating a unified experience for visitors and locals alike.

Coastal activities such as tide steps, va’a launches, boardwalks, safe swimming areas and urban beaches will act as attractors for the waterfront, encouraging tourists and locals to better utilise the area and easily access each attraction.

Other proposed key attractors along the waterfront include a natural sciences discovery centre at Mulinu’u Point and a satellite museum in the arts and heritage area.

Creating a continuous ‘necklace’ linking coastal activities will help to ensure that the public can walk, jog or cycle along the entire length of the waterfront and experience the variety of attractions on offer, as well as access adjacent town areas easily.

It is important that public infrastructure and assets that span the waterfront—such as the public facilities, seawall, lighting, signage and pedestrian pathways—reinforce this sense of connectivity and use an agreed and consistent design theme.

All future developments must therefore ensure that public access is maintained and enhanced along the waterfront. This will be achieved by establishing a permanent shared path along the waterfront and developing appropriate building setback guidelines. Long-term plans to redesign the Fish Market area will be the final action required to fully connect all coastal activities along the waterfront.

Potential future commercial opportunities include guided ecological tours of the mangrove areas and walking tours of the historical waterfront and its landmarks. Providing jetties at key locations will also facilitate a private water taxi service between the port and key destinations along the waterfront.

Figure 3.1 shows the extent of the continuous ‘necklace’ along the waterfront and the key coastal activities attractors: urban beaches, tidal steps, safe swimming areas, va’a launches and museums.
Samoa attracts many tourists to its shores each year. Developing the Apia Waterfront presents a unique opportunity to showcase the unique elements of Samoan culture to our visitors and to attract even more tourists. The waterfront will preserve our values, promote Samoan art and design, support traditional water-based activities, and showcase our heritage sites and buildings.

The Old Courthouse Building (Figure 3.3) will be adaptively reused to ensure preservation for future generations. Consideration will be given to developing an arts and culture ‘hub’ for downtown Apia, supported by cafes at the street level, private studios and galleries, as well as a museum showcasing waterfront and harbour history.

This Plan encourages local businesses and surrounding villages to participate in shaping the future of Apia’s waterfront. The government will work with local artists and designers to help develop key initiatives such as an interconnected heritage walking trail, interpretive signage, a public art and sculpture walk, and enhancement of the Cultural Village and Parliamentary Complex.

Public spaces and waterfront assets will also support temporary events such as cultural festivals, national celebrations and religious ceremonies (Figure 3.4). These events will help to highlight elements of Samoan culture along the waterfront and create a unique branding for the Apia Waterfront, setting it apart from other Pacific waterfronts.
Strategy 3: Encourage a diverse economy along the waterfront

The project is committed to promoting a diversity of business opportunities along the waterfront. This means supporting businesses that could operate during both day and night (such as food outlets, kiosks and markets); small-scale and large-scale businesses; and businesses operating in various industries. Encouraging a diverse economy along the waterfront is important as it enables the community to be resilient to fluctuations in the economy; helps provide infrastructure and services for visitors to Apia; and offers diverse local employment opportunities.

The Waterfront Plan aims to assist in the development of Samoa by encouraging private sector led economic growth and employment creation. Development of attractions and activities along the Apia Waterfront will help to draw both regional and international tourists, which in turn will stimulate the local economy to meet the varied needs of tourists. Whilst this Plan proposes to provide some physical infrastructure to help stimulate the local economy, it will be the responsibility of businesses, developers and the wider community to take advantage of opportunities identified in this Plan (Figure 3.5).

A series of consistent tourist ‘kiosks’ will be developed along the waterfront and will be available for lease. Opportunities could include refreshment stands, hire of water sports equipment, bicycle hire, and tour operations. There will also be additional food stall and art/craft stall opportunities at the Savalalo Markets (Figure 3.6), and two locations for potential cafes in the Eleele Fou area. The government is also committed to stimulating entrepreneurship and creating employment opportunities for youth. A ‘small business incubator for youth’ is proposed near Eleele Fou to support young Samoans in developing innovative and creative entrepreneurial ideas.
In addition to these specific opportunities, the Plan has identified general opportunities to provide additional tourist accommodation options in Sogi and the marina, as well as additional dining and evening business opportunities in the marina area. The Plan also encourages the development of galleries, studios and small-scale retail shops along Beach Road to support the satellite museum.

Within the town area, mixed-use residential and commercial developments will be encouraged. This means developing retail and commercial uses on the lower floors and residential accommodation uses on the upper floors, thereby allowing more people to live and stay close to the waterfront, and generate more pedestrian activity.

The Ports Development Masterplan signals the possibility of relocating commercial port functions from Matautu to Vaiusu Bay, retaining cruise passenger functions at Matautu. This would allow the commercial shipping functions of the port to be in closer proximity to the Vaitele industrial area and reduce heavy vehicle movements through the town area. The cruise ship function of the port could be developed allowing for more ships to enter Apia and drive tourism growth. Directional and interpretive signage will be installed to better connect cruise ship passengers and other tourists to various attractions along the waterfront, thereby enhancing their awareness of these attractions and creating a more memorable Samoan experience.

All businesses will be encouraged to support the vision and goals for the waterfront by ensuring that they are aligned to the policies outlined in Part 4.
Our waterfront is a public asset that should be preserved and enhanced for community use. Providing well-designed and attractive public spaces along the waterfront will liven up the area and draw more people to the waterfront. This means that public spaces are considerate of the local context, of a high design quality, inclusive for all, and environmentally sustainable. Public spaces that are well designed will therefore be more vibrant, safe and functional.

The public domain in general also needs to be attractive and well designed. This includes streetscapes, building facades, and the publicly visible elements of private developments such as fencing, landscaping and signage. Consequently, all future developments within the waterfront area should consider how their designs affect the public amenity. This means that developments along key pedestrian routes should have active frontages, allowing people on the street to interact with buildings through transparent building facades and shopfronts.

The key public spaces that are proposed in the Waterfront Plan are a public square at Savalalo; a central park at Elele Fou (including swimming lagoon, a playground, sporting courts and an outdoor performance area); an enhanced Sogi Park; and a va’a launching beach at the marina. Rest areas, mini parks and an outdoor library are also proposed along the extent of the waterfront. Additionally, there is scope to upgrade Palolo Deep Marine Reserve to improve its facilities and services.

The future waterfront of Apia will allow the community to partake in inclusive social and recreational activities; encouraging people of all genders, abilities and ages to participate. Such activities could include boot camps, triathlons, walking and cycling tours, and hire of bicycles and sports equipment.

Figure 3.7 illustrates the locations of proposed public spaces and green spaces along the waterfront.
Cities around the world are adapting and changing from a vehicle-oriented environment to a people-oriented environment. This is achieved by providing safer pedestrian routes, reducing traffic and congestion, providing public amenities and essentially improving ‘walkability’. This Plan aims to create a people-oriented waterfront that encourages pedestrian-friendly spaces and walking routes.

A key consideration of this strategy is to ensure that the waterfront is accessible for people of all abilities. Additionally, it is necessary to improve the amenity of key pedestrian pathways to make it more attractive for people to walk to and from the waterfront. This can be achieved by providing more unobstructed walking routes; more opportunities for shade and rest; more public amenities including change rooms and restrooms; additional energy-efficient street lighting; and attractive landscaping and rain gardens that make walking a pleasurable experience. Pedestrian safety also needs to be considered and this Plan proposes installing raised pedestrian crossings at key locations that are well lit at night.

Figure 3.8 highlights key pedestrian routes to be improved, locations of public amenities to be provided, and formal raised pedestrian crossings to be installed.

Other traffic management measures include temporarily closing Beach Road during events and festivals and allocating some pedestrian-only and shared spaces (pedestrians and vehicles - Figure 3.9). These will be located strategically along Beach Road to better facilitate pedestrian access.
Strategy 6: Partner with community and business to ensure long term sustainability

The Apia Waterfront is one of the country’s most valued assets, and it will be up to all members of the community to help maintain, protect and preserve its future. Whilst government has considerable ownership of much of the land in the waterfront area, certain initiatives presented in this Plan will need to be developed through public-private partnerships, partnerships between villages and local businesses, and other innovative implementation mechanisms. Government, community and private sector stakeholders need to work together to develop the waterfront, and subsequently safeguard its long term sustainability.

Future implementation of this Plan will require partnerships between government and private sector enterprises. Whilst government may provide start-up infrastructure for certain initiatives and developments, long-term management and maintenance may need to be the responsibility of private sector businesses and community. For example, the government may build jetties to facilitate a water taxi service but a private business would need to manage it.

Other opportunities for community partnership include monitoring of public spaces (particularly within the villages of Apia and Vaiala); asset management and maintenance; organisation and promotion of cultural events on the waterfront; and opportunities for telecommunications companies to provide WiFi hotspots in key public spaces.

The government may also engage with stakeholders and community to further develop the detailed design of some elements of the Plan to encourage local ownership of waterfront assets.
Whilst this Plan seeks to create a people-oriented waterfront, there is also a need to ensure vehicular traffic is managed efficiently and safely (Figure 3.13). Adequate and efficient vehicular parking also needs to be available to accommodate future uses along the waterfront. Pedestrian-oriented areas along the waterfront will also be developed or redesigned to consider traffic calming strategies such as raised and tiled pavements (Figure 3.14) and shared zones (Figure 3.15).

The existing bus station at Savalalo is located on prime waterfront land and will be redesigned to better ensure pedestrian safety, efficient movement of vehicles and potential to encourage more activity. The bus terminal should be established at the Fugalei Market (or other appropriate areas) and the bus station at Savalalo redesigned as a transit stop to offer pick-up and drop-off services only (not long-term layover parking). Improving and rationalising the public bus service will encourage more users and potentially tourists.

The improved bus service, along with development of a cycle path and water-based transport, will help to offer attractive alternatives to the private vehicle.

A designated shared path for pedestrians and cyclists is proposed in the Apia Waterfront Central and Apia Waterfront Harbour areas, whilst a designated cycleway on the road is proposed for Mulinu’u Waterfront and Vaiala Waterfront areas. Future developments in the waterfront will need to consider how to cater for
cycling facilities (e.g. storage racks and change rooms). They will also be required to provide reasonable amounts of vehicular parking spaces.

The parking in front of FMFMII Building will be redesigned to maximise efficiencies and provide a mixture of long-stay and short-stay parking opportunities. A parking building is proposed on the TATTE Building complex to assist with parking demand in the town centre for both government workers and the general public.

Future commercial opportunities include extending the public bus service to Mulinu’u Peninsula and providing a circular bus route system around the town area to service workers and tourists. This service could loop from Mulinu’u to Taumeasina and back.

Figure 3.16 is a good example of safe pedestrian crossings that exist on Vaitele Road. The raised pavement, street lighting and pedestrian refuge in the centre of the road help to make this a safe crossing for pedestrians on a relatively busy road.
The government is committed to sustainably managing the country’s natural assets including its land, water and vegetation in order to protect these areas from natural threats and contamination. Significant natural assets in the waterfront area include mangrove areas (Figure 3.17), parks, landscaping, native trees, the sea, rivers and beaches; these should be protected and rehabilitated where necessary. It is important that the waterfront, including the beaches and the seawater, are clean for people to enjoy and use.

There are plans underway to improve stormwater drainage in Apia, particularly along the waterfront where flooding is an issue during heavy storms (see Figure 3.18). Installation of rain gardens (see Figure 3.19) using native grasses and plantings will help to manage stormwater runoff and improve stormwater quality.

Food vendors and restaurants will be encouraged to consider environmentally-friendly options to dispose of food containers. There are also opportunities with community groups and village councils to develop waterfront management plans with government to ensure long-term sustainability.

The Waterfront Plan particularly encourages the conservation and expansion of existing mangrove areas at Vaiusu Bay and the Taumeasina area. Mangroves are extremely productive ecological resources, providing a habitat for a wide array of native species. They also provide vulnerable shorelines with critical protection from coastal erosion and storm surges.
Strategy 9: Ensure future buildings, public spaces and infrastructure are resilient to climate change

As a small island developing state, Samoa is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Samoa has the potential to be the leader in planning and designing climate change resilient cities and towns in the Pacific region. Sustainable developments along the waterfront should be best-practice exemplars for the rest of the country to follow, showcasing public spaces that incorporate climate change adaptation strategies and energy-efficient buildings (Figure 3.20).

A number of climate change adaptation strategies for buildings and developments will need to be prioritised in the future through enabling policies and the appropriate allocation of funding. For example, a cost-effective adaptation strategy is to require all buildings along the waterfront to locate all critical electrical equipment to the upper floors of the building, preventing them from being destroyed in the event of a severe storm surge or tsunami.

Coastal infrastructure must be designed to adapt to the increasing impacts of climate change. Furthermore, an additional siren in the Mulinu’u Waterfront area and clearly signposted escape routes should be considered with regard to best-practice disaster risk reduction.

The concrete environment in urban areas creates localised increases in temperature, causing the “urban heat island effect”. This effect can be reduced by creating a network of connected green spaces along the waterfront and increasing the number of native shade trees on main pedestrian routes and public spaces. New developments should also be encouraged to use lighter building materials, landscaping and rain gardens. These strategies will help to cool the microclimate of the waterfront and create a more pedestrian-friendly waterfront. This in turn will encourage people to walk rather than use private vehicles to get around the waterfront, helping to reduce carbon emissions and increase opportunities for healthy exercise.

The importance of integrating climate change and disaster risk management into core national and sector plan policies ensures that appropriate response mechanisms become a part of the implementation framework. The appropriateness and type of response is dependent on the results of climate change and hazard risks analyses and vulnerability assessments of sector plans and major investment initiatives, to identify potential impacts.
It is important to protect and enhance significant views and vistas along the waterfront as they contribute strongly to the positive experience of the waterfront. Preserving important vistas to culturally important landmarks such as the Clock Tower, Mount Vaea, Vaiala village, the Old Courthouse Building and the waterfront edge helps to orient visitors to the waterfront.

Enhancing existing views and creating new viewing points along the waterfront also helps to connect people to the sea. This will be achieved by regulating building heights and developments located along major vistas. Key vistas along Beach Road and Vaea Street will be enhanced with strategic landscaping and native trees.

A series of lookout points and viewing areas will be constructed along the seawall and to the mangrove areas in Mulinu’u Waterfront and Vaiala Waterfront. Locally-designed waterfront gateway markers will be installed to identify significant entry points to the waterfront area. Future commercial opportunities could include walking tours to these attractions.

Figure 3.21 illustrates the locations of landmarks, gateway markers and lookout points, as well as significant views and vistas.

Figures 3.22 to 3.24 are photographs of significant views along the waterfront that should be protected and enhanced wherever possible.
Figure 3.22: View of Vaisigano from Eleele Fou

Figure 3.23: View of Beach Road from Vaisigano

Figure 3.24: View corridor on Vaea Street to Clock Tower
Figure 3.25: Pedestrians crossing at the Savalolo bus station