Community Pride:
A Man-Made Environment’s Contribution to the 
Formation and Sustaining of Community Pride

An Honors Thesis

by

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Abstract

Communities are defined by places and certain qualities—those that make it unique, well-liked, and even treasured. The town of Lennox Head, located in New South Wales, Australia, is distinguished by a local icon, its Surf Life Saving Club.

The Club is a place where people swim in the waves, meet a friend for coffee, bask in the sun, or watch the waters as volunteer surf lifesavers. This study will look at how a man-made environment contributes to the formation and sustaining of community pride, or the sense of joy and dignity among the body of individuals. The question looks at the community, both residents and visitors, in the context of the Surf Life Saving Club. To carry out the study, data was collected through methods of historical research and observation, and a theory of placemaking is presented and analyzed. The beginnings of Lennox Head is introduced, followed by the exploration of the multiple facets of the Surf Life Saving Club including activities, observations, community culture, formation, origins, and beginnings of the building, and an examination of its coexistence. Other factors of influence on the Club include water as a source of destruction, the National Surfing Reserve, and the nearby Lake Ainsworth and its value to the community. All of these findings that support the existence of the Surf Club are compared with four qualities that contribute to placemaking.

The Surf Life Saving Club, on the Pacific shore of Lennox Head, provides a setting unspoiled by urban development and sustains the community, of members and visitors, creating a place that radiates community pride.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Joseph Bilello for advising me through this project. In the midst of living abroad in Lennox Head, we both came to better know the place through this exploration of the Surf Life Saving Club and the community.

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Significance

The Lennox Head Surf Life Saving Club is a place where people swim in the waves, meet a friend for coffee, smile, lounge in the sand, lifeguard, and volunteer to save lives. According to the Lennox Wave, a local icon has great value to the people. The publication claims the “Life Saving Club is one in a million” And “to many, it is a symbol of everything that is good about Lennox Head—a community facility used and cared for by the community (The Lennox Wave).

The Club is an important piece of the community and from its significance emerges: how does a man-made environment contribute to the formation and sustaining of community pride?

This question looks at the community, both residents and visitors, in the context of the Surf Life Saving Club in Lennox Head, New South Wales, Australia. The man-made environment is the Surf Life Saving Club. The formation includes the realization and development of the Club, at its origins in 1974. Sustaining community pride can be understood through the following definitions. According to the Merriam dictionary, to sustain means “to supply with sustenance” or “nourish” (Merriam). Another definition describes sustain as “to support the weight of” or “to carry or withstand” (Merriam). In the context of the community, sustaining looks at how the Surf Club is a supplying source of existence, nourishing the people in some manner. Community refers to the residents of Lennox Head, supported by tourists and other visitors of Lennox Head. More specifically, a community is defined as “a unified body of individuals,” which might refer to a group that lives in a common location or have a common characteristic (Merriam). Pride is “a reasonable or justifiable self-respect” or “delight or elation arising from some act” as defined by the Merriam Dictionary (Merriam). Accordingly, community
pride can be defined as a sense of joy and dignity among the body of individuals. The question then stands, "How does the Surf Life Saving Club support a sense of joy and dignity among the community members of Lennox Head?"
Research Method

To conduct this case study of the Surf Life Saving Club in Lennox Head, New South Wales, Australia, a question was formed and defined, data was collected through a variety of methods, and the theory of a successful place was explored and tested.

The first step is to formulate a question. From a couple weeks' time of living in Lennox Head, and experiencing and observing the place, I discovered the significance of the Surf Life Saving Club and its importance to the community. The question that emerged is "How does a man-made environment contribute to the formation and sustaining of community pride" in the context of the Surf Life Saving Club in Lennox Head. To address the question, sustain and community pride were defined.

Data was collected in a variety of methods. Historical research of Lennox Head was gathered, from the local library in Lennox Head and historian, Malcolm Milner. Information on Surf Life Saving Clubs was collected. The remaining research was through observation, encounters and interviews with local people. Observation was performed periodically across two weeks, on different days of the week and at different times of day. Data collection was a significant piece in the success of understanding the Surf Life Saving Club in the context of the Lennox Head community.

To understand if the Club is successful, I looked at the four qualities of placemaking that include sociability, accessibility, image, and activities. A comparative analysis was made through the application of these four qualities to the Surf Life Saving Club.

The study was completed through the proposal of a question, research collected through a variety of methods, and the qualities of placemaking.
I. The Beginnings

Years ago, in the late 19th century, Lennox Head was only settled by a few. The area was naturally isolated, with the swamp to the south and the scrub to the north. Similar to other small towns along the coastline, the livelihood was supported by farming, sugar cane, and cutting timber. The village consisted of "little more than a few fishermen's huts and a shop" (RRHS, 11). In contrast to the nearby areas that were thriving, Lennox Head was simply 'The Beach', a recreation area. A member of the village years ago, Jill Goodman, expressed "life was a lot less complicated. Simple activities such as exploring the seashore, fishing, swimming, collecting wood to boil a billy and roaming the sandhills filled our days" (RRHS, 21). In response, "with the advent of television, fast-moving transport and extensive road networks and the rapid development of Lennox Head we see today, it seems some of the simple pleasures are no longer enjoyed" (RRHS, 21).

These disappearing simple pleasures are restored through the livelihood and community interaction found at the Surf Life Saving Club. The Club is a place that provides for social interaction, leisure, and activities, bringing together members of the Surf Life Saving Club, the community and visitors alike. The community has come a long way from its simplicity as a village, but the town of Lennox Head still rings of happiness among members of its community.
II. Surf Life Saving Club

Activities

The Surf Life Saving Club is a significant community resource. It provides for both the members in the immediate town of Lennox Head and Alstonville, as well as community members and visitors alike.

With a town of only 2,000 people in Lennox and nearly 5,000 from the nearby Alstonville, a membership to the Club of over 500 alludes to the significance of the place, the Surf Life Saving Club. It is a place of a myriad of activities. Civic service (life saving), competition, mateship, and enjoyment of surf all merge, creating a synergy among users.

According to the Lennox Head Alstonville Surf Life Saving Club Handbook for Nippers, "A surf lifesaver is a person who demonstrates the character, skill and service that epitomizes the best of the Australian culture. Surf lifesavers give their time as volunteers in the service of their communities. They are fit, skilled, team oriented and adaptable Australians" (Handbook, 2). Though the Surf Life Saving Club of Lennox Head has only been standing since 1980 and formed a couple years earlier in 1974, the Australian tradition of lifesavers has been alive since 1899 on Manly Beach near Sydney (Jaggard, 45). Club members patrol the beaches, giving beachgoers a sense of security. They lead the way to "feeling a greater sense of ease with the Australian environment" (Jaggard, 1). The role they play raises a sense of pride for the lifesavers as the people depend on them. "In many, but not all instances, surf life saving is a very personal commitment by one person to the notion of volunteerism for the benefit of others whom they don't know, and may never know or see again" (Jaggard, 225). From
the feelings of one local, Brian Dell says, “I love surf life saving and I love being involved. I love the ocean and the camaraderie” (Lennox Head – Alstonville Surf Life Saving Club). Beyond the individual and community level, the surf lifesavers contributed to Australian culture by “assisting in the creation of a new national image” (Jaggard, 10). Service provided by the lifesavers demonstrates commitment to the safety of people, protecting them in their local community in the water activities of the Pacific Ocean.

Figure 1: Nippers on 7 Mile Beach

The other dimension of life saving is competition in water or on land, with skills evaluation and open swim, among others. Gradually, for this reason more and more people are becoming members, versus decades ago when perhaps the sole purpose was assisting the community in its effort to provide a safe environment. One such
competition involves the Nippers. Sunday beach days are organized and reflect the

crowd of participants and spectators (See Figure 1). In America a Sunday morning is

most commonly viewed as a solemn and joyous time spent in a church or service, but

here that sense of spiritual community lies along the sea. Something in the way the sky

meets the water, whether it is flat as glass or dangerously rough as the currents crash

against the shore, creates an atmosphere. Looking into the coastline, with the wind

breeze streaming across your face, the image captures you, and the place becomes a

life source for the well-being of the person. As a place that can be sought out for

spiritual refuge, the ocean supports the lifestyle of these people that focuses on the

activities of the Surf Life Saving Club.

Participants in the competitions are not only members of the community, but

people from near and far with intentional and coincidental relationships to the S.L.S.C.

Visiting teams of other Surf Life Saving Clubs are present. Passers by walking up the

beach enjoy the activated space, as do people staying at the caravan park across the

way. It is not only large events that attract visitors. Many a times, an older member of

the community has stopped for coffee on a fine mid-morning. Women, too, are passing

through with their strollers. As the Surf Life Saving Club faces Lake Ainsworth, a critical

component to the community, many visitors from Caravan Park find pleasure in a lunch

from the café that sits just inside the Surf Life Saving Club. On this day, the Ball State

University Australia Centre group and visitors are dispersed over the site, some

swimming, others borrowing long boards to practice some introductory skills, and others

making friends with members and enjoying their company.
Beyond the functions of the Surf Club itself, many local members of the community will use the space for a desired function. On Tuesday mornings and some evenings, yoga is offered. Attendees range from age groups of late teens thru early 40s. Classes are usually full. Singing and dance are seen here, too. Other days karate is offered. The majority of these users are young males. The use is not limited to active pursuits. On Tuesday mornings men and women congregate to play bridge. The chamber of commerce frequently meets at the Club, usually on Monday evenings. These enjoyable activities are offered for a variety of ages, proving that the Surf Club provides a place for interests beyond surfing alone.

Another function of the space is a room for a reception or celebration event. People from the area and outside the limits of Lennox Head can enjoy a view of the Pacific and utilizing an underutilized space.

The congregation of members and visitors at the Surf Life Saving Club is extraordinary. This exchange among people and their enjoyment and activation of space embodies the key role of the Surf Life Saving Club in the town of Lennox Head. It is a place where anytime throughout the week and most times throughout the day, someone is enjoying the facility or coast of the Pacific. The place is unspoiled by urban development—for some, a memory of what has been good about Australia.

Observations

Over the course of 2 weeks between Sunday, April 7th and Saturday, April 22nd, observations were made on a variety of days, at various times of day, and in different conditions at the Surf Life Saving Club. These observations will give insight into how the
place functions on a daily and special (occasional) basis and will help to determine the success of the Surf Life Saving Club and how effectively it sustains the community.

Saturday, April 7th, 3:30 p.m.

I see a little boy in a fluorescent green and electric blue full-body swimsuit writing a red hat with a piece of fabric draped for protection. He walks to the wood fence, climbs through and begins walking towards the water. He is one of many people I see today at the Surf Life Saving Club.

Today, this Saturday afternoon, nothing out of the ordinary is happening—except there are more people here than I have seen yet, not including days when the Nippers compete. It is Easter weekend and for this reason, people from near and far are enjoying the beautiful fall sun before the weather cools.

People are by the beach enjoying the water or resting in the shade provided by the Surf Life Saving Club. With only enough chairs in the shade for a dozen people, people are lying in the grace to find relief from the sun, in the shadows of the Club’s building. A lady sips her fruit smoothie, a young girl covers her head in a pink polka-dot towel, a lady orders her cappuccino, a man in white-flowered shorts rinses the salt water off his body, two kids chat at a picnic table over an ice cream treat, a family takes a group photo, one bloke carries up a surf board from the day, an older couple seeks rest from their beach walk.

The waves crash and people move farther out as low tide becomes nearer. The yellow and red flags are breaking in the wind. I see yellow long-sleeved shirts and wide-brimmed hats. These are the surf lifesavers.
On a busy day, people flood the water. With nearly 100 swimmers and just as many looking out from the beach, the job of the lifesavers is crucial. Looking down the 7 Mile Beach, I see clusters of people wading and boogie-boarding, but it is only here in the protected area at where these families enjoy their afternoon, entrusting their children’s safety to none other than the surf lifesavers. There is an older man and a young man on duty, with a couple others nearby at the patrol station for assistance. Kids run along the beach, making sandcastles, slipping off boogie boards, and jumping into the waves. Adults casually read on the beach or grab a snack. They are always keeping an eye out for their child, but in case a current takes them under, the surf lifesavers are alert and ready and able to handle the situation responsibly.

*Tuesday, April 9th, 10:30 a.m.*

The sun is peaking through the clouds and the grasses and trees are swaying back and forth as the wind picks up.

It’s late morning and though during the week, the place is lively. One couple is enjoying coffee. A group of ladies have met up for morning coffee and a biscuit. Two parents and their young daughter are met by a couple friends, enjoying drinks as well. Everyone is enjoying the sea breeze, relaxing in the shade just in front of the Surf Club. The sun comes out and they are content viewing the ocean from underneath the deck.

A violet, fuchsia, and turquoise kite flies by on the beach and I see an older woman with her hat on head and linen top holding onto the base. She looks to be alone. A group of school-aged kids walk up in a group of six, walk across the open lawn, and head down to the beach. Four girls post their surfboard on the fence and prepare for a surfing lesson. One board blows over—you already tell its going to be a rough day
the waves. A group of young boys approach and grab a seat on the picnic table. About two dozen people are hanging out by the café and another 35 are in the waves.

It is an ordinary, fall weekday. People are out. I wonder if they have work later or think where they might be traveling from. Regardless, they have come to the beach. With miles of beach on either side, it is notable that they all chose this location. I look in both directions and see few walking down the beach, but here, there is a concentration of people. Maybe the place is convenient; maybe it is just a way to get to the beach.

Either way—people are here, at the Surf Club, enjoying morning coffee and swimming in the waves guarded by the surf lifesavers. I believe they are there because of instinct; people subconsciously know it is a place of security against the destructive waves.

*Sunday, April 15th, 1:30 p.m.*

The morning started off overcast. Throughout the day, the clouds cleared up. The breeze is cool, indicative of the fall weather that is underway. The scent of fall spreads across the space. The waves are a bit rougher today, too. Only about a dozen people are in the waves, with just as many wading or lying on the beach in the area between the flags. Six lifesavers are hanging around the tent, with their eyes stretching back and forth across the waters to ensure the safety of all people. There are more than usual, but it is Sunday. On either side of the flags, the population is sparse, with a couple surfers in the water. Two children are passing a rugby ball and three others are playing in a life boat, sitting where the tide meets the shore. There are four lifesavers at the shore.

By the Surf Club, about 30 people stretch across the site. A couple with their four young children under the age of eight occupies a picnic table and stretch out on a
blanket just next to it. A little boy grabs his scooter and the two older sisters of the three engage in a water fight. Two women purchase a cool refreshment from the café—a mineral water and a soda and walk over to find a table in the sun. A group of three ladies sit at a table under the shade of the roof. They are dressed casually. It appears they met her for a chat and view of the ocean, with no intention of swimming. Two other women are on the other side of the law, taking in sun and finishing up their coffees.

The baristas are busy at work—and easily spotted by the black attire they wear. A bike is hitched to the wooden fence just next to the dune. A man walks up in a red top, dripping with water. He just came out of the ocean. A couple people walk in, through, and out of the site. Bleached blond hair moves in the breeze as a man in his twenties leans over the wooden fence to take in a view of the water.

_Sunday, April 15th, 2:30 p.m.—Interview_

As I wandered along the beach, one of the surf lifesavers approached me. Brett is a middle-aged man who openly talked to me about some of his experience as a surf life saver.

Surf lifesavers and lifeguards give of their time. On the weekend there are at least four surf lifesavers on duty and during the week there are two lifeguards. The lifesavers are volunteers, but the lifeguards during the week are paid. Brett has been out here for the afternoon, watching the beach with five other lifesavers. They are all about his age, except one who is much younger, about twenty. They are mostly parents of kids who began as nippers here at the Surf Life Saving Club, volunteering their time here, on the beach, during the weekends. Most often, the surf lifesavers are recruited after the kids are already involved. They find value in volunteering for those they love.
and people of the community or visitors, all of whom they find it important to protect. He says a lot of his saving actually occurs outside the time he is on duty. Whether on the beach or on duty, according to Brett, "We're locals. We're going to be here anyway" (Brett). Some might be selfish to freely give their time, but for Brett and other lifesavers, it makes sense their time there. "You do it because you want to be here" (Brett). Brett lives just down the street and many of them live close, too. Since he spends much of his time by the water anyway, he has an outlook of 'why not participate'? They have seen their children grow up through the Club and acknowledge the value of the surf lifesavers and the role they play in the safety of those in the water. The place is good for kids and families. The "surf club is really good for young people" claims Brett. In this atmosphere, people can gather and enjoy the water with the security of knowing someone is looking after them.

Thursday, April 19th 3:30 p.m.

The Surf Club is a little less busy than usual. There are twelve people near the Club. There is a family of five with three children. One boy has a yellow soccer ball and the girl has a boogie board. It looks like a family outing. There was a man and a woman sitting on the picnic table. They were enjoying the company of one another on an afternoon date. Two ladies were sitting at a white plastic table with her dog, enjoying coffee. Another woman, wearing a long, patterned skirt, is standing in line to order.

People are sprinkled across the beach and in the ocean. There are 18 people in and out of the water. The surf lifesavers seem to be enjoying the afternoon, appreciating the calm day in a carefree way of looking after the water, with a less arduous day of keeping track of person after person.
Saturday, April 21st, 7 p.m.

The activity on the water is little, with a usual couple people walking across the beach. Contrary to the typical night of quiet near the Surf Club, there was a group of 25 people having a cookout. A tent with a white nylon canopy was set up earlier in the day, with unknown intentions. Here it was, standing in the darkness, sheltering a group of friends for an evening of food, drink, and good company. With many other areas, either along the lake or down the shore along the beach, they chose this piece of grass to pitch a tent and host a festivity. It is possible that none of these people were even members of the Club, but regardless, they were taking advantage of that place.

Community Culture

Within the place of the Surf Life Saving Club, altruism, loyalty, and energy are inherently woven within. The community’s culture plays a pivotal role in defining the life saving model of the members. The focus on surf awareness skills and activities for the youth and community was the initial Surf Club strategy. It is equally important to simultaneously "build trust and rapport with the ‘hard core’ elements of the surfing community who would be needed to make an efficient rescue service" (Jaggard, 277). After all, people die from doing this. Therefore, the confrontation with the wilderness of powerful surf ensures collaboration among community members, building a sense of camaraderie. "Surf life saving is greater than the sum of its parts, because so many different exciting experiences make it what it is" (Jaggard, 237). Not only are participants becoming developed physically, but socially. They learn how to manage risk by patrolling the beach, understanding that your skills are relied upon for the safety of
others. Entrusting lives in the hands of surf lifesavers builds trust among members and within the community. "Making effective surf lifesavers out of members" in turn is "making great Australians" (Jaggard, 237). The individual's strength heightens the strength of the community and together is a symbiotic relationship and stronghold for the entire community, and in this case, Lennox Head.

Building Community: Origins of the Building

The Formation

In the 1940s, brothers Fred and Bill Fisher imagined a surf club for the little resort village of Lennox Head, but little did they know that they began a phenomenon, involving hundreds of people decades later. In the 1930s, the South Ballina Shire Surf Club gathered efforts to setup a Lennox Branch, but the attempt failed. (NSTAR, Brothers). At the time, there were miles of deserted beach open for raw enjoyment by the flocks of weekenders and crowds on holidays. In 1946 Bill recognized the lack of safety and said to Fred "Fred, there's a lot of beach here and none of it's patrolled" (NSTAR, Brothers). At that moment, "we decided to form a surf club" (NSTAR, Brothers). From there the Surf Life Saving Club of Lennox Head would emerge.

While Fred began instruction, support grew from the local government and area. The case gained backing by the Tintenbar Shire and the Far North Coast branch of the Surf Life Saving Association. As money was being raised, members were enrolling. Thursday Fred biked from Ballina to training of a squad. These were all sons of farmers, traveling six miles my horse or bike. Dances were held in the small hall in town to raise money for the Club. From one year, 135 pounds was collected. Fred instructed and helped raise money, but another contribution of his is the insignia, designed by Fred
himself (See Figure 2). This first effort to form a Surf Life Saving Club was folded. In time, council, business houses, and community members were backing the project.

Figure 2: Lennox Head S.L.S.C. Insignia

In 1973, there was an inaugural meeting to re-form the Club (N STAR, Clubhouse). On January 7\textsuperscript{th} of 1974, a general meeting of the public was held. "The new Club came into being on that night" (N STAR, Clubhouse). In this year, the Lennox Head Surf Life Saving Club "erected a tent on the beach as their first "clubhouse"." That year, the Tintenbar Shire Council employed its first full-time lifesaver. In March of that year, an aluminum shed replaces the tent. In 1975 the Club strengthened and grew. On January 30\textsuperscript{th} of that year, the 1\textsuperscript{st} Club championships were held at Lennox Head. A real structure was soon to come.

\textit{Surf Lifesavers Club}

After the establishment of a group of lifesavers in 1974, a building was erected in 1980. The Club was $49,320, which was supported by $6,000 in funds from Members and Sponsors and the remaining $43,320 was supported by the Federal Government under the Regional Employment Development scheme (N STAR, Clubhouse). This
support of funds is an indication of the significance of the Surf Life Saving Club and the value as seen by the government and community members alike.

The Surf Club was designed and supervised by the Tintenbar Shire engineer, Mr. Peter Thorpe. His design quickly lent itself to a nickname. The Surf Club house has been nicknamed “the ark” because of its “shape and ability to be moved from one position to another on special designed foundations” (N STAR, Clubhouse). The original structure was built on large concrete skids that would “enable the building to be towed away by bulldozers should rising seas threaten!” or conditions such as cyclone or erosion would occur (Handbook, 2).

The original clubhouse could accommodate its members and protect the community, which was enabled by the support of community members and other Surf Clubs. The clubhouse had a bunkhouse on the upper level, designed to accommodate 33 members, including a kitchen, dining room, and function room. The lower levels stored club equipment such as reels and surf boats and had amenities including showers, toilets, and a secretary’s office (N STAR, Clubhouse). The Lismore Apex Club conducted an art union to help Lennox Surf Life Saving Club purchase a new boat. Established local clubs gave old reels and other equipment. During the first couple years, 64 active members patrolled each Sunday and public holidays, carnivals, and Club events.

The presence of the Club and its new structure benefitted the community despite the inexperience of these surf lifesavers. It gave “holiday makers, participating families more confidence in using the beach” (N STAR, Clubhouse). With almost 2,000 visitors staying at the caravan park during holiday times, there was a definite need for security.
The surf lifesavers unfortunately lacked equipment as well as experience. There were 50 juniors and 14 seniors that made up the 64 active members. This beginning proved as a launching point. According to the Club President at the time, Tony Cole, “Our club has shown the most rapid growth of any surf club in Australia. We lack experience but this will come” (N STAR, Clubhouse). A slow beginning quickly changed into responsive community members who supported the cause and a club of members that could protect the lives of thousands who visited Lennox Head each year.

A Need for New Facilities

One volunteer at the Surf Life Saving Club, Brian Dell, confirmed this status of the structure, along with other building details. In 1992, an addition was made to update the structure for the use of its members, namely providing more storage. Since then, more bathrooms have been added and a sea container in the rear for additional storage. Years have passed, the structure is rapidly aging, and the Surf Club’s level of function, appearance, and fit with contemporary expectations no longer equals that of neighboring facilities, but struggles in design, appearance, and quality that a surf club should embody.

Members of the community feel strongly about a renovation and ideally see new construction as a means to establish a more professional and accommodating facility. Looking realistically, they want a simple upgrade. They would like for the design to be achievable and buildable in phases. Elements that would be worth adding are as follows:

1. More board storage
2. Dual access to boards
3. Patrol room—lookout tower
4. Shading structures
5. Building entry—a front door

With the addition of these five simple changes that could be achieved in stages the community members would be satisfied, though not fully pleased, with the result. These leaders and lifelong members of the Surf Life Saving Club understand the potential of a space and have the experience to visualize what could happen for the future. To further their vision, the studio students at Ball State University gave them a proposal. We gave them an image that can bring their dream closer to a reality. An image can promote and share the idea with others and gain interest in the project as well. Brian Dell, an esteemed member and longtime volunteer at the Club says they get in a mindset of doing things a certain way and he enjoys seeing new ideas. In Brian’s words, you “inspired me and I am back to thinking about this again” (Dell). Moreover, the citizens are rightly so concerned with the resilience and longevity of the current building. They see the need as so much more, with the intention of providing spaces that can fully accommodate members and visitors alike. If given the choice, designing a new facility would be preferable. In this option, they would extend storage, create a café that is more open with exterior covered seating, and provide a large room to be rented out for events such as receptions.

Discrepancy of Ownership

There is ambiguity over the ownership and responsibility of the Surf Life Saving Club, which has become problematic in recent years. The land on which the Club sits is
actually owned by the Department of Lands. According to the Club vice president at the time, Tom Berry, “the Council has a role as a kind of defacto owner, operating as a trustee” (The Lennox Wave). A problem arises when money needs to be spent. Tom Berry, in addition to many others, including surf life saving volunteer Brian Dell, believe the clubhouse is currently in very poor shape. Tom Barry recognized that improvements needed would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. In 2008, he claimed “the roof is leaking in parts, the kitchen is out of commission, the paintwork, and external cladding are in need of repair—and that’s just the start” (The Lennox Wave). The building is vulnerable and is perhaps being taken for granted. A vital piece of the livelihood and safety of the community of Lennox Head and its members rests in the Surf Life Saving Club. Damage has been recognized, but the member and local government have failed to address the dilapidation of this building. Time will tell the necessity and value on the importance of the Surf Life Savings Club and how much they are willing to invest to ensure the livelihood of its members, community, and visitors alike.

Coexistence

The well-being of the Surf Club may not always remain the same, but it is temporal. Some members today were teenagers or maybe young children, at the time of the opening in 1976. For these members, there is sentimental value instilled from years ago. This sense of attachment carries over to younger members. Others may not experience as strong of a connection. This community created varies from day to day, from season to season, year to year, and on holidays and special events. The Surf Life Saving Club at Koolingata is an example of how a Club can change. In Lennox Head, the coexistence of young and old establishes a strong sense of community.
This phenomenon, though consisting of strong ties, is temporal in nature. People will come and go in a place. At this moment in time, the Club is sustained by older and younger members alike. Members are invested into the place. It might be a certain memory that holds them there, or a Surf Life Saving Club competition or a carnival held there. It might not always be about what happens there and instead, it’s the people. The place simply brings them together. In either case, for the times of being, there is a spirit of place brought by the people.

The quality of the place depends on its members and the people using the space. A nearby Surf Club in Coolangatta, for example, has become so commercialized; members are few among all the visitors. In fact, the addition to the building was targeted at the uses and needs of visitors and those people of the community who were not members. This has destroyed the strength of place that was once very valuable to the members of the Surf Life Saving. For the members, who are the key and original users of the space, the Club has taken on a new quality that emanates touristy feelings that move away from the attachment to the earlier stages of the Surf Life Saving Club.

In time, the place might change. Once lifelong supporters move on, it is possible that the place will begin to take on a new aura. With time, the quality of membership and belonging would become restored. Decades from now, the place could take on a new being. The addition of a larger population and more tourism would contribute to a Club that feels more commercialized in place and spirit. At this point in time, the strength of the members and the visitors it attracts brings enjoyment, and it instills pride in the place and for Lennox Head as a community.
III. Factors of Influence

Water: Source of Destruction

The water, stretching farther than the eye can see, though a source of spiritual refuge is a place of destruction. The waves are strong, killing several people each year. Younger children and even adults get caught in the currents year after year. According to the National Drowning Report 2011, reported by the Royal Life Saving Society, 315 people drowned in Australian waterways. Of these deaths, 107 occurred in New South Wales (Royal Life Saving). While not all of these deaths were near the sea, some occurring in rivers and streams, the number represents the danger of water. The waters of the Pacific Ocean are fierce and can be frightening. Still, people are attracted to the sea and its unpredictability. People enjoy the Surf Life Saving Club because of its location. It is about the beach, extraordinary waves, and raw physical beauty. There is the desire for people to be by the sea and by providing safety that mitigates this wildness; more and more people can enjoy the water.

National Surfing Reserve: The Life Support of the Surf Life Saving Club

The Surf Life Saving Club would not exist if not for the water. The waters outside the Surf Life Saving Club are part of the Lennox National Surfing Reserve. “These are areas of coastal waters that have been recognised by National Surfing Reserves Australia (NSRA) & NSW Department of Lands as iconic sites being of environmental, cultural and historical significance to the Australian surfing culture” (LNSR, 2). One benefit of belonging to this reserve lies in what the Reserve can do for you. The regulations state that funds should be used to "enhance surfing facilities and other
recreational, environmental and cultural activities adjacent to the Reserve through Federal, State and local collaboration & grants" (LNSR, 8). The significance of the water reflects back on the vitality of a place, the Surf Life Saving Club, that supports its activities, in turn supporting the community as a whole.

Lake Ainsworth

One member of the community, Louise Owen, remembers the simple pleasures, even not too long ago. These memories are described in the account that discusses Lake Ainsworth and the Zoned Operational Land.

While the Surf Life Saving Club is a critical anchor to the pride and beginnings of Lennox Head, the nearby lake, Lake Ainsworth, holds value to members of the community, continuing a tradition from many years ago.

The southeastern corner of Lake Ainsworth used to be a more activated space that involved the whole community, while today it stands as a section of land without order, serving mainly those of the Caravan Park. Louise Owen, a lifetime member of the community and an involved citizen in the local Ballina Shire Council, describes some of her memories when expressing what this place used to be.

Louise is representing the community in the current battle of saving the Zoned Operational Land that is currently owned by the community. This piece of land is proposed to be sold to the State for development of the existing Caravan Park. This would promote the commercialization of the area, taking away from this valuable asset that the community now holds. The community has not financially or physically invested in this area for the people in quite some time. Now is the opportunity to restore this place to the relaxing and functional oasis for people of the community and their children.
Picture a sunny day with people sun-bathing across the sands and resting under colorful umbrellas, picnicking under an old pine tree, children laughing as they swing around the merry-go-round, and splashing in the hot summer air. Decades ago, there stood a diving tower in the lake, for the use of the community and visitors. It was an icon, a place pure enjoyment. Due to an unfortunate accident, the tower was deconstructed, never to be seen again. There used to be a pontoon, too, crazy boat races, and sailboats.

Louise recalls some of her earlier memories, reminiscing of what the place used to be. "We used to just sit at those picnic tables and just look at the lake. There's the merry-go-round. It just makes me laugh, oh gosh. It was really simple, really easy, with lot and lots of activities at a time." Luis looks puzzled when she sees a picture. She reacts with "nobody puts up umbrellas, I don't know why."

Louise sees how this area used to be and imagines it to become ever more for the community. Louise Owen tells us that "the community does not want it sold...does not want it sold." "We want kids swinging and people playing." She sees the possibilities as unbelievable for the community. Her final remark rings strong. On behalf of the community and people she represents, she claims "we desperately want to win this back...desperately...desperately, desperately."

As an advocate for the community and their best interests at heart, she imagines a place that can be fully utilized by the people of Lennox Head, restoring it to a place of laughter and relaxation. Louise sees the success of the Surf Life Saving Club and understands the benefits of a space for the public, benefiting the community as a whole.
IV. Placemaking: What Makes a Successful Place?

Through research and first-hand experience it is evident that the Club is a place of activity, energy, and sparkle. Many factors contribute to these qualities, creating a successful Surf Life Saving Club. To better understand how these qualities connect and embrace a space, a publication from the Project for Public Space is used as a guide and a means of evaluation.

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is an organization. It is an organization “dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities” (PPS). The goal of the organization is to promote placemaking and uses the work of William Whyte, the author of “The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces” as a foundation for their projects in over 2,500 communities across the United States and in 40 countries. The organization partners with federal, state, and municipal agencies and civic organizations such as neighborhood associations in addition to other groups.

According to PPS, “Great public spaces are where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges take place, friends run into each other and cultures mix” (PPS). These places can be inside a building or outside in a plaza. The organization looked specifically at four criteria that make a successful place. Each criterion has qualities of intuitive or qualitative aspects help to judge a place, and each of these looks at quantitative aspects that can be measured. The relationship of these qualities is represented in Figure 3 (PPS). The four key qualities are sociability, accessibility, comfort, and activities.
The following descriptions and questions to consider on each of the four qualities are primarily derived from the analysis by the Project for Public Spaces.

1. **Sociability is where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.**

   Sociability is a "difficult quality for a place to achieve, but once attained it becomes an unmistakable feature" (PPS). A place has sociability when people can come together. They may see friends and neighbors or interact with strangers. With this level of comfort, people feel a stronger sense of place and as a result, a stronger sense of community. Without people, there would be no community.

   **Questions to Consider:**

   a. Is this a place where you would choose to meet your friends? Are others meeting friends here or running into them?
b. Are people in groups? Are they talking with one another?
c. Do people seem to know each other by face or by name?
d. Do people bring their friends and relatives to see the place or do they point to one of its features with pride?
e. Are people smiling? Do people make eye contact with each other?
f. Do people use the place regularly and by choice?
g. Does a mix of ages and ethnic groups that generally reflect the community at large?

2. Accessibility refers to a place and its connection to its surroundings.

Accessibility allows for people to engage in the activities and uses in the place because it is easy to get to. Connections to its surroundings—both visual and physical—are a means of judging accessibility (PPS). It is visible near and far and easy to circulate to, through, and around.

Questions to Consider:

a. Can you see the space from a distance? Is its interior visible from the outside?
b. Is there a good connection between the space and the adjacent buildings, or is it surrounded by blank walls? Do occupants of adjacent buildings use the space?
c. Can people easily walk to the place? For example, do they have to dart between moving cars to get to the place?
d. Do sidewalks lead to and from the adjacent areas?
e. Do the roads and paths through the space take people where they actually want to go?

f. Can people use a variety of transportation options — bus, train, car, bicycle, etc. — to reach the place?

3. **Image is key: the space needs to be comfortable and the place needs a good image.**

   Comfort describes qualities such as cleanliness, seating availability and choice, and safety (PPS). People appreciate places with a good image, for they represent the community.

   **Questions to Consider:**

   a. Does the place make a good first impression?

   b. Are there enough places to sit? Are seats conveniently located? Do people have a choice of places to sit, either in the sun or shade?

   c. Are spaces clean and free of litter? Who is responsible for maintenance? What do they do? When?

   d. Does the area feel safe? Is there a security presence? Are people taking pictures? Are there many photo opportunities available?

   e. Do vehicles dominate pedestrian use of the space or prevent access?

4. **Activities are the uses available to the users.**

   According to PPS, "Activities are the basic building blocks of a place" (PPS). If there is something to do, people have a reason to come to a place and keep coming back. Conversely, a space will be empty if there is nothing to do. A variety of activities gives an opportunity for more people to participate — people of both genders, all ages, and group sizes — throughout all times of the day.
Questions to Consider:

a. Are people using the space or is it empty?
b. Is it used by people of different ages?
c. Are people in groups?
d. How many different types of activities are occurring? Are there choices of things to do?
e. Which parts of the space are used and which are not?

Each of these four criterions have a subset of qualities that characterize each. Sociability, accessibility, comfort, and activities are contributions to the Club and the theory that the man-made environment, the Surf Life Saving Club, sustains community pride in Lennox Head.
V. Measuring Up: Comparative Analysis

The Surf Life Saving Club supports the four qualities of sociability, accessibility, comfort, and activities. As described by the Project for Public Spaces, these four qualities align with the place of the Surf Life Saving Club. Each characteristic will be critically analyzed in comparison to the Surf Life Saving Club in the framework of the historical research and observation. Sociability, accessibility, comfort, and activities are the qualities of the Surf Life Saving Club in Lennox Head that characterize the success of a sense of joy and dignity throughout the Lennox Head area, for members of the Club, locals in the community, and visitors to the town.

Sociability

Sociability is a strength of the Surf Life Saving Club, supporting the argument that the place provides happiness for the people native to and visiting Lennox Head. According to Project for Public Spaces, a place has sociability when people can come together. The Surf Life Saving Club does exactly this—brings together people of all different kinds, binding them together with happiness in a place, a place of the Surf Life Saving Club in Lennox Head.

Each visit to the Surf Life Saving Club presented a new kind of interaction among people that varied in location, group sizes, familiarity, convenience, and combination of ages and synthesis of peoples from all places.

Most commonly, people would use the Surf Life Saving Club as a place to meet a friend for coffee, as noted in April 9th and April 19th. It was commonly a few middle-aged women that would simply dine by the Club and engage in conversation, while other activities happened. It was not only people meeting others, but always, there was a surf
lifesaver who encountered a familiar face on the beach or another member of the Club, whether it is young or old.

People were almost always in groups, whether it be in a group of a few people or a large group at a social gathering. There were small groups of friends that would meet, as described in April 9th with a group of ladies. Not only friends meet, but also families, young families in fact, as witnessed on April 19th, with a family who hung around the picnic table, just outside of the Surf Club. A group of 25 occupied the space on April 22nd. An even larger group, of a couple hundred, occupied the entire place—building, lawn, beach, and water, for the nipper competition on an early Sunday morning. From small to large, a variety of group sizes occupied the Surf Club, demonstrating success in sociability.

The people at the Surf Life Saving Club are familiar with one another and share the place with others. Many people seem to know each other or at least recognize the other as an acquaintance or familiar face. The baristas are recognized by their black attire and the surf lifesavers, by their bright red and yellow shirts. The people at the Surf Club ranges from family, as in the one picnicking and friends, as those who played rugby in the water—all types experience the Surf Club. While I did not witness relatives at the Surf Club, I imagine they frequent, especially for competition. People always seemed to be smiling, enjoying themselves at this place with each other.

For whatever activity or occasion, people of all ages used the Surf Club. In times of the competition, nippers from the young age of four enjoyed the place through the older kids at about ten, and also their parents, siblings, and family friends. Little kids run around the Surf Club, such as the little boy in the fluorescent green on April 7th or the
four siblings on April 15th with their parents. Teenage kid would hang out and grab a coke, middle-aged women met up, older volunteers were there and older couples, too. From young to old, all age groups were represented.

The variety of people that enjoy the Surf Life Saving Club validates the strength of the sociability of the Surf Life Saving Club in Lennox Head. A mixture of people is brought together at this location to delight in the place in a sociable manner.

Accessibility

The Surf Life Saving Club supports the activities of a place, and its position and connection to its surroundings partially supports this, through the distance from other places, ability to walk to, physical links, and transportation options. The qualities contribute to the accessibility of the Surf Life Saving Club, which reflects the quality of the place, exhibiting how the place supports community pride.

The Surf Club can be seen from a distance. It is most clearly visible from the beach and directly across the street on Pacific Parade. Further down the street on each direction, the building becomes less visible. Considering the beach culture of Lennox Head, as long as the Surf Life Saving Club was been seen from the beach, the place remains to be an attraction and success. Since the building sits on an open site, there is ample space for activities on three sides of the building, with the fourth side aligned closely with the street. People from the caravan park frequent the place, as do members of the Surf Life Saving Club, beachgoers, and other people of the community. It is common for people to walk the beach and from there; they can easily access the Surf Life Saving Club. From the street, there is a sidewalk across the road, which allows for pedestrian access along the road from closer to the heart of town. A number of small
car parks are near the Club, allowing for people to drive to the place. Moreover, people take the liberty to park along the road and even in the grass to find a place for their car. If people want to get there, they will find a way. While bicycle lanes do not exist, drivers are friendly and biking is an option via the road or sidewalk. A bus stop is just across the street and serves as an option to reach the Surf Club as a destination. Access is not strong, but sufficient to carrying people to their destination of the Surf Club.

The position in its surroundings, distance from other places, easiness to walk to, physical connections and modes of transportation are qualities that support the accessibility to the Surf Life Saving Club. While visible access and physical connection is lacking, people can see the Surf Club from the beach, where they would access the Club anyway, and have a variety of options to reach the Surf Life Saving Club. The place is accessible and because many people can and do access the place, it proves to be a place where people want to be, supporting the concept of community pride.

Image

According to the Project for Public Spaces, image is key and the space needs to be comfortable and provide a good image. While the Surf Life Saving Club is in desperate need of renovation, comfort qualities such as cleanliness, seating availability and choice and safety contribute to a place of good image, representing the community in a positive light and therefore emanating pride from this place in the community.

Of the several questions that the Project for Public Spaces asks when looking at a successful place, one aspect to consider is the first impression. Many would argue that there is not a defining characteristic or feature in the building that emanates a strong feeling of place that demands attention. Although this is true, for the sides of the
facades except the beach-facing address that direction of space, the one successful side seems to be enough. People know the building for what it is, not by how it looks. The first impression is made through the people at the café, the surf lifesavers on duty, volunteers hanging around the Surf Club, or the people that frequent and occupy the place. These personal qualities give a strong first impression to the comfort that the place of the Surf Life Saving Club has to offer, which is a source of pride for the community. Physically looking at the space, there are places to sit, both in the shade and in the sun, however, only about 24 seats are available in both conditions. The tables and chairs are in both conditions and the picnic tables are only in the sun. When the activity level is peaked, you would think that this would be insufficient; however the Australian people make do, by laying down a blanket, as with the family on April 15th. The space, as in most places in Australia, is very clean with very little litter, if any at all. Users take pride in the place and do not seem to litter at all. Maintenance is a joint effort and is in the hands mostly of the lifeguards who are on duty throughout the week and the workers of the café and volunteer surf lifesavers on the weekends. They upkeep the place because they have pride invested in it. The area feels safe, for the building is enclosed enough without a very permeable façade. There are no security cameras present, but the presence of people using the space at all hours and in all age groups suggests a trust in the security of the place. There is not much room for entrapment spaces, thus cutting down on a potential threat of people camping out at the Surf Club in the evenings, for example. Access to the space via car does not dominate the place. Although there is a road that bisects the beach and the Surf Club with the Lake Ainsworth and the caravan park, traffic is little and people can easily cross from one
place to the other, by simply crossing the road. The road does not prevent access.

Beyond the physical image, you see users taking pictures in front of the place, as in the observation on April 7th.

The image as kept by the people is a strong quality that contributes to the image of the place, such as good cleanliness, the success is supplemented by reasonable seating availability, safety and access. The Surf Club provides a place that is indefinitely comfortable for the users and provides a good image through upkeep, but not necessarily the building façade itself. The sense of pride that the workers, volunteers, and users have in the place is strong, contributing to a sense of respect and pride for this place in the community.

Activities

Activities are the essential components to a place, providing reasons to come to a place and keep coming back. The Surf Club supports a variety of activities for an assortment of user groups, thus maximizing the use of the place. Opportunities for people to participate in these activities throughout the day, whether it is scheduled or impromptu and defined by the users, supports a sense of unity among the members, instilling community pride that emanates from this place of the Surf Life Saving Club.

At all times throughout the day, there is some sort of activity that occurs in the place, among a variety of user age groups, numbers, and types of activities. Looking through the Observations and other experiences of walking or biking by the Surf Club, people are using the space. When the weather conditions are poor, a couple lifeguards might be caught inside tidying up the Surf Club. Similarly, if there is an event held in the evening, people will be inside. Otherwise, people are scattered throughout the outside
grounds, whether it be under the verandah at a table, sprawled out in the lawn in front of the Surf Club or to either side, posted up near the wooden fence near the dune grasses, walking on the path to the beach, occupying the sand across the beach, or enjoying the water of the Pacific. The space most prominently used is the area just in front of the café, the beach in front of the Club and the water. It is important to note that although the beach and water stretches for several miles, people choose to settle, mingle, and be active in the pleasure of activities at the Surf Life Saving Club and its beach that is just in front of it. No matter what the space—it is found occupied. As described in the sociability section, a variety of age groups used the space. This variety is critical to the success of a place. If a variety of age groups are actively using a space, as time goes on, the place continues to sustain itself, for providing activities for all age groups allows for a place to support its users.

There are a myriad of activities occurring across the site of the Surf Life Saving Club. After research and initial observation, it is clear that the activities of civil service (life saving), competition, mateship, and enjoyment of surf all merge, creating a synergy among users that develops into a source of community pride. Other activities emerged as actions, both active and sedentary, that sustain the life of the Surf Life Saving Club, too. Some active activities include boogie boarding and swimming and walking on the beach as observed on April 7th. Surfing lessons happen at the Club, as seen on April 9th, and there was even a water fight on April 15th. One lady enjoyed flying her kite. Less active ways of enjoying the place are taking group photos, as seen on April 7th, having a picnic, as on April 19th, and hosting a cookout party, as on April 27th. More sedentary
activities include enjoying the delights of drinking and eating, such as sipping a smoothie or eating ice cream as seen on April 7th.

Each of these activities, the involvement of different people and the way in which they were carried out exhibits the variety of enjoyments that occur at the Club and contribute to a livelihood among the people. Across the time frame of one day, there are all sorts of activities that occur that involve many types of user groups and of all sizes, too. The activities activate the space in a place, allowing for people to come together and accordingly strengthening the ties of those members and people of the community alike.

Enjoyment of the Surf Life Saving Club is experienced through sociability, accessibility, comfort, and activities through which emerges a sense of joy and dignity in Lennox Head. Members of the Club, locals in the community, and visitors to the town experience these qualities in their time spent at the Club. A place characterized with the success of such qualities creates a Surf Life Saving Club that transcends what one could hope for.
V. Conclusion: Findings

From the beginnings of Lennox Head in the late 19th century, the seashore was a focus, the central piece of the village. The Surf Life Saving Club provides a setting for people to congregate and be sociable. Conversation over coffee or lunch or taking in the seaside breeze are simple, sociable activities that the Surf Life Saving Club supports, which allows all people to take part in the experience of the Club, and binds people together. Providing a sociable place sparks new bonds in people and sustains old, forming a community filled with happiness and stronger ties.

The concern for the condition of the structure is an indication of how the members are invested in the Club. The Club is very successful in its current state, but they see an addition that could unlock the potential for more reaching out to even more groups, including more parts of the community. The members of the Club have pride in the place and cherish it. Naturally, they want to upkeep this self-respect and continue to maintain a positive image for the sake of the Club and its representation of the community.

Activities is a key contributor to the lifeblood of the Club, involving a mixture of people, creating a synergy of enjoyment through active and passive activities that supports community pride to its core of nourishing a body of individuals that find delight in their experience at the Surf Life Saving Club.

The Surf Life Saving Club is a locale that provides a hub for people of similar interests, supporting their dedication to volunteering their time as surf lifesavers and inspiring lasting commitment among new and old faces to the well-being and safety of the community. The Surf Life Saving Club's members provide security of the members
at the Club, offering an opportunity for all people of the community, visitors, and Club members, too, to experience the rough waters of the Pacific safely and happily in a looked after environment.

Nippers epitomize the best of Australian culture, demonstrating character, skill, and service. From a young age they are shaped to become competitors and more importantly eventual volunteers as surf lifesavers. This training becomes a lifestyle and its success, shared among community members and families, instills a deep commitment to the values of the Surf Life Saving Club. Involvement early on sparks devotion. In later years, they will give to the community by volunteering, contributing to the sense of joy and dignity of the community of Lennox Head.

In the midst of the easy going lifestyle of the Australians, competition is key. The Surf Life Saving Club provides a place for competition to thrive in the context of the Nippers. The setting brings to life the drive and camaraderie that results from it, bringing pride to their Surf Life Saving Club, in the midst of other Clubs that stretch across the eastern coast of Australia.

The Surf Life Saving Club sustains a culture of visitors. It attracts the nearby vacation homes, apartments, hostel, and the caravan park. The people though visitors, provide business for the cafe at the Surf Life Saving Club and a crowd of people and swimmers that add to the dynamic of the people in the community who frequent there. Moreover, the Surf Life Saving Club connects visitors to members. The Club is an interface for which visitors and members can relate. Members can share their pride for the place through enjoyment and visitors can witness this happiness. They can easily
see the place where joy flutters across its members and dwells in the people of Lennox Head.

Versatility is one of the greatest strengths of the Surf Life Saving Club. People of all ages, with varying ability levels, and a mixture of activity interests enjoy the Club and its provided environment so close to the water. The Club is accessible and convivial. The greater the opportunities for people to interact, the stronger ties will become, and there becomes a higher likelihood for more people to discover pride for this place of the Club in the community.

Each of these findings supports the idea that the activities, setting, and values of the Surf Life Saving Club took part in the formation and now sustain the community. With an expansive ocean through which you can see no land, but only the occasional ship and a beach that shows traces of humans and animals alike, the Surf Life Saving Club provides a setting for people to socialize, meet people, relax at their leisure, volunteer, play, explore the waters, swim, save lives, volunteer—enjoy. Members, community people, and visitors find comfort in this place in some form or another, bringing together a body of individuals. A place without respect is disliked and forgotten, but from the Surf Life Saving Club emanates a sense of pride, for oneself, each other, and the community as a whole.
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