

ITEM 3. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS – BOWMAN STREET PYRMONT – APPROVAL OF PROJECT SCOPE**FILE NO: S1231818****SUMMARY**

This report outlines the proposal for streetscape improvements at Bowman Street, Pyrmont, including the replacement of 26 Hill's Fig trees inappropriately located within the footpath with the planting of 26 Sydney Red Gums further away from properties, improving pedestrian safety and repairing damaged pavements.

Bowman Street was owned by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA), which is now part of Properties NSW. SHFA designed and constructed the street, including the street tree planting which is now causing problems for residents and the City. The City inherited Bowman Street from SHFA when the ownership was transferred in 2007.

In response to ongoing concerns from the community regarding the existing street trees, pedestrian safety, and property damage, City staff developed a streetscape upgrade proposal. The improvements contribute towards the City's *Sustainable Sydney 2030* commitments through the:

- provision of long-term tree canopy cover by replacing unsuitable juvenile street trees with a more suitable tree species in improved planting locations; and
- improvement of pedestrian safety by narrowing the road to reduce traffic speeds, extending footpaths to reduce crossing distances and rectifying damaged footpaths.

The proposal was exhibited for public comment with a majority of responses (41, or 77 per cent) in support. Of the 13 submissions received that were not in support, 10 submissions raised concerns regarding the tree removal and two raised concerns about the loss of metered parking. There was one submission supporting tree removal and objecting to metered parking loss.

The proposed footpath widening at intersections and new tree planting locations are expected to reduce parking by 13 metered spaces. The concept design placed on exhibition proposed an additional 13 metered spaces to be provided on Bowman Street, however, 21 responses (39 per cent) were opposed to the proposed new parking. The majority of residents have off-street parking and are not eligible for resident parking permits. The location is well serviced by public transport with Pyrmont light rail station 100 metres away.

The recommended proposal is to proceed with the tree removal and replacement and streetscape upgrade. This will result in the loss of 13 metered spaces. City staff will undertake further community consultation to identify potential locations for the introduction of new parking spaces within the street. This would then be referred to the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee.

These opportunities to improve pedestrian safety and canopy cover in Bowman Street are consistent with the City's Greening Sydney Plan, Walking Strategy and Action Plan, and the Street Tree Master Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) approve the scope of the Bowman Street Streetscape Improvements, as described in the subject report and shown in the Refined Concept Design in Attachment B to the subject report, for progression to design development, documentation and construction; and
- (B) explore options to retain the number of parking spaces available in Bowman Street, subject to further consultation with the community and approval by the City of Sydney Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Community Consultation Exhibition Panel (with additional parking)

Attachment B: Refined Concept Design (without additional parking)

Attachment C: Bowman Street Photos

Attachment D: Consultation Summary

Attachment E: Financial Implications (Confidential)

(As Attachment E is confidential, it will be circulated separately from the agenda paper and to Councillors and relevant senior staff only)

BACKGROUND

1. Bowman Street is a mostly residential street comprising high and low rise residential apartments (Jackson's Landing Estate), a vacant site, Waterfront Park, and low rise office buildings. The street was constructed between 1998 and 2004 to the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority's (SHFA) streetscape guidelines, and transferred to the City in 2007. Thirty-three Hill's Fig trees (*Ficus microcarpa* var. *hillii*) were planted in the footpath as part of the works managed by SHFA.
2. Following transfer of the street from SHFA, the City has received 12 complaints and insurance claims from building managers and residents who have reported damage to the footpath, stormwater and sewer pipes and buildings from Hill's Fig tree roots.
3. The City's subsequent assessments of the Hill's Figs trees at Bowman Street have identified that although the trees are still juvenile, they have already outgrown the space available for them. The Hill's Figs are an inappropriate species in this location due to their large mature size. At maturity, their canopies can be more than 20 – 25 metres in width, 20 – 25 metres in height, and their trunks over one metre in diameter. The canopies are also dense and branches typically begin spreading low to the ground. These trees are more suited to parks (e.g. Hyde Park's central avenue) rather than in streets close to buildings.
4. In the existing Bowman Street footpath, the trees roots have limited room to grow, as the footpath is less than two metres wide and is located over shallow bedrock. The canopies are also restricted by the existing residential and commercial buildings, which are mostly three-storey developments located immediately adjacent to the street trees. Even with regular pruning to allow sufficient clearance, the management options are now limited. Replacement of the trees with a more suitable species planted further away from properties is considered the best option for long-term tree canopy cover, street amenity, and cost-effective asset management.
5. In 2011, Council adopted the Street Tree Master Plan which supports the City's target to increase tree canopy cover by 50 per cent across the local government area. The master plan includes the nomination of the Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*) as the street tree for Bowman Street. The canopies of the Sydney Red Gum are expected to grow to a width of 10 – 13 metres, a height of 12 – 20 metres, and a trunk diameter of 600 millimetres. These trees have a much more open canopy with a higher clearance of branches than Hill's Figs.
6. To address these issues, a proposal has been developed by City staff in collaboration with residents, businesses and strata managers on Bowman Street.

SCOPE OF PROJECT

Tree Management

7. There are currently 33 juvenile Fig trees planted within the footpath on Bowman Street between Harris Street and the termination of the street with Bank Street, near the Glebe Island Bridge. As the trees have been planted in stages coinciding with the development of Jackson's Landing, they are in various stages of growth.
8. It is proposed to remove 26 of the largest Hill's Fig trees and plant 26 Sydney Red Gum trees in new footpath extensions and new garden beds in existing parking and 'No Parking' areas in Bowman Street between Harris Street and Tambua Street.

9. As the existing footpath is narrow and over shallow bedrock, planting further away from existing properties in new garden bed locations will provide the best long-term solution for tree planting, and allow for optimal tree growth to restore the temporary loss of tree canopy cover and amenity.
10. Seven Hill's Fig trees west of Tambua Street (opposite the Waterfront Park) have been excluded from the scope of this project, as they are smaller juvenile trees and located in a narrower part of the street where the construction of new garden bed locations is not possible. These trees will be managed as required as part of the City's ongoing street tree maintenance program.

Pedestrian Improvements

11. Footpath widening is proposed at the intersections of Bowman Street with Tambua Street, Jones Street, Cadigal Avenue, Mount Street Walk and Harris Street to slow traffic and provide a shorter distance for pedestrians to cross. Existing pram ramps which do not meet Australian Standards will also be rectified, and damaged asphalt footpath pavements and stone kerb and gutter will be repaired.

Parking Changes

12. Subsequent to the reconstruction of Bowman Street and the installation of parking restrictions in 2004, the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) have changed the required 'No Stopping' distances at intersections. In order to seek future RMS approval of the traffic changes, the City will be required to increase the existing 'No Stopping' Distances from six - eight metres to 10 metres. This will require the removal of six existing metered parking spaces. These areas will be replaced with footpath extensions and garden beds.
13. Replanting of trees further away from adjoining properties and provision of spaces for plant replacement, trees and garden beds will require the removal of a further seven existing metered parking spaces.
14. The expected net loss of parking is approximately 13 metered parking spaces. As most of the residential development at Bowman Street has occurred within the last twenty years, most residents have off-street parking available and are not eligible for resident parking permits.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

15. Community consultation has been conducted during May and June 2017 to assist with development of the design for this project. Letters were sent out to 850 local residents and businesses, and information - including a concept design - was presented on the City's 'Have Your Say' website.
16. The concept design presented to the community (Attachment A) proposed to repair and widen existing footpaths and replace 26 of the existing Fig Hill's trees with 26 new trees planted outside of the existing footpath, within footpath extensions at the corners and within parking areas. To reduce the loss of existing parking spaces, 13 new parking spaces were proposed to be installed in existing 'No Parking' areas opposite Waterfront Park. The community were also presented with options for replacement tree species.

17. During the three-week consultation period, the City received a total of 54 submissions. In regards to implementing the tree replacement and pedestrian improvements, the City received 41 submissions in support and 13 objections. Ten objections related to removal of the Hills Fig trees, two were related to loss of metered parking and one supported the tree removal but not the loss of metered parking.
18. Those in support of the project were in favour of the removal and replacement of the Hill's Fig trees, noting that the footpath was in need of repair and were supportive of it being renewed. The choice of Sydney Red Gum as the replacement species was favoured in the majority of responses received.
19. Residents also noted concerns for pedestrian safety and high instances of vehicles speeding down Bowman Street as it is used as a 'rat run' for traffic travelling east – west. These residents supported the proposed footpath widening and road narrowing to improve pedestrian safety.
20. The City received 21 submissions objecting to the proposed new metered parking spaces that would have compensated for metered parking removed in other areas of the street, citing concerns with driveway access, sightlines and potential overnight parking by campervans. In response to this feedback, the proposed metered parking spaces have been removed from the refined concept design (Attachment B).
21. 42 of the 54 responses received supported the proposal to replace the trees at Bowman Street. The City also received nine submissions requesting to extend the project to address four fig trees outside 25 Bowman Street (west of Tambua Street). These trees are more juvenile in growth compared to the trees between Tambua Street and Harris Street and have been excluded from the scope of this project as they are not a priority for urgent replacement. These trees will be assessed for replacement as part of the City's regular tree replacement program in future years.
22. Based on the feedback received it is proposed to proceed with the tree removal and replacement and streetscape upgrade, and to undertake further community consultation on the potential location of parking spaces within the street. This will be done following completion of the works to assess any impacts the proposal may have in regards to parking.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

23. *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 proposal is aligned with the following *Sustainable Sydney 2030* strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 2 - A Leading Environmental Performer – the proposal allows for the retention of long-term tree canopy cover by replacing problematic trees with the same number of a more suitable species planted further away from neighbouring properties to allow for better growing conditions.
 - (b) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling – this proposal will provide wider footpaths and shorter crossing distances at intersections to improve pedestrian connections between Pyrmont and the waterfront. The road width will also be narrowed by the raised garden beds which will slow traffic speeds.

- (c) Objectives under these Directions include developing a network of safe, linked pedestrian networks integrated with green spaces throughout both the city and inner Sydney, giving greater priority to 'green' and pedestrian infrastructure over car parking, and promoting green travel for major workplaces and venues in the city. It is noted that Bowman street is within 100 metres of the nearest light rail station and is within walking distance of the CBD.

Street Tree Masterplan

- 24. The planting is consistent with the Street Tree Master Plan (adopted by Council in 2011), which includes the planting of Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*) trees at Bowman Street.

Greening Sydney Plan

- 25. The new garden bed areas are consistent with the strategy to 'green our streets' by replacing unused concrete surfaces with planting and permeable surfaces. These areas also contribute towards reducing the 'heat island' effect of the City and can reduce storm water run-off.

Organisational Impact

- 26. The project will create additional assets, such as new civil infrastructure, garden beds and pavements that will require ongoing maintenance. There will be reduced maintenance street tree costs and reduced complaints from residents regarding infrastructure damage.

Risks

- 27. Risks associated with the proposal have been considered through the concept design and consultation phase. These include safety (in particular road safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists), environmental impacts and economic impacts, as well as community concerns.
- 28. This proposal is expected to reduce the risks to pedestrians by renewing footpath pavements, narrowing the road width to reduce vehicle speeds and providing footpath extensions to reduce the crossing distance at intersections.
- 29. Prior to community consultation, the City has received claims for property damage in relation to the trees (details provided in Confidential Attachment E). There are potential risks to the City of further claims from street tree failures, root impacts and trip hazards if this work is deferred or not undertaken.
- 30. If the tree replacement is deferred there will also be an increase in costs to maintain the City's assets. Undertaking the proposed works in future is likely to be at a higher cost as more streetscape assets will require repair and/or replacement.
- 31. An independent Road Safety Audit will be carried out on the developed design to further identify and assess any risks associated with the proposal.

Social / Cultural / Community

32. Residents and visitors to Bowman Street will be impacted by a temporary loss of amenity in the time period between the removal of the existing street trees and the establishment of the replacement trees. However, as removal of these fig trees will be required in the future due to the projected growth and expansion of the trees, acting now before they reach maturity will reduce this future impact. The new 'In Road' garden beds will also increase the amount of green space on the street, including habitat benefits.
33. Metered parking loss may also have impacts on the community although this was only noted in three submissions received from the community during consultation. The majority of residents in this area have off-street parking and are within 100 metres of the Pyrmont light rail station.

Economic

34. The new works will reduce the need for maintenance of the footpaths, kerbs and gutters currently being damaged by the trees. Within the last seven years, there have been 139 recorded maintenance jobs to repair footpath pavements, kerbs and gutters at Bowman Street. Over this time, the City spent approximately \$93,000 and had a forecast budget to spend a further \$80,000.
35. The proposal will also significantly reduce the risk of adjoining property damage and claims made to the City. The cost of property damage claims is outlined in Confidential Attachment E.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

36. The loss of 13 metered parking spaces will reduce parking meter revenue by an estimated \$50,000 per year.
37. It is proposed to deliver the works over two financial years. There are sufficient funds allocated for this project within the 2017/18 and 2018/2019 Capital Works Budgets in the In Road Tree Planting Program. Refer to confidential Attachment D for details.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

38. NSW Roads Act 1993 for road related approvals at a future City of Sydney Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee meeting.
39. Local Government Act 1993 for construction procurement.
40. Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act 1979 (Part 4 and 5). The scope of works have been reviewed to assess consent requirements for the project under the EP&A Act. The proposed works do not require planning approval and will be assessed as exempt development.
41. Attachment E contains confidential commercial information which, if disclosed, would confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
42. Discussion of the matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because it would compromise Council's ability to negotiate fairly and commercially to achieve the best outcome for its ratepayers.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

43. Construction is scheduled to commence in the first half of 2018 with a forecast duration of 6 – 8 months.

OPTIONS

44. The 'do nothing' approach would not respond to residents requests received before and during community consultation, and would not provide a solution to the existing street trees which are of an unsuitable species and location. There would also be ongoing complaints and claims received from residents for damage and expenses attributed to the fig tree root systems.
45. Endorsing the proposed streetscape improvements would be consistent with Council's adopted policies and would also respond to the majority of submissions received from residents.

FUTURE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

46. Community members and organisations that have made submissions will be notified of the Resolution of Council. Further consultation will also be undertaken regarding the replacement of metered parking spaces in Bowman Street.
47. Notification letters will be sent to property owners and businesses prior to construction.
48. During construction, there will be close liaison between property owners, businesses, City staff and the contractors to minimise disruption to residences and trade in the area.

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