

Naming Proposal - Post Exhibition - Plaza Bounded by Kent, Sussex and Napoleon Streets, Sydney

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Summary

This report summarises the outcome of the proposal to name a new public plaza located in Central Sydney, bounded by Kent, Sussex and Napoleon Streets.

In 2016, Council resolved to provide in-principle approval to name the site "Napoleon Plaza" (Resolution of Council 27 June 2016). That proposal generated 16 submissions (including a late submission).

- Four expressed support for the name Napoleon Plaza.
- Nine expressed opposition for the name Napoleon Plaza.
- Three expressed preference for the name Girard Plaza.

In response, Council resolved to defer naming the public open space and requested the Chief Executive Officer develop an alternative naming recommendation for consideration by Council, preferably recognising an Aboriginal or female leader with an historical association to the area.

The name 'Louisa Lawson Place' was subsequently submitted to Council in September 2017. Council resolved to give in-principle approval to name the plaza "Louisa Lawson Place" and endorsed the public exhibition of the naming proposal for a minimum period of 28 days. The proposal was exhibited for community comment from 22 November until 18 December 2017.

In total, 59 submissions were received.

- One expressed general support for the name Louisa Lawson Place.
- One expressed preference for the name Girard Plaza.
- One expressed preference for the name Napoleon Place.
- One expressed preference for an unspecified alternate name.
- Fifty-five submissions expressed preference for the name Napoleon Plaza.
- A 325-name petition also expressed preference for the name Napoleon Plaza.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note that the proposal to name the site bounded by Kent, Sussex and Napoleon Streets, Sydney was placed on public exhibition for community comment and that the public exhibition period has now closed;
- (B) Council note that the outcome of the community consultation referred to in clause (A) indicates that naming the site bounded by Kent, Sussex and Napoleon Streets, Sydney “Louisa Lawson Place” is not supported;
- (C) Council approve the name “Napoleon Plaza” for the site bounded by Kent, Sussex and Napoleon Streets, Sydney, based on the outcome of the community consultations in 2016 and 2017 referred to in clause (A); and
- (D) an application be made to the Geographic Names Board in accordance with the Geographical Names Act 1996 for the naming of the site as “Napoleon Plaza”.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Location and Images of the Public Plaza
- Attachment B.** Resolution of Council 27 June 2016
- Attachment C.** Resolution of Council 21 November 2016
- Attachment D.** Summary of Submissions
- Attachment E.** Biography of Louisa Lawson

Background

1. A new public open space bounded by Napoleon, Sussex and Kent Streets, opened to the public in September 2016. The site is primarily comprised of hard paving and functions as a pedestrian link between Wynyard Walk and Barangaroo.
2. A number of land lots make up the site. These are under various ownership, including Transport for NSW (TfNSW), Roads and Maritime Services, Barangaroo Development Authority and the City of Sydney. A process is underway to transfer ownership to the City, with the exception of some small lots containing engineering infrastructure, such as bridge pylons and ventilation stacks.
3. Following a request from TfNSW, on 27 June 2016, Council resolved to provide in-principle approval to name the site "Napoleon Plaza" and to exhibit the proposal for public comment for a period of 28 days (refer to Attachment B: Resolution of Council 27 June 2016).
4. The project name "Napoleon Plaza" has been in use by TfNSW in their communications and media releases. Napoleon Plaza was originally proposed because the name reflected the proximity of the site to the adjacent Napoleon Street.
5. The Napoleon Plaza naming proposal was exhibited for public comment from 6 September until 3 October 2016 and attracted 16 submissions (including a late submission). Four submissions (including the late submission) supported Napoleon Plaza and 12 were not in support, including three submissions expressing preference for the name "Girard Plaza".
6. On 21 November 2016, Council resolved to defer naming the site and requested the Chief Executive Officer to develop an alternative naming recommendation for consideration by Council, preferably recognising an Aboriginal or female leader with historical association to the area (refer to Attachment C: Resolution of Council 21 November 2016).
7. Following research of the area, the City Historian recommended the name Louisa Lawson Place. An Aboriginal Sydney Language name was not recommended for this site due to the lack of connections with Aboriginal culture and the urban fabric of the site.
8. A brief biography of Louisa Lawson is contained in Attachment E.

Outcome of Community Consultation

9. The Louisa Lawson Place naming proposal was exhibited for community comment from 22 November until 18 December 2017.
10. In total, 59 submissions were received.
 - (a) One expressed general support for the name Louisa Lawson Place.
 - (b) One expressed preference for the name Girard Plaza.
 - (c) One expressed preference for the name Napoleon Place.
 - (d) One expressed preference for an unspecified alternate name.

- (e) Fifty-five submissions, and a 326-name petition, expressed preference for the name Napoleon Plaza.
11. The 55 submissions and petition supporting Napoleon Plaza shared many common sentiments. The themes presented in support of the name Napoleon Plaza included:
- (a) Wayfinding - naming the site Napoleon Plaza would assist in wayfinding because the Napoleon name is well established in the area. The site is adjacent to Napoleon Street, The Napoleon Bridge, Napoleon Steps and the Napoleon Apartments. The Napoleon name is well known locally and globally which would facilitate recognition, encourage visitation to the area, and may be of benefit in emergency management.
 - (b) Social History - the area has a long and continuing history with the name Napoleon as evident by the adjacent Napoleon Steps, Napoleon Bridge, Napoleon Apartments and Napoleon Street. Prior to construction, some sections of the site formed part of Napoleon Street. The name was previously used by TfNSW during its development and construction and is reportedly in local use.
 - (c) Multiculturalism - naming the site Napoleon Plaza would raise awareness of the City's multicultural heritage. Napoleon had indirect connections to Sydney through Nicholas Baudin (1754 - 1803), the French explorer, cartographer and naturalist, who Napoleon selected to lead an expedition to explore and map the coast of Australia in 1800. Francois Girard (1793 - 1859), an officer during the Napoleonic Wars, migrated to England and was subsequently convicted for theft and transported to Sydney. Following his pardon in 1825, Girard established a flour mill and wharf at Darling Harbour, naming the access road to his property Napoleon Street.
 - (d) Social Inclusion - Napoleon contributed to the recognition and advancement of gay rights through the legalisation of gay relations in his Napoleonic Code.
12. The common themes presented in opposition to the proposed name "Louisa Lawson Place" included:
- (a) Lack of Local Relevance - Louisa Lawson is perceived to have no direct relation to this specific site given that her business addresses were located in Jamieson and Phillip Streets, Sydney.
 - (b) Site Characteristics - characteristics of the site, particularly its location between a public hotel and a pedestrian tunnel, within an area traditionally associated with the dockland industry, and its lack of greenery and vegetation are considered to be inappropriate to the memory and legacy of Louisa Lawson.
 - (c) Other greener sites (outside the City of Sydney area) already named after Louisa Lawson, such as Louisa Lawson Reserve in Marrickville, are considered a more fitting tribute to her memory.
13. The management of the adjacent Sussex Hotel and (part) owner of the hotel made submissions also noting that previous consultation on the Napoleon Plaza name did not reach many occupants and owners of local properties. They noted that the current consultation, having deeper reach, has generated significant support from local businesses, their staff and customers for Napoleon Plaza, including a petition with 326 names.

14. An assessment of the submissions received is contained within Attachment D.
15. The community consultation process in 2017 indicated a strong preference for naming the site Napoleon Plaza. However, this name does not reflect the intent of the Resolution of Council 21 November 2016 (refer Attachment C) to "request the Chief Executive Officer develop an alternative naming recommendation for consideration by Council, preferably recognising an aboriginal or female leader with historical association to the area."
16. Louisa Lawson was a notable female leader with historical association to the area, having established and developed her business interests at nearby Jamison Street and Phillip Street.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

17. 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 report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling - naming the site will assist in pedestrian wayfinding and will facilitate recognition and visitation.
 - (b) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre - the site is located on a busy pedestrian route linking the public transport hub at Wynyard with the Barangaroo business precinct. Naming the plaza will engage and educate visitors and commuters about the site history.
 - (c) Direction 6 - Inclusive and Resilient Communities - naming the plaza will raise awareness and promote visitation to the precinct and to nearby businesses such as cafes and restaurants.
 - (d) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City - the recommended name raises the awareness of visitors to the significant contribution and cultural achievements of Louisa Lawson in shaping our modern society.

Organisational Impact

18. The naming proposal will not have significant organisational impact. Wayfinding signage will be updated to include the approved name.
19. The organisational impact of the handover to the City of the various land parcels which comprise the open space will be the subject of a future report to Council.

Social / Cultural / Community

20. The City's Historian did not recommend the use of an Aboriginal Sydney Language name due to a lack of direct connections with Aboriginal culture and the urban fabric of the site.

21. Many City of Sydney parks and streets have Indigenous names and the City is progressively including formal acknowledgement of country messages on its parks signs. The Barangaroo Development Authority has also applied Aboriginal recognition naming to many of the pathways in the nearby Barangaroo Reserve.

Budget Implications

22. There are funds available in the capital works and operating budgets approved by Council for the installation of signs in the newly named plaza.

Relevant Legislation

23. The recommended name needs to comply with the Geographic Names Act 1966 (NSW) and the Geographic Names Board Guidelines.
24. The recommended name should be consistent with the City of Sydney Draft Naming Policy.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

25. There are no critical timeframes.

Options

26. Council may choose to select any of the previous recommended names, including Louisa Lawson Place, Napoleon Plaza or Girard Plaza.
27. Council may also opt to defer naming the site. This option is not preferred because the site is currently without a formal name.

Public Consultation

28. The naming proposal was advertised for community comment in the local press. Public Notices were installed on site and a letter was posted notifying surrounding properties of the proposal. The proposal was also advertised on the Sydney Your Say website.
29. The process for naming public places generally proceeds as follows:
 - (a) in-principle approval by Council of the proposed name (completed);
 - (b) public notification of the naming proposal with a minimum 28 day response time (completed);
 - (c) Council approval following community consultation (pending);
 - (d) assessment by the Geographic Names Board NSW through its formal application process (pending); and

- (e) approval by the Geographical Names Board and subsequent publication in the NSW Government Gazette (pending).
30. The Geographic Names Board will also notify the public through the local press as part of their routine procedure for the naming of public places. If objections are raised, the proposal is returned to Council for further comment or amendment if required.

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