

ITEM 7. CITY CENTRE LANEWAYS – WILMOT STREET AND CENTRAL STREET – PROJECT SCOPE**FILE NO: S103829****SUMMARY**

This report describes the community consultation and concept design plans for the proposed upgrade of Wilmot Street and Central Street, City Centre, as part of the Live Laneways - Laneway Revitalisation Strategy.

Council endorsed the indicative priorities for nine laneways projects on 1 June 2009.

The concept design of Wilmot Street and Central Street has been built upon the City's strategy of reclaiming and revitalising Sydney's hidden laneways by improving public amenities, traffic rezoning and installation of calming devices, to enhance their role as a pedestrian link and to encourage activation.

As part of the community consultation, over 3,000 letters were sent to residents and stakeholders within a 175m radius from Wilmot and Central Streets. Briefing meetings were held with eight of the major building owners and building/tenant representatives. In total, 11 written responses were received. There is overall support in the area for the laneways to be revitalised.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) subject to any direction made by the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee in relation to the proposed works, Council approve the concept design plan for the Wilmot Street and Central Street upgrade works, as shown in Attachment A to the subject report, for progress to detailed design and construction tender;
- (B) Council note that Central Street upgrade works may proceed in stages subject to resolution of Light Rail works on George Street, and
- (C) note the Financial Implications in Attachment C to the subject report, and that this Attachment remain confidential in accordance with section 10A(2)(c) of the Local Government Act 1993.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Concept design for Wilmot Street and Central Street

Attachment B: Consultation Summary

Attachment C: Financial Implications (Confidential)

(As Attachment C is confidential, it will be circulated separately from the Agenda Paper and to Councillors and relevant senior staff only).

BACKGROUND

1. On 10 March 2008, Council endorsed the Live Laneways – Laneway Revitalisation Strategy. The strategy proposed a number of initiatives including the development of a public domain implementation plan that provides for the improvement of City Centre laneways in future capital works programs, establishes design principles for laneways and marketing of laneway activities.
2. On 1 June 2009, Council endorsed the general priorities for nine CBD Laneways projects. Wilmot Street and Central Street have been scheduled to start construction works in 2014. The status of laneways projects is as follows:
 - (a) Ash Street – completed 2010;
 - (b) Angel Place – completed 2011;
 - (c) Albion Place – completed 2012;
 - (d) Bulletin Place – under construction;
 - (e) Lees Court – under design documentation;
 - (f) York Lane – concept design completed. Works to align with Wynyard Walk;
 - (g) Hosking Place – design documentation underway;
 - (h) Wilmot Street – concept design and consultation completed; and
 - (i) Central Street – concept design and consultation completed.
3. Wilmot and Central Streets are located in the mid-precinct of the City, connecting Pitt and George Streets. The precinct has large entertainment facilities, such as the Event Cinemas Complex. It enjoys a vibrant night life, and is characterised by Asian restaurants, many of them Korean. The nearby World Square development adds to the precinct's activity.
4. Central Street features the heritage listed Central Local Court, popular evening entertainment venues, such as The Metro Theatre and the MTV Lair, and a series of Asian grocery stores, restaurants and take-away outlets.
5. Wilmot Street features the Star Bar, the HSBC plaza and the heritage-listed former Sydney Water building at the Pitt Street end. A series of Korean businesses, backpackers' accommodation and the entry to the Century Tower residential building are also located along the southern end of the laneway.
6. Both streets are zoned as roads and are characterised by narrow asphalt pedestrian footpaths with historic trachyte kerbs. Current surveys also indicate extensive services running beneath the road, with surface pits located at intervals along the length in both laneways.
7. To facilitate their activation and pedestrianisation, the upgrade works for Wilmot Street and Central Street propose to:
 - (a) create flexible spaces for multi-purpose use and activities that allow for integration with the future works in George Street as part of the implementation of the Light Rail;

- (b) encourage and promote night time economy by creating opportunities for pop-up food carts and visual projection in Central Street, and extended outdoor dining/entertaining in the area closed to vehicles in Wilmot Street; and
- (c) improve safety by implementing night time programs that increase pedestrian through traffic in the laneways, including the installation of programmable street lighting to improve public domain lighting to suitable levels and enhance the laneways' ambience.

8. The concept design for Wilmot and Central Streets is contained in Attachment A and includes a number of traffic changes as follows:

Wilmot Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanently closing to vehicular traffic Wilmot Street between George Street and the most western driveway (HSBC car park access). • Making the remaining portion of the street into two-way traffic. • Raising the road surface level to be flush with the footpath levels and providing a driveway crossover to George Street and Pitt Street. • Transforming the street into a shared zone.
Central Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the road surface level to be flush with the footpath levels and providing a driveway crossover to George Street and Pitt Street. • Transforming the street into a shared zone. • Making Central Street one-way eastbound, with entry from George Street. • Removing the existing signalised intersection of George Street and Central Street and providing a mid-block crossing located to the south of Central Street.

- 9. Parking is currently prohibited in Wilmot Street, and no changes are proposed to the existing parking arrangements.
- 10. Parking is mostly prohibited in Central Street except for a section marked as "Police parking" located next to the Central Local Court, and a loading zone on the western end, which also provides parking outside of the loading times. The Police have advised they may no longer require this space. It is proposed to retain only the loading zone with the existing loading times.
- 11. The traffic proposal takes into consideration the current use of these laneways by the adjacent stakeholders and future works in George Street as part of the Light Rail project.
- 12. Converting Wilmot Street and Central Street into shared zones will optimise pedestrian use, while still maintaining existing vehicular access requirements.

13. Key physical elements of the concept design are:
 - (a) footpath continuation at the George Street and Pitt Street intersections;
 - (b) raising the road surface to the footpath level within both laneways;
 - (c) upgrading of the public domain lights with LED fittings; and
 - (d) new high quality paving in accordance with the City of Sydney Design Code, incorporating the use of smaller units in a more detailed layout in response to the pedestrian scale in the lanes.
14. An opportunity for a video artwork projection has been identified in Central Street. This will be developed with the City Art strategy team during the detailed design stage, subject to further negotiation with adjacent land owners.
15. Following feedback received from the Transport for NSW and Light Rail Project Team, the proposed kerb extensions in Pitt Street will be removed due to anticipated traffic changes in Pitt Street as part of the Light Rail implementation in George Street.

Community Consultation to date

16. A communication plan has been developed for the project to outline the approach and methods for future consultation with the community and key stakeholders. The consultation to date has included one-on-one consultation with immediately adjacent property owners and businesses, web updates and public exhibition of the concept plan, which closed on 19 July 2013.
17. As part of the community consultation, over 3,000 letters have been sent to residents and stakeholders within a 175m radius of Wilmot and Central Streets. A public notice was placed in The Sydney Morning Herald on 18 June 2013 and the concept plans were on exhibition from 18 June to 19 July 2013.
18. In addition, one-on-one meetings were arranged with key stakeholders prior to the concept design being developed, to ascertain current usage and access requirements of owners and tenants of the laneways.
19. During the exhibition period, the proposal was displayed at the Town Hall House One Stop Shop, the City's Neighbourhood Service Centres, and available online at Sydney Your Say website page for Central and Wilmot Streets (<http://sydneyyoursay.com.au/> and <http://sydneyyoursay.com.au/laneways>).
20. Eleven (11) written responses were received via email and comments from eight businesses were obtained during the one-to-one consultation with individual business owners. These have been collated and summarised in Attachment B. These submissions also requested amendments and additions. The suggestions are addressed in Attachment B and a number will also be considered during the design development and documentation stages of the project.
21. The major issues raised with the proposed works for Wilmot Street and Central Street during consultation related to the proposed traffic reversal inside the Century Tower building, new traffic arrangements, as well as the removal of kerb and gutter and the use of stone paving in the laneways. The stakeholder comments were reviewed in detail and a response provided in Attachment B.

22. The current Century Tower access arrangements will be maintained, irrespective of the Central Street travel direction. The initial proposal was recommended to discourage vehicles entering Central Street from Pitt Street and then illegally travelling against the proposed Central Street one-way eastbound operation. This would result in vehicles entering the site via Wilmot Street and then exiting onto Central Street. This proposal would also facilitate access to Century Tower after the traffic changes in George Street as a result of the implementation of the Light Rail. The non-reverse of the traffic flow inside Century Tower will not impact on this project.

Works on Private Property

23. The proposed works area includes small sections of adjoining private property, which form a natural extension of the streets' public domain.
24. These sections are minor and the occurrence of these is common throughout the City's streets as a result of historical development and consecutive realignment of buildings along the footpath edge.
25. The proposed works on these areas are limited to surface treatment and do not contain key structural, amenity or service elements.
26. The City will proceed with these works, subject to written agreement from the property owners.

IMPLEMENTATION STAGING AND THE LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

27. The proposed traffic changes described in this report reflect the final outcome sought for these two laneways and have taken into consideration upcoming works in George Street. The proposal aims to support the future traffic changes that will be implemented with the Light Rail project. Nevertheless, staging of the works is being investigated to avoid any redundant works in George Street.
28. Yet to be confirmed, Stage One may see the traffic signals at George Street and Central Street retained and reconfigured, and the shared zone in Central Street and associated civil works within 25 metres of George Street deferred until Light Rail is implemented in George Street.
29. The works are required to be referred to the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee at least 28 days before they are proposed to commence, and may be subject to further direction from that Committee, including a direction varying or delaying the work. This project will be referred to the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee prior to the tender, and any significant direction made by that Committee will be brought to the attention of Council prior to the tender being issued.
30. Pending on the final design for Light Rail in George Street, the following items in this project may require changes:
 - (a) the permanent closure to vehicular traffic in Wilmot Street between George Street and the western most driveway (HSBC car park access), as it may become necessary to convert this closed section of the lane to one-way westbound to facility access to Central Street. The concept design for Wilmot and Central Streets accommodates for this future traffic change; and

- (b) the mid-block crossing located to the south of Central Street may not be required depending on the final traffic arrangements in George Street.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

- 31. *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 project is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 4 - A City of Pedestrians and Cyclists – outlines actions that will make walking and cycling an easy option for residents and visitors in our City. It recognises the importance of these modes to improve the health and environmental sustainability of our City; and
 - (b) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre – envisages a city where the Centre is opened and re-connected to the water, where the City Centre is reclaimed from traffic, where there are more, and better quality open spaces for people to linger, and where ‘fine grain’ character, such as small retail and service spaces, is increased.

Organisational Impact

- 32. The project will create additional assets that will require ongoing maintenance. These include the new road paving and lighting.

Risks

- 33. Risks associate with the proposal have been considered throughout the concept design and consultation phase. These include safety (in particular road safety for pedestrians), environmental and economic impact, and community concerns.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 34. The proposed upgrade will improve the pedestrian safety, amenity and character of Wilmot and Central Streets, creating a more generous pedestrian experience and encouraging more people to use these laneways as thoroughfares and meeting places.

Environmental

- 35. The project will incorporate best practice environmentally sustainable initiatives to support Sustainable Sydney 2030, including material selection and energy minimisation.

Economic

- 36. Loading area and building access are maintained where they are currently located and are not changed by the proposal.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

37. A Quantity Surveyor has prepared an estimate based on the concept design. There are sufficient funds available in the current 2013/14 capital works budget and forward estimates to undertake the works outlined in the concept design.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

38. Attachment C is to remain confidential in accordance with section 10A(2)(c) of the Local Government Act 1993, as it contains information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
39. NSW Roads Act 1993 and City of Sydney Act 1988 for road related approvals.
40. Local Government Act 1993 for construction procurement.
41. Council and Roads and Maritime Services guidelines for streetscape design.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

42. The proposed program for the project is:

Design development and documentation	July to October 2013
Tender phase	November 2013 to February 2014
Commence Construction	March 2014
Construction period	30 weeks

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

43. The Community Consultation Summary Report is provided at Attachment B. It includes a summary of issues and suggestions raised by the community and responses from the City.
44. The following engagement will take place to ensure the community is kept up to date with further developments regarding the design and construction of the Wilmot Street and Central Street project:
- (a) CBD Laneways Revitalisation Website updated;
 - (b) project update letters and emails to local residents and interested community members prior to construction;
 - (c) door-knocking nearby properties; and
 - (d) during construction, the selected contractor will be required to provide a dedicated Community Liaison Officer on-site to assist all stakeholders with day to day operational construction related issues.

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