

Item 3.

Public Exhibition - City North Public Domain Plan

File No: S121925

Summary

This report seeks Council's approval to publicly exhibit the draft City North Public Domain Plan (Draft Plan).

This is a proposed update to the City North Public Domain Plan, which was adopted by Council in December 2015 (2015 Plan) following a period of public exhibition.

The City North study area is generally bound by George Street, Alfred Street, Macquarie Street and King Street. The 2015 Plan analysed the existing public domain, strategic and development context, and recommended the scope, location and extent of public domain improvements over the short, medium and long term. It was developed as part of a series of studies which identified public domain improvements to increase amenity, connectivity and identity for the City Centre, in delivering on Sustainable Sydney 2030's strategic direction of a Lively and Engaging City Centre.

Since the adoption of the 2015 Plan, the planning and development context of City North has changed, with the Central Sydney Planning Strategy creating the northern tower cluster. Significant State government infrastructure and transport projects are planned for the precinct, including two new Metro Stations, and several large planning proposals are underway. These changes all significantly increase demands on the public domain, particularly within the area bound by George Street, Bridge Street, Macquarie Street and Martin Place (known as the Hunter Street Precinct).

These challenges and opportunities have been considered in a detailed study of the Hunter Street Precinct by urban design consultants Gallagher Studio, coordinated by City Design and City Access and Transport teams. Opportunities identified include place-specific upgrade options for streets and spaces, which have been incorporated into the Draft Plan.

This update is consistent with the principles and guiding directions of the adopted 2015 Plan, and is representative of a vision for the precinct. Minor amendments are also proposed to update the 2015 Plan to align with Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision, Sydney Public Spaces and Public Life 2020, and the current development context.

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

It is recommended that the Draft Plan be placed on public exhibition for a period of four weeks. The Draft Plan will then be formally presented to Council for adoption as the City North Public Domain Plan.

Preliminary priorities for implementation have been identified (complete/underway, priority project and longer term projects) and have informed the recommendations of the Draft Plan. An implementation plan will be developed and reported back for adoption with the Draft Plan following the public exhibition.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) approve the public exhibition of the Draft City North Public Domain Plan, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report, for a minimum period of 28 days;
- (B) note that a report will be brought back to Council incorporating a recommended City North Public Domain Plan for adoption that includes the results of the public exhibition and a project implementation plan; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor amendments to the Draft City North Public Domain Plan for clarity or correction of drafting errors prior to public exhibition.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Draft City North Public Domain Plan
- Attachment A1.** Appendix A - Martin Place Urban Design Study (Gehl Architects)
- Attachment A2.** Appendix B – City North Streetscapes and Spaces (Hassell)
- Attachment A3.** Appendix C – Hunter Street Precinct Public Domain Study (Gallagher Studio)
- Attachment B.** Schedule of Changes - City North Public Domain Plan

Background

1. In December 2015, Council adopted the City North Public Domain Plan (2015 Plan). The 2015 Plan related to the area generally bound by George Street, Alfred Street, Macquarie Street and King Street. It included detailed analysis and feasibility to recommend the scope, location and extent of public domain improvements over the short, medium and long term. It was part of a series of detailed studies comprising the overall City Centre Public Domain Plan, which delivered on Sustainable Sydney 2030 directions to create a Lively and Engaging City Centre. To date, in addition to the City North precinct, public domain plans for Chinatown, Harbour Village North, George Street, City South and the Town Hall Precinct have been completed. The 2015 Plan was endorsed following a 4 week public exhibition period.
2. The 2015 Plan focused on transformation triggered by the CBD and South East Light Rail around Circular Quay and Martin Place. It enabled Council to input to the major development projects which were planned in these areas - including the APDG block (developments by Mirvac and Lend Lease), AMP Quay Quarter and others. Upgrades were prioritised to respond and enable this transformation.
3. Since the adoption of the 2015 Plan, the planning and development context of City North has changed, with the Central Sydney Planning Strategy creating the northern tower cluster. State government infrastructure projects have also progressed, and other state masterplan projects are under development. This has created a concentration of transformative proposals around the area bound by George Street, Bridge Street, Macquarie Street and Martin Place. These are detailed below. The Draft City North Public Domain Plan incorporates and addresses these projects.
4. Within the precinct several large private planning proposals have recently been approved, assessed or lodged, with others in pre-lodgement discussions. These include:
 - (a) 37-49 Pitt Street, 49A-57 Pitt Street (approved development comprising a new 45-storey commercial tower)
 - (b) 56 Pitt Street (planning proposal for a new commercial tower envelope has been lodged and is under assessment)
 - (c) 15-25 Hunter Street and 105-107 Pitt Street (planning proposal for commercial tower envelope has been endorsed for gateway determination and public exhibition)
 - (d) 2 Chifley Square (approved planning proposal for an additional commercial tower on the site with improved built form outcomes and active interface with Chifley Square)
5. Metro City and South West - Martin Place station is under construction, including a station entry located on Hunter Street and associated over station development. This is planned to be operational in 2024.

6. Planning is underway for Metro West, including an underground station with two entrances on Hunter Street. A western entrance will be provided facing George Street, allowing interchange with light rail and proximity to Wynyard Station. An eastern station entrance is proposed facing O'Connell Street. Station entrances will be provided from the public domain at ground level, as well as underground connections to Wynyard Station and Metro City and Southwest Martin Place Station. Metro West is planned to open in 2031.
7. A planning proposal for over station development envelopes on the two Metro West sites was recently endorsed by Council and the Central Sydney Planning Committee for a gateway determination and public exhibition.

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8. City Design has been working closely with the Strategic Planning and Urban Design team, and the City Access team, to develop a Public Domain Study for the Hunter Street Precinct to provide a coordinated vision for the future public domain cognisant of the above development context.
9. Consultants have been engaged to develop the Hunter Street Precinct Public Domain Study (Gallagher Studio urban designers, informed by heritage advice from GML Heritage). The Hunter Street Precinct Public Domain Study has been incorporated into the Draft City North Public Domain Plan.
10. In 2018, the NSW Government commissioned a Review into the Macquarie Street East precinct. Released in 2021, the Review recommended improving accessibility and linkages to the rest of the CBD, and adopting a unified vision. \$119 million has been committed in the NSW Budget to progress options to improve the Precinct. A Masterplan is under development, planned for release late 2022. The Draft City North Public Domain Plan proposes strengthened east-west connections linking to the Macquarie Street Precinct - with a new focus on Hunter Street and continued implementation of the endorsed long term works program for Martin Place.
11. The City and Transport for NSW have formed a working group to develop a Joint Road Space Allocation Study for this precinct. The role of the working group is to provide a forum for City of Sydney Council (Roads Authority) and Transport for NSW (including Sydney Metro) to develop a shared vision for the Hunter Street Precinct. This will address place-specific opportunities proposed in the Draft City North Public Domain Plan and include a spatial representation of street functions - including local access, loading and freight - and road space over the next ten years. This work will be completed by the end of November 2022 and will be incorporated into the finalised update to the Draft City North Public Domain Plan, to be reported to Council following public exhibition.
12. The Draft Plan has also been updated for alignment with key strategies and projects. These updates include:
 - (a) Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 - Continuing the Vision. The City North Public Domain Plan has been updated for alignment with Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 - Continuing the Vision. The plan implements the City space improvement program project idea. The City's long term vision for Circular Quay has also been incorporated into the draft updated plan.

- (b) George Street North. The proposed scope of the George Street North pedestrianisation project is coordinated with the Hunter Street public domain study and incorporated into the draft updated City North Public Domain Plan.
 - (c) Circular Quay. The NSW Government is exploring options to renew Circular Quay's public spaces and transport interchange. Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) are jointly leading the renewal project in consultation with other NSW Government agencies. Design development, community consultation and a statutory planning process, is currently underway.
13. The Draft City North Public Domain Plan is attached (Attachment A). New content is shown in red font and a full schedule of amendments is included at Attachment B.

Key Project Outcomes

14. Projects completed or underway (2015 City North Public Domain Plan works plan)
- (a) Martin Place short term upgrade works (CoS)
 - (b) Martin Place metro upgrade works (TfNSW)
 - (c) Alfred Street upgrade (TfNSW)
 - (d) Loftus Street and Reiby Place upgrade (CoS)
 - (e) Farrer Place upgrade (by others via VPA)
15. Existing priority projects (2015 City North Public Domain Plan works plan)
- (a) Martin Place medium term upgrade works
 - (b) Richard Johnson Square upgrade
 - (c) Gresham Street upgrade
 - (d) Alfred Street (north of Customs House) upgrade
 - (e) Macquarie Place Park upgrade
16. Existing longer term projects (2015 City North Public Domain Plan works plan)
- (a) Martin Place long term upgrade works
 - (b) Customs House Square
 - (c) Jessie Street Gardens
 - (d) Pitt Street mall extension north
 - (e) Young and Phillip Street upgrades

17. Recommended priority projects (draft updated plan)
 - (a) George Street north upgrade
 - (b) Hunter Street upgrade
 - (c) Spring Street upgrade
 - (d) Loftus Street south upgrade
 - (e) Bent Street upgrade
18. Recommended longer term projects (draft updated plan)
 - (a) Circular Quay - The Water Square

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

19. 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 plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 1 - Responsible governance and stewardship - the plan guides long term public domain investment and structures improvements to the City's public domain assets and services, as well as guiding investment by others through development.
 - (b) Direction 2 - A leading environmental performer - the plan will implement the Greening Sydney Strategy and significantly increase tree canopy throughout the precinct. It supports active transport and public transport with a focus on the new interchange precinct around the Hunter Street Metro stations.
 - (c) Direction 3 - Public places for all - the plan will balance different public space uses and redistribute space to places cater to movement and daily life.
 - (d) Direction 4 - Design excellence and sustainable development - the plan responds to the distinct character, topography and history of the precinct, opening up opportunities to celebrate water and heritage through project development.
 - (e) Direction 5 - A city for walking, cycling and public transport - the plan will improve pedestrian amenity and safety by creating an attractive environment for pedestrians to walk and upgraded seating for resting close to a busy public transport interchange.
 - (f) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - the plan outlines projects which will make space for all city users, including improving access and amenity for people of all abilities and cultures. The development of projects under this plan provides an opportunity for connecting with Country in City North.

- (g) Direction 7 - Resilient and diverse communities - the plan aims to increase the amount of useable public space with appropriate infrastructure that can be activated by different uses to attract foot traffic and improve business continuity through various shocks and stresses.
- (h) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life - the plan improves connectivity throughout City North, including connecting to the emerging Macquarie Street cultural precinct and the Metro to Modern connection to AGNSW.
- (i) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy - the plan proposes transformative streetscape projects to create a welcoming public domain, encouraging people to stay and enjoy the City and support a diverse 24-hour economy.

Organisational Impact

- 20. Subject to project development and implementation. Any proposed upgrade projects would undergo additional feasibility and costing, and further consultation with Council and the community at the project scoping, design development and approvals stage.

Risks

- 21. All recommendations and actions in the Draft Plan will require a project scoping and feasibility assessment process that will identify risks and mitigation measures prior to any implementation stage proceeding. Statutory approvals are required prior to implementation. Many of the recommendations require the support and collaboration of key stakeholders for a successful outcome.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 22. The Draft 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

- 23. This Draft Plan will contribute towards the Sustainable Sydney environmental targets by:
 - (a) contributing to net zero emissions through improving connectivity and walkability of the city, supporting and connecting sustainable forms of transport; and
 - (b) increasing tree planting to contribute to greening and canopy targets, creating a cool, calm and resilient city.

Economic

- 24. Public domain improvements will have a positive economic impact through increased pedestrian use and activation.

Financial Implications

- 25. The Draft City North Public Domain Plan includes the coordination of several projects already funded or to be delivered by others.

26. The City's Long Term Financial Plan allows for city centre public domain improvements. Funds are available to develop priority projects, to be confirmed following public exhibition.
27. Streetscape upgrade projects relating to development and infrastructure projects may be funded through development contributions. The Draft Plan will also guide future Voluntary Planning Agreement negotiations.
28. An implementation plan will be developed and reported back for adoption with the Draft Plan following public exhibition.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

29. It is proposed to exhibit the Draft Plan for a period of four weeks, and report a revised plan and implementation plan back to Council in early 2023.

Options

30. The option not to update the City North Public Domain Plan has been considered. This would result in an uncoordinated response to individual private development and transport projects, potentially missing opportunities for public domain improvements and limiting pedestrian safety.

Public Consultation

31. The Draft Plan has drawn on extensive community engagement process for the preparation of Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision. 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.
32. This City's Design Advisory Panel were briefed on the proposed update in June 2022 and expressed their support.
33. Transport for NSW will be briefed, and engagement will continue to address implementation, loading and local access issues.
34. It is proposed to publicly exhibit the Draft City North Public Domain Plan for a period of four weeks.
35. During the consultation phase, the City will engage directly with key stakeholders including developers and government to share the proposed updated plan and gather feedback.

36. Feedback gathered during the public exhibition phase will be incorporated into the Draft City North Public Domain Plan and reported back to Council.
37. Individual projects will be subject to separate consultation and stakeholder engagement process in the future which will be reported to Council with recommended project scope for Council approval.

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