

Resolution of Council

9 August 2021

Item 2.5

City Architect and Landscape Architect Works Heritage Study

Moved by Councillor Thalys, seconded by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the importance of the work of City Architect Albert Smillie and City Landscape Architect Ilmar Berzins in the design of post-war Sydney;
- (ii) Albert Smillie joined the Sydney Municipal Council as an architectural draftsman in 1924, was appointed Chief Architect in 1949 and became the Council's Principal Architect in 1953, a position held to 1969;
- (iii) the period following World War Two was characterised by economic prosperity and a full job market. Albert Smillie's appointment as Council's head architect in 1949 coincided with a period of intense post-war reconstruction, which was accompanied by a boom in the construction of community facilities including baby health centres, libraries and welfare centres;
- (iv) Albert Smillie oversaw many public projects while at Council such as; sports facilities including Victoria Park Pool, welfare centres, kindergartens, baby health centres, Council housing including in Pyrmont and Glebe and libraries including Anthony Doherty in Surry Hills, Catherine Sloss in Woolloomooloo and Florence Bartley in Kings Cross (awarded the Sulman Medal and now demolished);
- (v) Ilmar Berzins was the first qualified landscape architect to be employed in local government in Australia when he was employed by the City in 1951 and became Director of Parks and Gardens in 1984;
- (vi) in 1946, the City Engineer A H Garnsey and Alderman Ernest Marks had produced a major report to Council which recommended a program of increasing the City's parks, open spaces, children's playgrounds and street tree planting.

The scheme was adopted by Council as a 'master plan to prevent haphazard development' for the next 30 years. Ilmar Berzins was recruited to this team;

- (vii) Ilmar Berzins designed many existing public spaces while at Council including; Arthur McElhone Reserve in Elizabeth Bay, Sandringham Gardens in Hyde Park, Fitzroy Gardens in Kings Cross (much altered), Chessboard Garden in Hyde Park and others which have been demolished including; Fragrance Garden in Cook and Phillip Park;
- (viii) there is a risk that other public works by Albert Smillie and Ilmar Berzins could be lost if they are not identified and if necessary protected;
- (ix) the City commissioned a Heritage Study Review in 2019 into Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney;
- (x) Council endorsed the planning proposal for the Modern Movement Heritage Items in June 2020. The report told Council that:

"Central Sydney contains one of the greatest concentrations of post-war Modern Movement buildings in New South Wales. The Modern Movement represents one of the most significant and far-reaching twentieth century design aesthetics. For Sydney, 1945 to 1975 was an exciting and challenging architectural period that determined much of the present physical form of the city centre. The dominance of modern office buildings from this period records the changing role of Australia in an international context and Sydney's new-found role as a major world financial centre during the 'Long Boom'."

- (xi) a further heritage study could be expanded to include important works under Albert Smillie and Ilmar Berzins in the City of Sydney Local Government Area; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) investigate the commissioning of a heritage study of City projects under Albert Smillie and Ilmar Berzins in the Local Government Area; and
 - (ii) report back to Council via the CEO Update on which items could be considered for heritage listing.

Carried unanimously.

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