

Appendix H Open Space

2016

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1

Introduction

Central Sydney contains and is surrounded by significant public open spaces. These spaces are diverse in their character and use.

Land in Central Sydney is scarce. While the Central Sydney Planning Strategy is to increase the number of workers accommodated in Central Sydney, it is very difficult to increase the amount of public open space. This is because there is a conflict between the desire to use land efficiently in order to create more business space and jobs, and to use land to increase the amount of public open space.

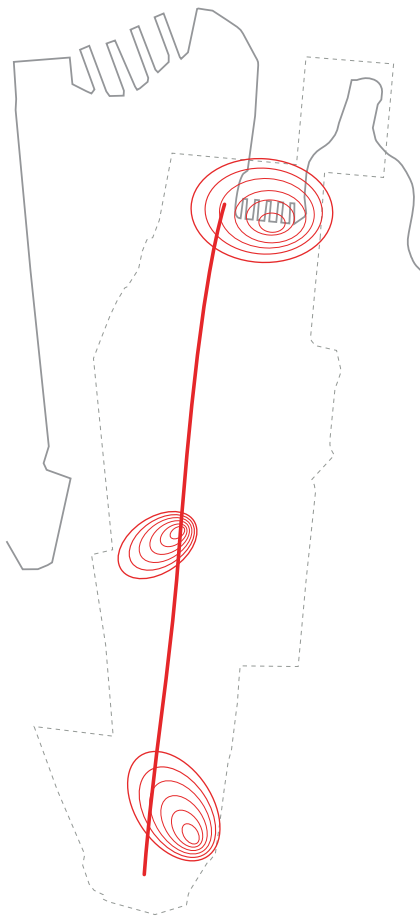
In the future existing open spaces will be used more intensively and the City is working to improve the quality of existing spaces. This work is outlined in Section 2.

Most areas of Central Sydney are in close proximity to open spaces. This is analysed in Section 3. Where there are pockets that are not within an easy walk of open space, the Strategy has identified actions to improve accessibility. These actions include:

- Building a new square at Town Hall;
- Extending the pedestrianisation of George Street to Railway Square; and
- Improving east west pedestrian links to provide better access to existing high quality open spaces at the foreshore and Darling Harbour.

As well as noting relevant recommendations from the City Centre Public Domain Plan and Place Specific Plans, the two key recommendations of this study are:

- that the City continues to explore how streets can increase their function as public open spaces; and
- that more of the City's public domain works be directed toward the south of Central Sydney (Chinatown, Belmore Park) to make it more attractive to a broader cross-section of employers.



2

Existing plans

City Centre Public Domain Plan

The City Centre Public Domain Plan is under continuous development and is largely built around key recommendations derived from the Public Spaces/Public Life Sydney Study produced in 2007. The central idea highlighted in this study was the need for a strong city identity with a central spine of one main street and three significant squares.

The Public Spaces / Public Life Sydney Study was divided into three intervention approaches: large, medium and small scale interventions.

The large scale approach proposed:

- a full pedestrianisation of George Street;

The medium scale approach proposed:

- the creation or upgrade of the three public squares at Circular Quay, Town Hall and Railway Square;

The small scale approach proposed:

- the creation of small public open spaces through street closures
- a focus on the provision of a high quality public art programme for the central spine and the three squares.

The study coincided with the preparation of Sustainable Sydney 2030 (published in 2009), the City's long term strategic vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. This vision integrated the outcomes of the Public Spaces / Public Life Sydney Study.

The City Centre Public domain plan is comprised of a number of studies developed ahead of development pressure. The main public domain studies completed to date are:

City of Sydney	
2007	Public Spaces, Public Life (Gehl Architects)
2008	Sustainable Sydney 2030: The Vision (City of Sydney)
2010	Town Hall Precinct + Square Urban Design Study (Tony Caro Architect)
2012	George Street Urban Design Study (City of Sydney and Gehl Architects)
2012	George Street Concept Design (City of Sydney)
2015	Harbour North Village Study
	City North Public Domain
	Chinatown and south CBD Public Domain (under exhibition)

The City's studies work together with studies developed by the State Government:

NSW Government	
2012	Sydney's Rail Future: Modernising Sydney's Train (NSW Government)
2013	Sydney City Centre Access Strategy (NSW Government)



The City Centre Public Domain Plan identifies a number of recommendations:

Developing George Street as a central spine of the CBD

One of the central actions which will transform George Street by 2020 into Sydney's new civic spine is the CBD Light Rail project. In September 2013, Council endorsed the George Street Concept Design, which detailed public domain improvements along George Street and its adjacent spaces. This concept was conceived alongside the NSW State Government's CBD Light Rail Project. The City continues to work with Transport for NSW to ensure the best possible outcome, with a focus on a high quality public domain for George Street.

The City's vision for George Street is guided by the following public domain principles.

- Maximization of space for pedestrians
- Minimization of clutter in streetscape
- A balance between public and private occupation of space
- A 24-hour street offering diversity of use beyond traditional business hours
- A dedicated flex-zone to contain all furnishing and free standing elements
- A coordinated suite of elements
- Universal accessibility

Guided by these principles a set of actions have started to shape the projects.

Pedestrianisation and introduction of light rail

The reduction of vehicular traffic is the main objective behind the introduction of light rail along George Street. Planning and work on this project has already commenced since late 2013.

City centre cycleway

The Sydney City Centre Access Strategy (2013) has identified cycleways as part of an integrated solution to unlock congestion and assist the public to get around the city more sustainably. As part of this strategy, the State has already begun work on the CBD Cycleway project with new constructions along Castlereagh, Liverpool and Park streets.

Paving, trees, Furniture, Lighting, Art

The George Street Concept Design (2013) document details out a number of public domain principles such as paving, trees, furniture, lighting, art, etc. Approximately 25, 000 sq. m of road space is planned to be reclaimed for pedestrians in the City's extended scheme – providing opportunity for tree planting, outdoor dining, new public domain furniture and events.

The Edges

The City will identify activation zones along the edges of George Street and in the adjoining laneways/squares for a range of uses. In order to achieve this, the City is preparing a public domain plan for the length of George Street incorporating a detailed block-by-block study considering existing and potential floor usage, façade quality and treatment, awnings, signage, fixed furniture and kiosks.

H_02

George Street Concept Design



Development of three significant squares

Circular Quay Square

The City North Public Domain Plan (2015) objective is to reinforce a connected public space at Circular Quay and create a unified square from the building edge to the water. Moreover, the renewal of the Circular Quay area as one of the main squares of Central Sydney also calls for an overall development/planning of the public domain in and around its surrounding areas. The plan identifies some of the key surrounding areas: Circular Quay waterfront, Martin Place and Wynyard. Focusing primarily on pedestrian amenity and environment, four principles are of direct relevance to the City North Public Domain Plan:

1. A waterfront city – The harbour front is connected by a foreshore walk linking the Opera House to Darling Harbour, and better links are established between the city and the water.
2. A green connected city - The City's parks are celebrated and linked by strong pedestrian connections.
3. A better city for walking - Pedestrian networks link villages and transportation modes around the city and the pedestrian environment is attractive and safe.
4. An inviting streetscape - There is a distinct street hierarchy. Streets are differentiated by their uses.

It is noted that any intervention within the Circular Quay and surrounding areas would have to take into account the future of Cahill Expressway.

Town Hall Square

The need for creation of Town Hall Square along the main central spine of George Street was first envisioned in “Public Spaces / Public Life Sydney” (2007). Later in 2008, this idea was incorporated by the City within its new vision - Sydney 2030. Following this in March 2010, Tony Caro Architecture (TCA) prepared a document “Town Hall Precinct-Square Urban Design Study” which detailed various different square options at Town Hall.

The above mentioned documents set the precinct for the creation of Town Hall Square and at present, after several study options were investigated, an area has been identified for the Town Hall Square. The main criteria for this has been the nature of public space and its relationship between existing surrounding open spaces and heritage buildings. The preferred option (H_03) responds to both of these key criteria.

This ease of space along the main spine of George Street through the creation of a Town Hall square is not only significant in terms of introducing new public space; it also plays a significant role in consolidating existing public spaces and heritage buildings within the area. In order for Town Hall square to function effectively, there is also the need for reduction of heavy vehicular movement along Park and Druiitt Streets.

H_03

Future Town Hall Square – Urban Design Study



Southern Square (Railway Square, Chinatown, Darling Harbour)

The Chinatown and City South Public Domain plan (2015) which was publicly exhibited late 2015, incorporates three main areas within the Southern square: Railway Square, Chinatown, and Darling Harbour. It is important to note that the Darling Harbour and CUB developments will have a significant effect on Chinatown's public domain as they are located immediately adjacent to Chinatown and include a significant increase in residential density.

The public domain plan proposes substantial improvement in street and building fronts in Chinatown, better traffic management within Railway square incorporating future light rail stops, improved accessibility of Belmore Park and better connectivity between the three spaces (Railway Square, Darling Harbour and Chinatown).

Within the central and south CBD there are a number of open public spaces such as Belmore Park, Darling harbour, Railway square, etc., however the lack of connectivity between them makes their accessibility difficult. There is a possibility of exploring this connectivity through Hay and Quay Streets. Parts of Hay Street are already proposed to be pedestrianised and similar options could also be explored through Quay Street.

Martin Place and Wynyard

Martin Place and Wynyard are identified as future potential public squares/spaces within the George Street central spine in addition to the three main squares. Although Martin Place already exists as a major public space within the central Sydney CBD, there is a need to further optimize its quality and create better connectivity with the central, pedestrianised George Street spine.

The City North Public Domain Plan (2015) further details out the above listed phasings.

Similarly Wynyard, which is a major transport hub within the CBD, lacks some of the major qualities of a public space such as legibility, fine grain, etc. Some of these shortcomings are being addressed through a number of projects underway. There is a need to create better connectivity between Wynyard and the central, pedestrianised George Street spine.

Place Specific Plans

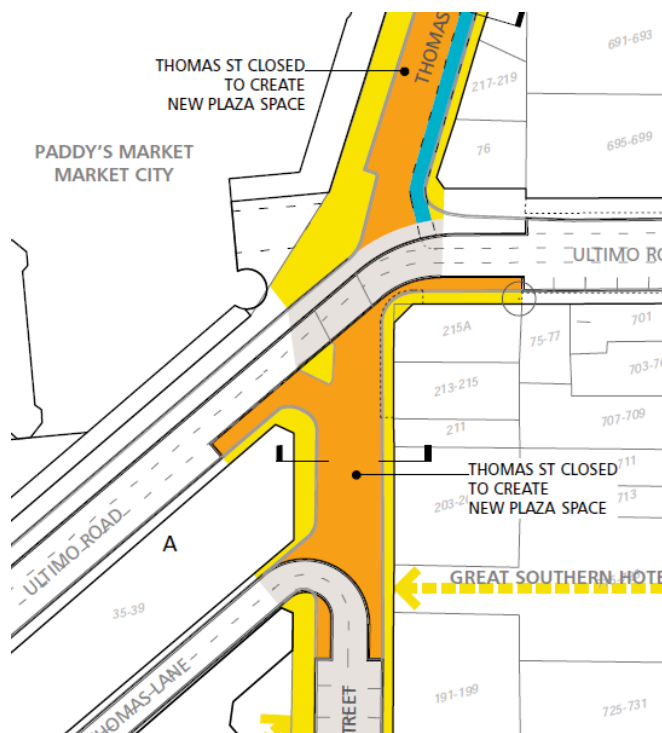
Three place specific plans have been completed including City North, Harbour Village North and Chinatown.

Each plan has a different focus and is built around leveraging opportunities arising from State and private development.

The Chinatown public domain plan included detailed study of areas where vehicle carriageway could be resumed for pedestrians. One square on Thomas Street has been realised. The strategy demonstrated by this project is not new but is a good example of the kind of works that will need to be undertaken to increase public open space in Central Sydney.

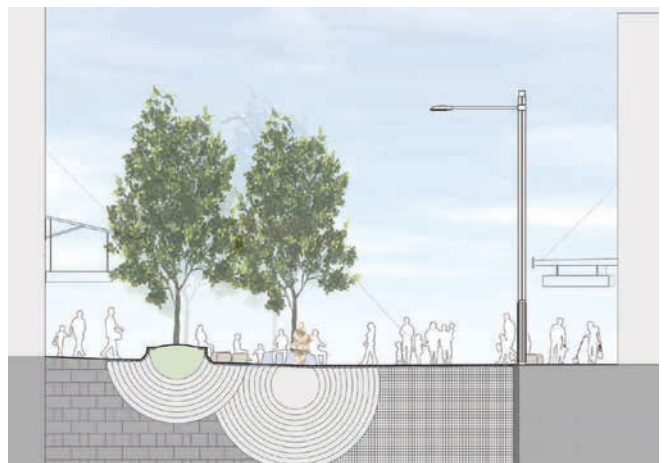
H_04

Thomas Street closure
Chinatown Public Domain Plan



H_05

Thomas Street closure
Concept design



H_06

Indicative Open Space Accessibility

-  Lots further than 400m walking distance of an open space larger than Wynyard Park
-  Lots further than 200m walking distance of all open spaces
-  Lots further than 400m and 200m walking distance of open space
-  400m analysis open spaces
-  200m Analysis open spaces



3

Open space accessibility

The indicative open space accessibility analysis (Refer to H_06) shows that most of Central Sydney is well served by open spaces. Most areas are within 200m of small open space and/or 400m of large open space.

There are two areas that are not presently well served. The area west of George Street and south of Wynyard Park and the area around World Square, east of George Street and south of Town Hall.

The midtown parts of both of these areas will benefit from the construction of the future Town Hall Square.

A greater improvement in accessibility to the western area will be realised by the committed pedestrianisation of George Street north of Bathurst Street. The southern extension of pedestrianisation of George Street is not yet committed and so the southern area will remain un-served.

Actions that will improve accessibility levels include:

- Building a new square at Town Hall
- Extending the pedestrianisation of George Street to Railway Square
- Improving east west pedestrian links to provide better access to existing high quality open spaces at the foreshore and Darling Harbour.