

Post Exhibition - City North Public Domain Plan

File No: S121925

Summary

This report seeks Council's adoption of the City North Public Domain Plan (the Plan) as amended.

The City North study area is generally bound by George Street, Alfred Street, Macquarie Street and King Street. The Plan analyses the existing public domain, strategic and development context, and recommends the scope, location and extent of public domain improvements over the short, medium and long term.

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.

Since the adoption of the 2015 Plan the planning and development context of City North has changed, with the adoption of the Central Sydney Planning Strategy supporting changes to the planning controls as part of the Central Sydney Planning Framework creating opportunities for additional height and density in the right locations. The northern tower cluster is one such opportunity. 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). The Plan has been updated to allow the City to provide a detailed and timely response to this changing context.

The scope of the updated Plan includes an urban design study for the Hunter Street Precinct by Gallagher Studio landscape architects, which identifies opportunities for additional public space and greening, addressing future public space needs around the new Metro stations. The Plan's original proposals for City North streetscapes, and Martin Place, remain as originally endorsed. The update also brings the Plan in line with the City's current strategic direction as per Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision. Opportunities identified include place-specific upgrade projects as well as precinct-wide overlay projects.

Council approved the public exhibition of the draft City North Public Domain Plan on 31 October 2022. The draft Plan was placed on public exhibition from 15 November to 19 December 2022. Nineteen written submissions were received as well as comments gathered through an online map, survey and drop-in session at Customs House. The engagement report is provided at Attachment B, and a summary of the issues raised in submissions and the City's response is provided at Attachment C.

The City North Public Domain Plan has been reviewed and amended following consideration of external and internal feedback. The amended Plan recommended for adoption, with additional text shown underlined in red and deleted text shown in strikethrough, is provided at Attachment A.

Project opportunities for streets and public spaces arising from Metro and proposed major development have been identified in the amended City North Public Domain Plan for further feasibility testing, concept design development, costing, and consultation / advocacy. This will allow important issues raised during the exhibition period to be addressed and provide timely detailed input to the design development of the Metro West Hunter Street project.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council adopt the City North Public Domain Plan with amendments, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report, as a guiding document to inform capital works planning, negotiations with government and developers, planning proposals and development applications;
- (B) Council note that project opportunities require further advocacy, consultation, testing, feasibility assessment and design development in collaboration with key stakeholders including property owners and Transport NSW / Sydney Metro, to inform future capital works budgets and future scoping reports to be considered by Council; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make amendments to the City North Public Domain Plan in order to correct any minor drafting errors and finalise design, artwork and accessible formats for publication.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** City North Public Domain Plan (with Amendments)
- Attachment B.** Engagement Report - City North Public Domain Plan (2022 Update)
- Attachment C.** Summary of Submissions and Responses

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 four 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 adoption of the Central Sydney Planning Strategy supporting changes to the planning controls as part of the Central Sydney Planning Framework, creating opportunities for additional height and density in the right locations. The northern tower cluster is one such opportunity. 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) 180 George Street, (approved development comprising a new 56-storey commercial tower);
 - (b) 37-49 Pitt Street, 49A-57 Pitt Street (approved development comprising a new 45-storey commercial tower);
 - (c) 15-25 Hunter Street and 105-107 Pitt Street (planning proposal for commercial tower envelope has been approved following public exhibition); and
 - (d) 2 Chifley Square (approved and amendments made to the LEP 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, with public exhibition recently closing on 30 January 2023.
8. Concept State Significant Development Applications for over station development (commercial towers) over the two Hunter Street Metro sites are currently under assessment by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.
9. 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 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.

City North Public Domain Plan Update 2022

10. The draft City North Public Domain Plan has been prepared by City Design in close consultation with the Strategic Planning and Urban Design, and City Access teams.
11. Consultants were 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 updated following public exhibition, and incorporated into the City North Public Domain Plan.
12. The City and Transport for NSW have formed a Hunter Street Working Group to provide technical evidence-based analysis of the precinct and proposals. 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 working group has provided detailed input to the draft Plan and is generally supportive of the Plan's overall objectives. Continuing engagement with the Hunter Street Working Group will allow resolution of detailed local access, loading and freight, and road space allocation to be resolved as key projects progress.
13. The 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 scope of the George Street North pedestrianisation project is coordinated with the Hunter Street public domain study and incorporated into the 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.

Project Opportunities

14. The original City North Public Domain Plan endorsed in 2015 included a project implementation plan. Several of these projects have now been completed or are underway. These include:
 - (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);
 - (f) Macquarie Place Park Conservation Management Plan and upgrade (CoS); and
 - (g) George Street north pedestrianisation (CoS).
15. The remaining projects endorsed under the 2015 plan are included in this Plan, together with new project opportunities for streets and public spaces in the Hunter Street Precinct. It is recommended that these project opportunities undergo feasibility testing/concept design development and advocacy to inform the planning for the Metro West station and large private planning proposals as well as to respond to issues raised during the public exhibition.
16. Capital works budgets and detailed scoping reports would be provided to Council for endorsement prior to any project being progressed to implementation stage. All projects would be subject to community and stakeholder engagement, statutory planning assessment, exhibition and approval processes. Implementation of public domain improvements will need to be co-ordinated with Metro West and private development construction programs.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

17. 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.

Risks

18. 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. Many of the recommendations require

Transport for NSW support, approval and ongoing collaboration for a successful outcome.

Social / Cultural / Community

19. 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

20. 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

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

Financial Implications

22. The City North Public Domain Plan includes the coordination of several projects already funded (such as George Street north), or to be delivered by others (such as the Macquarie Street Precinct).
23. The City's Long Term Financial Plan allows for city centre public domain improvements. Funds are available to develop priority projects as recommended in this report to inform future capital works budgets to be adopted by Council.
24. Streetscape upgrade projects relating to development and infrastructure projects may be funded through development contributions. The Draft Plan may also guide future Voluntary Planning Agreement negotiations.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

25. Adoption of the Plan will be timely to input to Transport for NSW and Sydney Metro's design and approval process for the Hunter Street metro station sites. It will provide a clear vision for the future of this important precinct to inform Council's ongoing engagement and advocacy for this precinct.
26. Adoption of the Plan will inform public domain works associated with private development, both under Voluntary Planning Agreements and standard consent conditions.

Options

27. 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

28. The preparation of the 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.
29. This City's Design Advisory Panel were briefed on the proposed update in June 2022 and expressed their support.
30. The draft Plan was placed on public exhibition from 15 November to 19 December 2022.
31. Community consultation during the public exhibition period included the following activities:
 - community notification distributed to 4,148 property owners, residents, and businesses;
 - e-mailout to 315 registered stakeholders;
 - a briefing to business leaders and industry groups hosted by Lord Mayor Clover Moore;
 - eleven individual briefings with affected stakeholders;
 - an online community briefing on 29 November 2022;
 - a drop-in consultation session at Customs House on 1 December 2022;
 - online survey and interactive map;
 - 140 decals placed throughout the precinct promoting the consultation;
 - advertising on community screens throughout the precinct;
 - Sydney Your Say e-news sent to over 7,000 subscribers;
 - Sydney Your Say web page; and
 - media announcement.
32. The draft plan was available on the Sydney Your Say webpage which was viewed 1,380 times and the document downloaded 670 times.

33. At the close of the public exhibition 157 submissions were received from the channels listed above. In addition, this engagement also captured the views of 87 people who attended the Lord Mayor business briefing, stakeholder briefings and online community briefing.
34. Submissions were received from government agencies and organisations including Transport for NSW, Sydney Metro, Business Sydney and the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust. Major private developers and landowners expressed support for the Plan in submissions, including AMP, Lendlease and partners, Dexus, Macquarie Group, Pontiac Land Group, Milligan Group and Charter Hall. A summary of submissions is provided in the Engagement report (Attachment B).
35. A late submission was received from Property & Development NSW (Department of Planning & Environment) in February 2023. This has been included in the Summary of submissions and responses (Attachment C).
36. Submissions were predominantly supportive of the principles for public domain renewal expressed by the Plan. Support was particularly expressed for:
 - (a) more trees and green spaces;
 - (b) more pedestrian space and footpath widening;
 - (c) reducing the number of cars on city streets; and
 - (d) outdoor dining and activation.
37. Submissions were supportive of proposed new public domain opportunities, with particular support / interest expressed for:
 - (a) Hunter Street - pedestrian priority area between George Street and Pitt Street;
 - (b) Hunter Street - footpath widening between Pitt Street and Macquarie Street;
 - (c) O'Connell Street - partial closure; and
 - (d) Bent Street - more pedestrian crossings and improved pedestrian safety at intersections.
38. Additional public domain opportunities were suggested for consideration, including:
 - (a) O'Connell Street - suggestion to widen footpaths north of the indicative closed area;
 - (b) Bond Street - reallocate road space to pedestrians; and
 - (c) Macquarie Street - removal of slip lanes into/out of Macquarie Street to the east at Bridge Street and Shakespeare Place.
39. Key areas of concern expressed in submissions include:
 - (a) Provision for kerb side access for taxis and pedestrian drop-off;
 - (b) Impact on loading, servicing and delivery access;
 - (c) Flow-on effects such as traffic congestion and cross-city vehicular movement;

- (d) Access for emergency services; and
 - (e) Construction coordination with private development projects, and with Hunter Street Metro West works.
40. Many of the issues raised are noted for future design development of the individual projects.
41. TFE (A by Adina Hotel) at 2 Hunter Street provided a detailed submission, raising concerns regarding the impacts of the western Hunter Street Metro West station (both during construction and end-state), and noting the need for the coordination between the City and Sydney Metro in this precinct. TFE seek collaboration with the City to resolve the hotel's operational needs for taxi and vehicular drop-off with the Plan's proposed vision for a pedestrian priority space in Hunter Street. TFE also noted concerns regarding the proposed vehicular circulation in Curtin Place and Harrington Street.
42. These concerns are noted. City staff met with TFE during the exhibition period and will continue to closely engage and consult in progressing Hunter Street project opportunities. Resolution of the operational concerns raised by TFE will form the basis of the next stage of work by the City on progressing concept design options and feasibility testing. The City will continue to engage with TFE, Sydney Metro and other stakeholders as project opportunities are progressed.
43. Responses to every submission received are outlined in Attachment C - Summary of submissions and responses.
44. Key amendments to the Plan to address issues raised in submissions include:
- (a) Nomination of project opportunities for further analysis, testing, consultation and technical study to inform more detailed concept designs;
 - (b) Bent Street - inclusion of footpath widening and continuous footway treatment proposed;
 - (c) O'Connell Street - inclusion of footpath widening, with indicative loading/drop-off bays; and
 - (d) Bent Street/O'Connell Street/Loftus Street - widened pedestrian crossing suggested to respond to pedestrian desire lines.
45. Several comments made on the on-line map relate to the scope of the Macquarie Street Masterplan, currently underway by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. These comments have been passed on to the project team.
46. A proposed amended version of the Plan is provided in Attachment A. Additional text is shown underlined in red and deleted text is shown in strikethrough.

47. The proposed changes are minor, for the clarification of the draft and the correction of typos and graphics. It is considered that these amendments do not substantially change the strategic directions of the Plan and therefore re-exhibition is not warranted.
48. Appendix C - Hunter Street Precinct Public Domain Plan has been updated with minor graphic corrections, and to incorporate the responses to submissions outlined above. This is incorporated into the amended Plan at Attachment A.

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