

**ITEM 7. KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SPONSORSHIP - UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES CITY FUTURES RESEARCH CENTRE - GREEN SQUARE, ASHMORE AND SURROUNDS COMMUNITY SURVEY 2017**

**FILE NO: S112458.012**

**SUMMARY**

City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales (UNSW), has applied for sponsorship under the City's Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship Program for a research project to track the changing nature of social interaction and community cohesion in key City South urban renewal areas and surrounding neighbourhoods.

The research project is directly aligned with the City's *Social Sustainability Policy – A City for All* and current Resilience Strategy work. This strategic framework aims to promote a connected city with diverse, cohesive communities, and includes actions to foster social cohesion and harmonious living in high density communities.

Creating more cohesive, socially connected communities will strengthen their capacity to withstand shocks and stresses in keeping with the forthcoming Resilient Sydney Strategy. The research project also aligns with the Strategic Directions 6, 8, 9, and 10 in *Sustainable Sydney 2030*, with a particular focus on Direction 6: Vibrant Local Communities and Economies.

Communities in the City South Area – incorporating the major urban renewal precincts of Green Square and Ashmore – are experiencing significant changes as redevelopments take shape and the population grows. There are an estimated 45,000 people currently living and/or working in this area.

The City is working closely with the community to support it through these changes, including working to ensure that facilities, programs and services provided by the City and other government and non-government organisations are keeping pace and meeting the community's needs.

In line with this work, City Futures Research Centre has carried out two community surveys in the Green Square urban renewal precinct: a pilot in 2013 and a more extensive survey in 2014.

City Futures' current research proposal is for a program of three geographically broader surveys over five years to 2021. It will build on the success of the previous Green Square surveys and expand to areas in and around the Ashmore precinct. This approach will enable more comprehensive, representative analysis over time of these fast-changing and growing communities and surrounding neighbourhoods.

The research project will provide the City with robust data and information about the community in the City South Area, their issues and aspirations, and social changes over time. It will contribute to the body of knowledge about urban renewal, social cohesion and community connectedness in emerging high-density environments.

The final research report and the key findings will inform the City's work in providing community facilities, programs and services in the City South Area. The research will also provide data to inform and support the City's advocacy to government, in particular on transport and education services. Ultimately, it will support the development of a more sustainable and resilient community in the City South Area.

It is recommended that Council support the project by providing cash sponsorship of \$40,000 to the City Futures Research Centre under the Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship Program. The program fosters 'the exchange of ideas and knowledge, supports the showcasing of local expertise, and encourages dialogue on local and global issues.'

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve a cash sponsorship of \$40,000 (excluding GST) to City Futures Research Centre for the My Place Local Community Survey 2017 in the City South Area;
- (B) Council note the applicant intends to conduct two further follow-up surveys in the period to 2021 to track changes in social cohesion over time, and will make separate funding applications at the appropriate time; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer a sponsorship agreement with City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Nil.

**BACKGROUND**

1. City Futures Research Centre has applied for funding under the City's Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship Program to undertake a research project measuring social interaction and community cohesion in the City South Area.
2. City Futures Research Centre is a national leader in applied urban research. The Centre is based in the Faculty of Built Environment, University of New South Wales (UNSW). It has 10 years' experience in the interrelated areas of urban planning, housing, health and wellbeing, design, urban development and social policy. Their applied focus involves strong partnerships with local, state and federal government agencies as well as industry stakeholders and community groups.
3. The City South Area incorporates the urban renewal precincts of Green Square and Ashmore. These areas are experiencing significant changes as redevelopments take shape and the population grows. The City is working closely with the community to ensure the community is well understood and supported through these changes, and facilities and services keep pace with changes to the residential and commercial profile of the region.
4. The City of Sydney's Community Strategic Plan recognises that urban renewal sites, such as Green Square and Ashmore, provide the opportunity to improve the social, economic and environmental performance of the city and Sydney region. The plan also prioritises the creation of vibrant local communities and economies.
5. The City's Social Sustainability Policy 2016 – A City for All, recognises that a socially just and resilient society is vital to Sydney's progress and global competitiveness. It commits the City to foster a socially connected city that embraces diversity. The forthcoming Social Sustainability Action Plan (draft) includes proposals to strengthen the social connectedness of people living in high-density communities.
6. To identify how best to promote the social wellbeing and resilience of communities in evolving urban renewal areas, the City needs robust, up-to-date information about the experiences and aspirations of local residents and workers. This includes their satisfaction with, and feelings of attachment and belonging to the places they live and work, the nature of their social interactions and social cohesion, and their plans and desires regarding their local area.
7. The City Futures Research Centre previously carried out two community surveys in the Green Square urban renewal precinct in collaboration with the City. The first was a pilot study in 2013 funded by UNSW Built Environment and supported by the City. In 2014, the City funded a broader survey of the Green Square precinct.
8. The previous Green Square urban renewal precinct surveys provided important information about the community with implications for community development, open space and public domain planning, building design and place making.
9. Building on the previous Green Square surveys, City Futures Research Centre is proposing to undertake a five year programme of geographically broader surveys to measure the changes in social interaction and community cohesion in the City South Area over time. These surveys have informed the City's work across a range of areas, including community development activities and facilities programming.

10. The proposed survey area will be expanded from Green Square and extended to include the Ashmore precinct and surrounding neighbourhoods, enabling similar insights into this equally dynamic community. The survey will reach approximately 45,000 people, comprised of 30,000 residents and 15,000 workers.
11. The survey will be conducted three times: in 2017, 2019 and 2021. A consistent program over multiple years enables tracking of key indicators over time that will give richer, more robust research data and provide information on how the community is changing.
12. City Futures Research Centre's current funding application is for the first survey in 2017 only. Separate applications will be made for the subsequent surveys in 2019 and 2021.
13. The 2017 research project is expected to take five months. A final research report with key findings will be provided to the City by September 2017. Intellectual property will be shared between UNSW and the City.
14. The application for support has been assessed under the City's Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship Program, one of the 15 programs under the Grants and Sponsorship Policy adopted by Council in September 2014. The program supports the exchange of ideas and knowledge, showcasing of local expertise, and encourages dialogue on local and global issues. Under the program, eligible projects can be supported to a maximum of \$40,000 cash, and applications can be received ad-hoc throughout the year.
15. The application has been assessed as contributing to the following program outcomes:
  - (a) share best practice approaches by organisations and individuals;
  - (b) create strong networks where participants share resources and acquire new knowledge and skills; and
  - (c) increase the reputation of Sydney as an innovative and creative city.
16. The request for sponsorship has been evaluated against the Knowledge Exchange Sponsorship Program, and support is recommended. All sponsorship recipients are required to sign a contract, meet specific performance outcomes, and acquit their sponsorship.
17. Benefits for the City will include the collection of robust research data and information to enable:
  - (a) ongoing assessment of social interactions and community cohesion. Identification of opportunities and barriers community members face in contributing to social cohesion and community development; and
  - (b) assessment of factors that influence accessibility to local facilities and services, and how these impact on social interactions, social cohesion and community development.

18. The research will also contribute to the City's reputation as an innovative, leading city. It will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information with other local governments and stakeholders interested in the field of high-density urban renewal and social cohesion.

## KEY IMPLICATIONS

### Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

19. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This sponsorship is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
  - (a) *Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies* – the research will further Objective 6.2 to foster resilience, social cohesiveness and wellbeing within the city's diverse communities by assessing aspects of successful communities, monitoring changes in communities over time, and providing recommendations to ensure the City's programs, services and facilities keep pace with the evolving residential and commercial profile of the region.
  - (b) *Direction 8 - Housing for a Diverse Population* – the application of the survey to areas subject to increasing density and high housing growth mean the survey's findings will inform the City's policies and initiatives to promote diverse housing types and tenures, and associated supporting social infrastructure.
  - (c) *Direction 9 - Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design* – the research in the Green Square and Ashmore precincts will assist the City to assess the impacts of large-scale urban renewal, and strengthen design excellence and development that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.
  - (d) *Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships* – the research will support more informed, participatory local decision-making by engaging with the community and seeking their views and aspirations for their local area. This research strengthens the City's partnership with the City Futures Research Centre, building on previous research collaborations.

### Organisational Impact

20. The research project will be overseen by a small working group comprised of City representatives from Social Strategy, Strategic Planning & Urban Design, Green Square, Marketing, and City Engagement, who will provide strategic guidance on survey design, distribution, promotion, and the survey findings report.
21. The City will provide support to the research project through promotion of the survey to the Green Square and Ashmore communities, community engagement, and communications.

**Risks**

22. City Futures Research Centre has identified a potential risk of a low survey response rate undermining the statistical validity of the research findings. The following strategies will be put in place to mitigate this risk:
- (a) survey will be simplified to minimise its length and complexity;
  - (b) survey will be distributed to households in hard copy with a reply paid envelope, and it will also be available online;
  - (c) survey will be open for around two months;
  - (d) the City will raise community awareness of the survey through locally-targeted promotion and marketing support; and
  - (e) a version of the survey and promotional material will be made available in Simplified Chinese.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

23. Funding of \$40,000 cash (excluding GST) is available in the 2016/17 Research, Strategy, and Corporate Planning Unit operating budget and in forward estimates.

**RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

24. Section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993.

**CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES**

25. The research project deliverables proposed are:
- (a) Agreed survey and promotional strategy – April 2017;
  - (b) Survey period – May to July 2017;
  - (c) Draft report and presentation of findings to the City – August 2017; and
  - (d) Delivery of final report – September 2017.

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