In a $12 million four-stage project, Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) transformed the tired main street into a vibrant and liveable community space through the Bulcock Street Revitalisation Project.

A transformation to a vibrant-green community place

In 1917, Bulcock Street was established as the main street of sunny Caloundra on the Sunshine Coast. One hundred years later, competing against new urban centres, big box malls and online retail, the rundown street was in decline. In a $12 million four-stage project, Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) transformed the tired main street into a vibrant and liveable community space through the Bulcock Street Revitalisation Project. This project is Australia’s first smart city streetscape demonstration and testing facility, showcasing the latest smart city technologies.
At the outset of the project, the much-loved shady fig trees dominated the 20-metre wide street, with some also planted in raised containers. Twenty years after planting, these trees were significantly root-bound and at risk of catastrophic failure. Key to the success of the project was creating a people-orientated flexible street to foster events and act as an inviting public space. Council recognised that recreating the cooling shade previously provided by the fig trees would be crucial to achieving this goal.

"To ensure success we instigated investment in underground tree health using Citygreen’s StrataVault system, specialist soil mixes and tree grow-on contracts."

– Scott Howarth, Landscape Architect at SCC

Sian Crawford, Landscape Architect at SCC, said, “With the Sunshine Coast Council’s Landscape Architects acting in many roles; the client, the project manager, design lead, and project delivery, our challenge was to take the community and organisation on a journey to re-imagine the high street experience through a holistic placemaking framework. As Landscape Architects, we listened, learned and shaped the streetscape forms, layout, infrastructure, selected materials and plants species, and collaborated with engineers and artists, as key participants in this process of collective leadership.”

Scott Howarth, Landscape Architect at SCC, said, “The design responded to the community’s desire for a green street with substantial tree planting and garden areas. To ensure success we instigated investment in underground tree health using Citygreen’s StrataVault system, specialist soil mixes and tree grow-on contracts. Between 2016 and 2018, 35 Elaeocarpus Obovatus were installed in the StrataVault system. These trees were 700L when installed and were grown by council’s nursery specifically for this project.”
Trees planted with StrataVault clearly outperforming those planted without the system

Overall, the project saw a total of 105 extra trees planted in the street, though not all were installed in the StrataVault system. A few years down the track, this has provided an insightful comparison – with trees planted in stages 3 & 4 using StrataVault clearly outperforming those planted in stage 1 that didn’t use any type of StrataVault or StrataCell system.

Sian Crawford said, “Feedback from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. In terms of the physical outcome, Bulcock Street is now a vibrantly-green, comfortable place to be. Momentum following the streetscape has resulted in a community embracing innovation and activation, with an increased sense of identity and self-determination. Eclectic in character, fun and colourful, the street has evolved into an ‘alternative’ retail experience that appeals to all ages and is uniquely ‘Caloundra’. Retail outcomes support this, with Caloundra experiencing an increase in the total spending during the 2017/18 financial year of 8% above the 2016/17 results (equating to $39.3 million in extra trade). An overwhelming success, the project was nominated for the 2020 Queensland AILA Landscape Architecture Awards.”