

Victoria Street Public Domain Upgrade

File No: X117828

Summary

This report outlines the proposed scope of works for the upgrade of Victoria Street, Darlinghurst.

The proposal for the Victoria Street Public Domain Upgrade project includes a new streetscape design with wider footpaths, formalised outdoor dining, concrete unit paving and bluestone kerb, bi-directional separated cycleway, undergrounding of electrical cables, new trees, landscaping and low-level planting, replacement of inefficient lighting with Smartpoles and LED lighting, bike racks, seating, raised pedestrian crossing and continuous footpath treatments.

From 8 September to 20 October 2025, we asked the community for feedback on the proposal to upgrade Victoria Street. A dedicated project webpage via the City's "Sydney Your Say" website was created. A notification letter was sent on 8 September 2025 to over 2,000 properties and businesses and pop-up events were held on 17 and 20 September 2025. Community feedback was in support of the proposal. Community suggestions have been incorporated into the concept design as part of design development.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council endorse the design for the Victoria Street Public Domain Upgrade, as described in the subject report and shown at Attachment A to the subject report, for progression to detailed design, documentation and construction of the works.

Attachments

Attachment A. Refined Concept Design

Attachment B. Engagement Report

Background

1. Victoria Street is defined as a Neighbourhood Hub Street in the City's Streets Design Code, and is a focal point for residents, businesses, shopping, meeting, culture and health. Frontages along Victoria Street are a complement of residential, commercial and special purpose, making it a major destination for both the local community and visitors to the area.
2. Victoria Street is identified in the City's Liveable Green Network Strategy and Masterplan. The City has allocated funding within the long-term financial plan to upgrade the streetscape of Victoria Street, between Craigend and Burton Streets.
3. The last comprehensive upgrade of the street was in 1994 by the then South Sydney Council. This upgrade will bring this section of Victoria Street, Darlinghurst, to the City's Neighbourhood Hub Street palette, in line with the City's Sydney Street Code.
4. In November 2018, Council endorsed the Cycling Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2030, for incorporation into the City's community strategic plan Sustainable Sydney 2030. The Strategy includes an overall proposed Bike Network.
5. Priority 1 of the Strategy and Action Plan is to connect the bike network, as there is strong evidence that safe connected cycling infrastructure is essential to making bike riding a viable transport option for much of the population.
6. The Strategy and Action Plan target is to complete 100% of the regional route network and 60% of the local route network by 2030.
7. The upgrade aligns with the following directions in the City's Community Strategic Plan, Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision:
 - (a) Direction 8 - by 2050 people will use public transport, walk or cycle to travel to and from work.
 - (b) Direction 9 - by 2030 every resident in the local area will be around a 10-minute walk to what they need for daily life.
8. The upgrade will contribute to the City's Urban Forest Strategy, 2023, Direction 2 - which expands on the targets for canopy cover within streets as part of the Greening Sydney Strategy and builds upon its actions towards a cooler, calmer, and more resilient city.
9. A concept design has been prepared that:
 - (a) enhances the character of the area for locals and visitors and encourages a sense of belonging through additional greening and seating, and improved lighting and footpath treatments
 - (b) improves pedestrian safety and connectivity along Victoria Street, between Craigend and Burton Streets by calming traffic and enhancing opportunities for walking
 - (c) benefits local businesses by supporting increased pedestrian activity, as well as provide space for alfresco dining or display of goods and services in public spaces

- (d) provides a key section of the local bike network along Victoria Street and
 - (e) increases the resilience of the infrastructure by undergrounding all overhead electrical cables, which reduces their susceptibility to extreme weather and provides opportunities for new tree planting and increased canopy coverage.
10. In summary, street improvements will include:
- (a) undergrounding of all overhead cables in Victoria Street and removal of timber poles
 - (b) footpath widening throughout Victoria Street
 - (c) bi-directional separated cycleway
 - (d) pedestrian improvements at signalised intersections.
 - (e) upgraded pedestrian crossing at Surrey Street
 - (f) in-lane bus stop
 - (g) replacing existing pavements with concrete unit pavers
 - (h) installation of Continuous Footpath Treatments and
 - (i) installation of new garden beds, street trees, Smartpoles and energy efficient LED lighting, bike racks and seating.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

11. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This program is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 3 - Public places for all - Our local main streets are thriving hubs with their own distinctive characters.
 - (i) The project will provide an improved public domain that meets the needs of a wide variety of user groups and provides opportunities for social interaction.

- (b) Direction 5 - A city for walking, cycling and public transport - more people choose to walk and ride bikes. The city is greener and calmer with more space for people on the streets.
 - (i) The project improves pedestrian amenity and safety through enhanced footpath treatments, localised footpath widening and continuous footpath treatments, improved lighting and increased amenities such as seating and bubblers.
 - (ii) The project provides a key section in a network of safe, linked pedestrian and cycle paths integrated with green spaces throughout both the city and inner Sydney.

Organisational Impact

- 12. The organisational impact of the Victoria Street project is taken into consideration as part of the City's annual Operational Plan review.

Risks

- 13. Risks associated with the proposal have been considered through the concept design and consultation phases. These include safety for people walking, riding and driving, environmental and economic impacts, community concerns and emergency service access provisions. The risks will be further addressed in the forthcoming design development and documentation phases.
- 14. Undergrounding of overhead cables involves the modification of private connections, which will require approval from the property owners.
- 15. The City does not control, operate or own signalised intersections. The proposed pedestrian improvements at signalised intersections are subject to approval from Transport for New South Wales.
- 16. The works will be managed in line with the tolerances set out in the City's Risk Appetite Statement, particularly the following:
 - (a) Environmental and Sustainability Risk Appetite
 - (i) We are dedicated to actively identifying and addressing environmental risks associated with our activities and services. We prioritise prevention and proactive measures to minimise our ecological footprint, conserve resources and protect ecosystems.
 - (b) People
 - (i) We are committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of our workers, residents, visitors and others who interact with our assets, operations and services.
 - (ii) We acknowledge that achieving a risk-free environment is not feasible, especially in the public domain. We therefore aim to minimise health, safety and wellbeing risks within our organisation and in the public domain as far as reasonably practicable and in keeping with our legal obligations.

- (c) Infrastructure, Technology, Assets and Property
 - (i) We acknowledge the diverse expectations of our stakeholders, including the community, ratepayers, regulatory bodies and elected officials. Our risk appetite considers stakeholder expectations and seeks to align infrastructure management practices with their needs, while maintaining a responsible and sustainable approach.
 - (ii) We acknowledge our responsibility to protect and enhance the social and environmental wellbeing of our community. Our risk appetite emphasises the integration of sustainable practices into infrastructure asset management, considering environmental impacts, climate change resilience and community engagement.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 17. The project will provide improved amenities for local residents, businesses and visitors to the City to encourage walking and social interaction.
- 18. People will have improved access to safe walking and cycling infrastructure to enjoy a healthy lifestyle with an increased level of physical activity. As part of the City's bike network, this project will contribute to better connected neighbourhoods, increased transport choice and a more socially connected, active and healthier community. Cycling provides a sustainable, low-cost private transport option for people.
- 19. The project will improve the material quality of the public domain. This provides opportunities for the community to highlight the characteristics of Victoria Street.

Environmental

- 20. This project aligns with the City of Sydney's environment performance objectives and targets. Key initiatives include:
 - (a) retention of existing street trees along Victoria Street and the addition of approximately 12 new trees (a 22% increase)
 - (b) undergrounding of overhead wires to provide the opportunity for increased canopy cover for cooler streets
 - (c) cycling and walking are integral to our transport future because they are the most accessible, equitable, sustainable and reliable forms of transport
 - (d) construction waste - all recyclable construction waste will be diverted from landfill in line with the City's Recycling and Waste Policies
 - (e) materials - materials adopted for this project are in line with standard City of Sydney approved products, which are selected from responsible manufacturers and sourced within Australia.

Economic

- 21. The upgrade will provide additional footpath space that can be used by businesses for alfresco dining and display of goods or services in public space.

22. The upgrade will add to the area's attractiveness for families and visitors, increasing pedestrian foot traffic along shop frontages, which may assist the viability of local businesses.
23. Connecting the bike network has a significantly positive benefit to cost ratio as outlined in the Cycling Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2030.

Financial Implications

24. The FY26 Long Term Financial Plan includes an allocation of \$15 million for the Victoria Street Public Domain Upgrade project.
25. There are sufficient funds in the Capital Works Budget for 2025/26 and future year forward estimates as set out in the City's approved Long Term Financial Plan to deliver this project.

Relevant Legislation

26. Roads Act 1993 for road related approvals.
27. Local Government Act 1993 for construction procurement.
28. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EPA Act) (Part 4 and 5). A planner will review the scope of works to assess consent requirements for the project under the EPA Act.
29. Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

30. Key dates for the project are as follows:

(a)	Local Pedestrian, Cycling, Traffic Calming and Transport Forum	March 2026
(b)	Detailed design finalisation	December 2026
(c)	Service investigation and relocation planning	Late 2026
(d)	Pre-construction approvals - Transport for NSW and Ausgrid	Early 2027
(e)	Construction commencement (pending approvals)	Early 2027
(f)	Construction completion	December 2028

Public Consultation

31. Prior to public consultation, the design was informed by advice from the City's Design Advisory Panel (DAP) in June 2025.
32. Ongoing stakeholder consultation is being conducted with Transport for NSW, NSW Fire and Rescue, St Vincents Hospital, NSW Ambulance Services and King Cross Police. All stakeholders are supportive of the proposal.
33. Public consultation commenced with the distribution of over 2,000 letters to the surrounding area on 8 September 2025, following which community feedback was received until 20 October 2025 via the City's "Sydney Your Say" website.
34. During the feedback period, 2 pop-up meetings were held on the 17 and 20 September 2025 and were attended by approximately 50 people.
35. A dedicated Sydney Your Say webpage with an interactive map was provided, for the community to have their say. The webpage was visited 1,869 times during the consultation period.
36. There was a total of 219 responses via an online survey, interactive map, phone calls and email submissions, summarised as follows:
 - (a) 82% of responses were in strong support for the upgrade, cycleway, formalised outdoor dining and additional greening or provided feedback on improving the design which will be incorporated into the detailed design.
 - (b) 18% of responses did not support part or all of the upgrade with the majority of these responses not in favour of the cycleway.
 - (c) No net loss of parking was positively received.
 - (d) Businesses were receptive and supported the public domain upgrade, indicating it should encourage higher visitor numbers.
 - (e) 34 submissions raised concerns around traffic congestion, emergency vehicle access and Craigend Street slip lane removal which will be addressed as part of the detailed design.
 - (f) 19 people requested the relocation of the advertising panel at Craigend Street intersection, which is under investigation for feasibility.

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