

City South Public Domain Plan

File No: X031129

Summary

This report recommends that the City South Public Domain Plan (the Plan) be adopted to provide the basis to undertake further stakeholder consultation to develop a public domain coordination plan that considers Tech Central as well as progress design development on Belmore Park.

The City South precinct is the area between Liverpool Street to the north, George Street to the west, Elizabeth Street to the east and Central Station precinct in the south.

The Plan is part of a broader City Centre Public Domain planning process whereby the City has been divided into eight precincts (Attachment A).

The City South Public Domain Plan provides a coordinated response for improvements for streets and public spaces in the precinct to respond to the expansion of the city centre further south, the renewal of Central Station with metro and over station development, congested footpaths, the need for more public spaces for dwelling, traffic dominated streets, and the need to respond to a hotter climate.

Addressing these issues will require space reallocation of streets from a primarily traffic and parking function to provide more space for people to walk, cycle, stay and accommodate tree canopy.

This response is informed by the principles and directions set out in Sustainable Sydney 2030 and Public Space Public Life 2007 and 2020. This includes the idea of a pedestrianised George Street linked by three squares at Circular Quay, Town Hall and Central.

The proposals are not fully developed or resolved designs but are intended to illustrate potential design principles to streets and spaces within the precinct to stimulate conversation and engagement with stakeholders in particular Transport for NSW about the future direction of the area.

The recommended project priority to proceed with stakeholder consultation, feasibility and design development is Belmore Park.

Central Station is the focus of significant urban renewal and transport infrastructure development by the NSW Government that presents opportunities to reconsider existing streets and spaces and the creation of new public space as an integrated public domain network.

The Greater Sydney Commission is also progressing the coordination of planning for Tech Central which, in addition to the City South study area, encompasses a wider area including Broadway, Camperdown Innovation precinct, North and South Eveleigh, Haymarket and Ultimo. (Attachment B)

With multiple project stakeholders, land ownership and overlapping areas of interest, it is evident that further co-ordination between agencies and the City is required to ensure a connected, cohesive public domain over a broader southern city area.

It is recommended that the City South Public Domain Study be adopted by Council and be an informing document for advocacy and stakeholder consultation on recommended project priorities, as well as input into the development a broader public domain coordination plan that includes Tech Central.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council adopt the City South Public Domain Plan as shown at Attachment C to the subject report;
- (B) Council note that the City South Public Domain Plan forms the basis to undertake stakeholder engagement and development of a broader public domain framework that includes Tech Central;
- (C) Council note that further stakeholder engagement and feasibility assessments will be required to develop a more refined scope to finalise individual project scopes and guide the City's long term planning and capital works programming; and
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor amendments to the Public Domain Plan arising from stakeholder consultation and feasibility assessments.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** City Centre Public Domain Precincts
- Attachment B.** Greater Sydney Commission - Tech Central
- Attachment C.** City South Public Domain Plan

Background

1. City South is the area between Liverpool Street to the north, George Street to the west, Elizabeth Street to the east and Central Station precinct in the south.
2. The City South Public Domain Plan is part of a broader City Centre Public Domain planning process whereby the City is divided into eight precincts. (Attachment A)
3. Each precinct's streets and public space is studied to develop a series of projects to both significantly increase the quantity and improve the quality of the city centre public domain. This is in line with Sustainable Sydney 2030 directions to create a Lively and Engaging City Centre.
4. A key objective in the development of the city centre public domain plans is to rebalance space allocation of streets to provide more room for people to walk, cycle and stay.
5. Plans that have been completed to date are Chinatown public domain plans (2010 and 2015) Harbour Village North 2012, George Street 2013 and City North 2015.
6. A Town Hall Public Domain Plan has also been prepared (subject of a separate Council report).

Planning context

7. Sustainable Sydney 2030 and the key informing document Public Space Public Life 2007 Public Space Public Life Study 2007 included the idea of a pedestrianised George Street linked by city squares at Circular Quay, Town Hall and Central Station.
8. The Public Space Public Life Study was recently updated in 2020 and again reinforces the importance of continuing a public domain quality agenda to support the growth, competitiveness and environmental resilience of the city.

Central Station planning

9. In 2019, Central Station and its immediate environs was identified as a State Significant Precinct (SSP). The SSP boundary includes the Western Gateway sub-precinct on Lee Street (western edge of Central Station) and the over station development down to Cleveland Street. The precinct also includes the area the City has identified for Central Square (the 'Third Square').
10. At the Council meeting of 14 September 2020, Council endorsed the structuring principles and indicative staging for Central Square. The Plan builds on these structuring principles in the development of the public domain proposals.
11. It is anticipated that a proposal for Central Station over station development will be released in the near future. It is likely that the proposal will include public domain directions for the new Central Station Square, Railway Square/Lee Street, Eddy Avenue, over station public space and connections and Prince Alfred Park boundary edge development.

Greater Sydney Commission

12. The NSW Government is also planning to develop Central Station as part of the innovation precinct, 'Tech Central'. (Attachment B) The precinct will support tech start up, scale ups and innovation partners. The proposed major new public place at Central is a critical part of the re-envisioning of this area of the city by the Commission.

City South Public Domain Plan

Development of the Plan

13. Development of the Plan involved collaboration between City staff and informing plans and studies.
 - (a) Sustainable Sydney 2030;
 - (b) Public Spaces Public Life Study 2020 (Gehl);
 - (c) City South Public Domain Study (Spackman, Mossop and Michaels and WSP);
 - (d) Central Square Design Study (Hassell); and
 - (e) Central Square Structuring Principles study (Spackman Mossop Michaels, Tonkin Zulaikha Greer and Pentelic Transport Advisory Services).

City centre transformation

14. The Plan builds on the transformation of city centre undertaken over previous years. This includes:
 - (a) George Street transformation creating a new civic spine connecting Circular Quay and Central Station;
 - (b) twenty-six city centre laneway upgrades;
 - (c) substantial investment in public transport by State government including light rail and future Sydney Metro;
 - (d) rollout of new public domain furniture and improved wayfinding signage;
 - (e) rollout of more granite paving to achieve a more consistent footpath quality;
 - (f) planting additional street trees in the city centre; and
 - (g) planning controls delivering design excellence outcomes for built environment;

Key issues

15. Although much has been achieved, issues confronting city centre including the City South precinct are:
 - (a) projected development and growth which will increase pedestrian numbers and place pressure on narrow footpaths;

- (b) Central Station renewal that includes the metro station and over station development which will increase concentration of people using public domain to access public transport, employment and retail;
- (c) traffic including buses still dominate and dictate the management of most streets in the city centre with too many streets serving the same purpose, primarily for vehicular traffic and parking;
- (d) disconnected cycleways inhibit the uptake of cycling from all sectors of the community; and
- (e) climate action requires a rethink on public space provision to accommodate additional tree canopy and greening.

Covid-19

- 16. Public space is an absolute necessity for supporting healthy, equitable and financially viable city centres. The pressure for redistributing street space for high capacity transport, walking, cycling and public transport, is further increased through the demand for more space to enable safe social distancing.
- 17. City South precinct's vibrant night-time economy with a strong international student and visitor presence will need to be reinvigorated to support the recovery. Supporting the recovery will include attracting people back to the precinct and creating more space for people to safely access businesses in the area.

Response of public domain plan to issues

- 18. To increase the amount of available public space, a key objective in the development of the City South Public Domain Plan is to rebalance space allocation of streets to provide more room for people to walk, cycle and stay as well as accommodate additional tree canopy.
- 19. The Plan uses the directions in Public Space Public Life 2020 to provide a framework for public domain improvements. They are:

A green and cool city

- 20. The Plan is aligned with the City's leadership in environmental sustainability and climate action with recommendations to maximise tree canopy and greening.

A protected heart

- 21. The transformation of the city centre requires a systemic and structural transport and traffic rethink to create opportunities for road space reallocation to provide more space for people to walk, cycle, stay as well as for green infrastructure.

A city for all

- 22. This direction is focussed on ensuring the public domain is welcoming for all with an emphasis promoting social inclusion.

City identity

23. This direction is focussed on ensuring a high quality, connected and legible public domain key for City South and includes:
- (a) spines and squares - reiteration of the Sustainable Sydney 2030 idea of the George Street spine linked by squares at Circular Quay, Town Hall and Central Station;
 - (b) the precinct conceptualised as a series of connected public spaces that provide a variety of roles and functions;
 - (c) clear street hierarchy - Pitt Street, Eddy Avenue, Campbell Street and Broadway have been identified in the Plan as having merit for further feasibility assessment and design development to capitalise and expand on the George Street pedestrianisation to create a distinct street hierarchy with transformation of additional east-west and north-south streets to more pedestrian orientated and green streets; and
 - (d) continuation of public domain planning that is sensitive to place, including recognition of First Nations People.

City South Public Domain projects underway that deliver on directions

24. Projects underway or in planning include:
- (a) George Street South – extension of further pedestrianisation south of Rawson Street to Pitt Street intersection at Railway Square.
 - (b) Barlow Street closure – approved as a laneway priority project by Council in September 2021.
 - (c) St Laurence Lane – approved as a laneway priority project by Council in September 2021.

Project opportunities

25. The Plan includes various public domain opportunities for the streets and public spaces to facilitate consultation with the community and stakeholders. High level images and sketches have been used to illustrate design concepts for each street and space to communicate possible design directions for improvements.
26. These concepts are not fully worked designs but are rather intended to inform and to be the basis for advocacy technical and feasibility assessment and collaboration with state agencies to achieve successful outcomes. The efficient functioning of the city, including servicing and loading, will be a prime consideration in developing the project proposals.
27. The Plan has identified project opportunities that have been group in to 'key moves' to transform the precinct:
- (a) George Street South Pedestrianisation (underway);
 - (b) Belmore Park upgrade and extend park edge (Eddy Avenue, Hay Street and Pitt Street);

- (c) Central Square and adjoining street and spaces (including Railway Square, closure of Lee Street and Prince Alfred Park interface) - the development of a public domain framework for Central precinct;
 - (d) Pitt Street as a green pedestrian priority street that complement George Street (as envisioned in the Public Spaces Public Life Study) as a north south street that connects the Harbour to Central;
 - (e) Slow Streets and Laneways - Campbell Street, Barlow Street, St Laurence Lane, Parker Street and Lane, Randle Lane and Cunningham Street;
 - (f) Broadway converted into a green boulevard; and
 - (g) City centre palette rollout including paving street furniture wayfinding as per City public domain palette - Castlereagh Street, Elizabeth Street, Goulburn Street, Regent Street and Chalmers Street.
28. Quay Street, as identified in the Chinatown Public Domain (subject of a separate report) has been noted as key project to deliver an improved pedestrian connection between Central and Darling Harbour.

Belmore Park

29. Belmore Park is a 2.1 hectare public open space located directly opposite Central Station on Eddy Avenue.
30. The Plan provides a series of directions derived from the endorsed Plan of Management that aims to revitalise Belmore Park and re-establishes its status as a significant urban park in a changing city south, with a unique relationship with Central Station.
31. Future improvements are to retain the landscape character and sympathetically revitalise the park to provide a safe welcoming place that encourages people to walk through and stay, as well as improve activation opportunities and environmental performance.
32. Key directions to form the basis of a masterplan development process and stakeholder consultation include:
- (a) reinforce the physical and visual relationship and connection to Central Station;
 - (b) ensure Belmore Park responds to the renewal of the Central Station precinct with a series of connected public spaces / public domain;
 - (c) review path hierarchy and circulation network including the south-western to Central Station corner Eddy Avenue entry to improve access;
 - (d) removal, where feasible, of the western boundary fence to provide better integration of the Park to the Pitt Street ramp;
 - (e) expand park edges curtilage to surrounding streets of Eddy Ave, Hay Street and Pitt Street ramp;
 - (f) establish a central activity area and associated recreation opportunities including options to reposition the bandstand to provide more focus to the park;

- (g) provide infrastructure and amenity to facilitate events and community gatherings;
- (h) improve park amenity to create a welcoming space for people to use and enjoy including lighting, park furniture and pathway materials; and
- (i) improve the parks environmental performance and sustainability to contribute to the City of Sydney's environmental targets.

Tech Central and Transport for NSW over station development public domain coordination

- 33. The Greater Sydney Commission is also coordinating planning for Tech Central which, in addition to the City South study area, encompasses a wider area including Broadway, Camperdown Innovation precinct, North and South Eveleigh, Haymarket and Ultimo. The GSC have raised with the City the need for a holistic public domain framework (see Attachment B).
- 34. In addition, over station development proposals under preparation by Transport for NSW will require assessment by the City to ensure alignment of public domain outcomes and connections to the broader precinct.
- 35. With multiple project stakeholders, land ownership and overlapping areas of interest, it is evident that further co-ordination between agencies and the City is required to ensure a connected, cohesive public domain over a broader southern city area.
- 36. It is recommended that the Plan form the basis to undertake stakeholder engagement and development of a broader public domain framework/co-ordination plan that includes Tech Central, as well as be the means to undertake assessment of Central Station over station proposals once publicly released and ensure an improved and connected precinct.

Project development and delivery

- 37. To achieve the Plan's project outcomes, partnership and collaboration with State agencies will be imperative, in particular measures to change traffic and access arrangements.
- 38. Further stakeholder engagement and feasibility assessment will be required to develop a more refined scope to finalise individual project scopes and guide the City's long term planning and capital works programming.

Project priorities for feasibility and design development

- 39. The recommended project priorities to commence stakeholder engagement, feasibility assessment and development resolution is as follows:
 - (a) Belmore Park masterplan development;
 - (b) Barlow Street closure - approved by Council in September 2021;
 - (c) St Laurence Lane upgrade - approved by Council in September 2021; and
 - (d) development of a more detailed public domain framework for the Central Station precinct.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

40. 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 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City - the Plan promotes a public domain quality agenda that supports the city centre that is competitive, attracts investment, and ensures ongoing liveability.
 - (b) Direction 2 - provides a road map for the City to become A Leading Environmental Performer - the Plan supports the City's environmental actions, in particular increasing space available for tree canopy.
 - (c) Direction 3 - Integrated Transport for a Connected City - the Plan supports efficient public transport modes such as Sydney Metro through provision of wider footpaths, wayfinding and public domain legibility.
 - (d) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling - the Plan promotes a rethink of street space allocation to promote better conditions for walking and cycling.
 - (e) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre - the Plan advocates for a welcoming public domain that encourages people to stay and enjoy, as well as measures that support a diverse 24-hour city economy.
 - (f) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City - the Plan promotes the importance of a diverse cultural offer and public art for city identity and encourages people to come to the city for leisure beyond work and business activities.
 - (g) Direction 9 - Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design - the Plan advocates built development and public domain to be exemplars of sustainability.
 - (h) Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships - It will be imperative for State government and private sector collaboration to implement the Plan's recommendations as most require a rethink of road space allocation and traffic management managed by State agencies.

Risks

- 41. All project priorities recommended will require a project scoping and feasibility assessment process that will identify risks and mitigation measures prior to any implementation stage proceeding.
- 42. Many of the recommendations require Transport for NSW approval and ongoing collaboration for a successful outcome.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 43. The Plan includes as a strategic direction "A City for All" which recognises the importance of the public domain to bring people together, with ideas of co-creation of public space outcomes, and need for ongoing public life data collection to ensure an evidence-based approach to public domain planning.

Environmental

44. The Plan is aligned with the City's environmental actions, in particular the need for more space to increase tree canopy and greening.

Economic

45. The Plan focuses on delivering public domain quality and liveability which has been proven to be a key contributor to the competitiveness of cities to do business and attract investment.

Financial Implications

46. The City's long term financial plan has capital works budget allocations for Belmore Park.
47. Barlow Street and St Laurence Lane have been identified as priorities in the Laneway Revitalisation Program which has capital works budget allocations.
48. The Plan also presents a series of recommendations many of which are already business as usual actions incorporated in the City's long term financial plan. This includes granite paving, public domain furniture, wayfinding, greening and laneways program.
49. The Plan's other project opportunities and proposals will require further advocacy, consultation, feasibility assessment and design development in collaboration with stakeholders and state agencies such as Transport NSW to inform future capital works budgets to be adopted by Council.

Relevant Legislation

50. Project delivery will be in accordance to relevant planning and approval legislation and regulations including Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and Roads Act 1993.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

51. It is anticipated that proposals for Central Station over station development will be available for comment in the near future.
52. The Plan provides the opportunity to assist in assessment and response to Central Station Precinct Renewal proposals which is anticipated to be released for comment imminently.

Public Consultation

53. The Plan has drawn on an extensive community engagement process for the preparation of Sustainable Sydney 2050. The main themes identified by this process – a city that is green with quality public space, is easy to walk and cycle in, and responds to climate change – have informed the development of the project proposals and opportunities.
54. The Plan has been presented to the Design Advisory Panel.
55. It is recommended that the Plan be placed on the City's website and the informing principles and public domain proposals and opportunities be a basis for advocacy and consultation to key stakeholders in particular Transport for NSW , as well as to undertake further feasibility assessment and design development.
56. Individual projects will be subject to separate consultation and stakeholder engagement process which will be reported to Council with recommended project scope for Council approval.

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