

Post Exhibition - Oxford Street LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy

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Summary

The Oxford Street LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy (the Place Strategy) sets out principles and priorities to maintain the significant historical and contemporary connection the LGBTIQA+ community has to Oxford Street. It builds on recently amended planning controls to support the development of a Creative and Cultural Precinct around Oxford Street, Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision, and work being undertaken to prepare for Sydney WorldPride 2023. The Place Strategy was developed in consultation with key LGBTIQA+ community groups, stakeholders and the community.

On 11 April 2022, Council approved a draft of the Place Strategy for public exhibition. The City received 173 submissions, including 167 surveys and six written submissions via email. Online forums and one-on-one meetings were also held by City staff with key stakeholders as part of the consultation process.

The feedback is extremely positive and indicates that the community feels the Place Strategy is an effective plan to support the continued connection to and celebration of LGBTIQA+ communities and culture in the local area.

Feedback indicates support for:

- delivering a safe and welcoming environment across the Oxford Street Precinct;
- recognising the social and cultural significance of historical LGBTIQA+ places and spaces;
- increasing social and cultural space across the Oxford Street Precinct that caters to the diverse groups of the LGBTIQA+ community; and
- encouraging local businesses in the Oxford Street Precinct to celebrate LGBTIQA+ character and culture and support the local community.

This report recommends the adoption of a post exhibition Place Strategy, which responds to community feedback and includes some new opportunities identified through the exhibition process. The Place Strategy includes actions to be delivered by the City of Sydney in collaboration and at times in partnership with the local community, businesses and private landowners.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council adopt the Oxford Street LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy as shown at Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) Council note the feedback received on the draft Oxford Street LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy as shown at Attachment B to the subject report; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make amendments to the Oxford Street LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy in order to correct any minor drafting errors and finalise design, artwork and accessible formats for publication.

Attachments

Attachment A. Oxford Street LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy

Attachment B. Engagement Report

Background

The Place Strategy

1. Since 2019, the City has consulted widely on ways to revitalise Oxford Street. Overwhelmingly, the community called for Oxford Street to remain the focal point for Sydney's LGBTIQ+ communities and culture. People asked if more could be done to keep Oxford Street a safe and welcoming hub, and to celebrate the LGBTIQ+ history of the area.
2. The Place Strategy reflects the importance of the Oxford Street precinct and local LGBTIQ+ communities to Australia's past and future. It aims to promote inclusive businesses, fund new public artworks and support the delivery of a pride museum.
3. The Place Strategy sets out opportunities and initiatives for the City, community organisations and the private sector to strengthen and build upon Oxford Street's LGBTIQ+ history, character and future.
4. The Place Strategy includes five key priorities and a series of actions for each priority area. The actions will be driven and delivered collaboratively between the City and the community.

The 5 key priority areas are:

- (a) Recognise and remember historic LGBTIQ+ places and spaces.
- (b) Retain the local character of Oxford Street through contemporary LGBTIQ+ venues and businesses.
- (c) Increase LGBTIQ+ cultural and social space within the Oxford Street Precinct.
- (d) Increase the visibility and reflect the identity of the LGBTIQ+ community across the Oxford Street Precinct.
- (e) The local community is safe and supported.

Community feedback and amended actions

5. The City received 173 submissions on the draft Place Strategy, including 167 survey and six written responses. Respondents included a diverse range of community members who live, work or visit the Oxford Street Precinct and key community organisations and stakeholders.
6. Written submissions were received from ACON, Sydney WorldPride, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Qtopia, Queer Day Out, Haus of BlackStar, Darlinghurst Business Partnership and the Ankali Project.
7. Community feedback was extremely positive showing very strong community support for the draft Place Strategy's vision and priority areas.
8. The priority area considered most important was that "The local community is safe and supported" (96 per cent of respondents rated this as very important or important) and this will be noted when the City consults with NSW Police on the development of a Precinct Safety Plan.

9. The following outlines the key themes from submissions and how they have been addressed within the Place Strategy.

- (a) Diversity and intersectionality of the LGBTIQ+ community be represented in the delivery of the Place Strategy. This includes First Nations people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Response: The implementation of the Place Strategy will include the delivery of public spaces and places, murals and artwork that reflects the diversity of the community as well as identification and acknowledgement of historical places of significance.

- (b) Increase First Nations representation, visibility and intersections with LGBTIQ+ community across the Precinct.

Response: A new action is proposed post exhibition to support the development and delivery of a First Nations Queer Cultural Space through grant funding and advocacy.

- (c) Provide more social and cultural spaces for community to connect, celebrate and support each other.

Response: The City is supporting Qtopia to set up a Pride Museum within the Precinct and if possible incorporate community spaces within the Museum.

- (d) Continue to support local businesses, nightlife and the use of outdoor spaces.

Response: The City will work with local businesses to implement a Business Charter to support an inclusive and welcoming Precinct. In addition, the City has extended fee waivers for outdoor dining with opportunities to expand this initiative in the future. The green avenues project as part of Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision will aim to calm traffic and create more space for entertainment and dining along Oxford and Flinders Streets.

- (e) The need for better transport connections to the Precinct that are affordable.

Response: The City will advocate to the State Government through the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner to consider opportunities to increase affordable and late-night public transport options to the Precinct from across Greater Sydney.

- (f) Affordable and diverse housing options within proximity to the Precinct are limited, impacting on young LGBTIQ+ people and more vulnerable community members living close to community and support services.

Response: The City will advocate for diverse and affordable housing for LGBTIQ+ people and other vulnerable community members within proximity to the Precinct.

- (g) Increase cleaning of the streets and beautification projects in the public domain, particularly in the lead up to Sydney WorldPride 2023.

Response: The City will deliver a range of projects to enhance the vibrancy and amenity of the public domain and City assets, including Pride themed Living Colour floral displays, Pride themed lighting at the Taylor Square fountain and an interpretive sign identifying Taylor Square and its connection to the LGBTIQ+ community.

10. Other updates to actions post exhibition:

- (a) Previous action to support the establishment of a cultural centre or museum updated to reference Qtopia as the organisation that the City is supporting to deliver this action.
- (b) Previous action on the promotion of Oxford Street as a location through City marketing now updated to be more specific and include developing an Oxford Street landing page on the City's website that highlights key events, programs and services, local businesses and progress on the implementation of the Place Strategy.

Next steps

- 11. All actions within the Place Strategy will be delivered by the City in collaboration with community, local businesses and key stakeholders.
- 12. Several actions are already underway with the majority to be completed prior to Sydney WorldPride 2023.
- 13. The Place Strategy will continue to be implemented post Sydney WorldPride 2023.
- 14. Progress of the implementation of the Place Strategy will be reported to Council via CEO Update quarterly until June 2023 and annually thereafter.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

- 15. 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 LGBTIQ+ community are supported and included in decision-making at the City, particularly in relation to the Oxford Street Precinct.
 - (b) Direction 3 - Public places for all – public spaces and places reflect and celebrate the LGBTIQ+ history, community and connection to place. The LGBTIQ+ community feels safe and acknowledged in public spaces within the Precinct.
 - (c) Direction 5 - A city for walking, cycling and public transport – the Strategy advocates for accessible streetscapes and infrastructure that supports active transport and an increase in affordable public transport to the Precinct.

- (d) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city – the City is committed to ensuring social justice and equity for all, including for the LGBTIQ+ community. This Strategy furthers this commitment with practical actions to create meaningful change for the LGBTIQ+ community.
- (e) Direction 7 - Resilient and diverse communities – the Strategy advocates for increased services and programs that support transgender and gender diverse people, and older members of the LGBTIQ+ community.
- (f) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life – the Strategy will support increased cultural space and activity in the Precinct and aims to maintain the LGBTIQ+ character and heritage.
- (g) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy – the Strategy builds upon the Precinct's existing economic activity and aims to build a thriving and welcoming night-time economy.
- (h) Direction 10 - Housing for all – the Strategy advocates for the delivery of affordable and diverse housing for LGBTIQ+ people within proximity to Oxford Street.

Organisational Impact

- 16. The Place Strategy will be implemented by City staff across multiple Divisions as part of their existing work plans.

Risks

- 17. If the Place Strategy is not adopted, some of the actions may not be able to be delivered prior to Sydney WorldPride 2023.

Financial Implications

- 18. There are no post exhibition changes to the previously approved draft budget reported to April 2022 Council.

Relevant Legislation

- 19. Local Government Act 1993.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

- 20. Delivery of the Place Strategy is already underway. Most actions within the Place Strategy will be delivered prior to Sydney WorldPride 2023. The Place Strategy will continue to be implemented over a 3–5-year horizon.

Public Consultation

21. The Place Strategy was exhibited from 12 April to 24 May 2022. The Engagement Report is at Attachment B.

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