

Post Exhibition - Naming Proposal - Two Lanes at 180 George Street, Sydney

File No: X086317

Summary

The redevelopment of 180 George Street is creating a new public plaza and activating the industrial lanes between George and Pitt Streets. The renewed public domain – plaza and lanes – now require official naming. The spaces are currently within private property but will be dedicated to the City when the development is complete.

The City undertook community consultation on the proposed names "Cabinetmaker Place" and "Crane Place" from 23 September 2022 to 21 October 2022.

Feedback from the community strongly supported the intent to celebrate the history of the area, particularly the original Chinatown that was located around the site in the 1800s. However, a majority of responses suggested that using well-known Chinese family names would be a more meaningful way to do this.

It is recommended that in response to community feedback, "Cabinetmaker Place" is amended "Ah Toy Lane" and "Crane Place" to "Sai Ying Lane" to better celebrate the Chinese-Australian history and businesses of the area.

Both of these names conform to the NSW Geographical Names Board (GNB) requirements for naming roads. The names were placed on public exhibition via a public notice on the City's website. This second round of consultation confirmed strong community support for the names. The Geographical Names Board has also approved the proposed use of both names.

This report recommends that Council support the naming of two new lanes:

- "Ah Toy Lane" - It is proposed that the lane with a northeast-southwest alignment recognises the evolution of Sydney's original Chinatown around Lower George Street and The Rocks from 1850s – 1880s. Ah Toy was a large and successful furniture business located on George Street in the vicinity of the lane.
- "Sai Ying Lane" - It is proposed that the lane with the east-west alignment from Pitt Street recognises the early Chinese immigrants who established businesses in Sydney and Parramatta. Mak Sai Ying is recorded as one of the first Chinese people to arrive in Sydney on 27 February 1818. His sons were carpenters, cabinetmakers and undertakers. Mak Sai Ying had 31 grandchildren and the family is believed to be one of the largest Chinese-Australia families in Australia today.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve the name "Ah Toy Lane" for the northeast-southwest aligned lane;
- (B) Council approve the name "Sai Ying Lane" for the east-west aligned lane; and
- (C) an application be made to the Geographical Names Board for the naming of the lanes as approved in (A) and (B), in accordance with the Geographical Names Act 1996.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Map Showing Location of Development Site, Including Lanes
- Attachment B.** 22 August 2022 Resolution of Council
- Attachment C.** Engagement Report
- Attachment D.** Submissions Table for Additional Consultation
- Attachment E.** Historical Justification

Background

1. The redevelopment of 180 George Street is creating a new public plaza and activating the industrial lanes between George and Pitt Streets.
2. The public plaza, laneways and community building are part of Lendlease's Sydney Place office tower development at 180 George Street. The development predominantly comprises commercial space with a mix of ground floor retail.
3. The plaza, artwork, community building and lanes are currently within private property but will be dedicated to the City when the development is complete.
4. Proposed names for the lanes have been checked against the City's Naming Policy and with the Geographical Names Board.

Ah Toy Lane

5. The majority of submissions, including from the Chinese Australian Historical Society, commended the proposal to celebrate the history Sydney's original Chinatown on Lower George Street and in particular the Chinese cabinet makers.
6. However, they suggested that a better way to do this, was to name the lane after one of the largest furniture makers, Ah Toy.
7. Ah Toy had an extensive furniture factory on Lower George Street in the vicinity of the laneway with a showroom at 192 George Street and his timber yard and factory at 202-208 George Street. He came to Sydney in the 1850s and was in business for over 36 years. Ah Toy's factory produced up-market furniture for David Jones as well as cheaper lines.
8. Ah Toy's store bore the brunt of anti-Chinese violence in 1878, when 2,000 protesters separated from a larger rally at Hyde Park and descended on the premises, pelting it with stones. Fortunately, an attempt to torch the building was unsuccessful and police, along with some outraged citizens, dispersed the crowd. But this nasty incident is a reminder of the discrimination and violent racism many Chinese families and workers encountered in Sydney.
9. The name meets the principles of the City's Naming Policy and conforms to the NSW Geographical Names Board requirements for road naming.

Sai Ying Lane

10. The majority of submissions, including from the Chinese Australian Historical Society, commended the proposal to celebrate the multicultural history of Sydney and particularly the Chinese community in the early years of the British colony who were based around lower George Street.
11. These submissions proposed that naming a second lane after one of the first known Chinese immigrants and their descendants would be a meaningful way to celebrate this important story of Sydney. Mak Sai Ying is recorded as one of the first Chinese people to arrive in Sydney, disembarking on 27 February 1818.
12. It is proposed that the lane with the east-west alignment from Pitt Street be name Sai Ying Lane.

13. Mak Sai Ying's sons were cabinetmakers, carpenters and undertakers in Sydney. John J. & George H. Sai Ying operated J & G Shying & Co, Undertakers in George Street South and Abercrombie Place. J. Henry Sai Ying was a cabinetmaker at 477 Pitt Street, Sydney.
14. Mak Sai Ying had 31 grandchildren and the family is believed to be one of the largest Chinese-Australian families in Australia today. His descendants are believed to number in the thousands.
15. The name meets the principles of the City's Naming Policy and conforms to the NSW Geographical Names Board requirements for road naming.

Public Plaza and Community Building

16. A new public plaza and community building will be delivered as part of this development. The plaza and community building will include a new public artwork by Kudjla/Gangalu artist, Daniel Boyd. The artwork includes a perforated steel canopy cover that will be suspended 20 metres above the plaza and interact with the ground below through shadow and light. This will be a significant new artwork and public space.
17. The City has commenced a process to work with the artist, Daniel Boyd and Cultural Knowledge-holders and consult Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel to identify a suitable name for the plaza.
18. Once this initial consultation process is complete the proposed name will be reported to Council in line with the Naming Policy.

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 report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 3 - Public places for all - naming the lanes will acknowledge important local historical context and enhance the renewal of the northern end of the city's central business district.
 - (b) Direction 4 - Design excellence and sustainable development - the naming proposals will enhance the renewal of the northern end of the city's central business district.
 - (c) Direction 5 - A city for walking, cycling and public transport - formally naming the lanes will assist in wayfinding and will facilitate recognition and visitation.
 - (d) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life - naming the lanes will acknowledge important local historical context.

Organisational Impact

20. Naming of the lanes will have minimal organisational impact. The City will ensure signage is installed once construction is complete.

Social / Cultural / Community

21. The community had an opportunity to comment on the naming proposal for the lanes during the exhibition period, including the second recent period during which the updated proposal was the subject of additional consultation.
22. The names celebrate the rich social and cultural history of the site.

Financial Implications

23. There are funds available in the 2022/23 operational budget for the installation of signage for the lanes.

Relevant Legislation

24. Geographical Names Board Address Policy and Users Manual.
25. Roads Regulation 2018.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

26. A subdivision application was lodged at the end of July 2022 and the subdivision plan registration with NSW Land Registry Services will follow. Address schedule, including road names must be part of this plan.

Public Consultation

27. As the authority responsible for Road Naming, the City has sought feedback from the community on the proposed names.
28. The naming proposal was placed on public exhibition from 23 September to 21 October 2022. It was placed on the Sydney Your Say website, a letter was sent to 650 properties, a public notice was placed on site, it was included in the Sydney Your Say email newsletter and a City news article was written to promote the consultation.
29. A total of 40 submissions were received. Three submissions were received from organisations:
 - (a) Chinese Australian Historical Society;
 - (b) Chinese Heritage Association of Australia; and
 - (c) Lendlease Australia (on behalf of the joint owners).

30. There was strong support for the use of a Chinese family name from the early colonial period for both lanes. The full engagement report can be found at Attachment C.
31. A second round of consultation was undertaken on the amended names from 24 November to 30 November 2022. There was overwhelming endorsement of adopting the names Ah Toy Lane and Sai Ying Lane. The submissions received during the second round of consultation can be found in Attachment E.
32. Once the names are endorsed, Council is required to notify the NSW Geographical names board and interested parties.

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