

Item 3.4

2024 Australian Urban Design Awards

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I am pleased to report that the City of Sydney's transformation of George Street was recognised at the 2024 Australian Urban Design Awards: Winner of Built Projects – City and Regional Scale.

I was honoured to accept the award at a presentation in Canberra on Monday 18 March 2024.

The City also received a commendation in Leadership, Advocacy and Research – Local and Neighbourhood Scale for a Height of Building and Floor Space Ratio alignment study, that we did in conjunction with Hill Thalys Architecture + Urban Projects and Olsson Architects.

The Australian Urban Design Awards were created in 1996 by former Prime Minister Paul Keating's Urban Design Taskforce, to recognise contemporary Australian urban design of the highest quality.

George Street transformation

What was once a grimy street clogged with noisy, polluting buses and souvenir shops, has been transformed into a tree and flower-lined boulevard with quiet and efficient light rail.

From Central Station to Circular Quay, there are more than 20,000 square metres of high-quality urban space with granite-paved footpaths, modern street furniture and lighting, and interesting laneways.

While the City has now spent more than \$300 million on our public domain vision along George Street, the economy has reaped the reward with \$8 billion in private investment.

The boulevard is now home to high-end businesses like Paspaley, Cartier, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Ernst and Young and Salesforce to name a few, all proud to boast a George Street address.

Most importantly there are people everywhere – sitting or walking, shopping or sipping coffee, conversing with colleagues or friends.

Jury comments

The Jury noted that the George Street transformation has overturned more than a century's dominance by vehicles, returning it to a place for people and public transport. It has not only reinvigorated the street, but also revolutionised the atmosphere, use and movement patterns of the entire city.

It said that the project's impact is testament to the power that the collaboration of multiple levels of government can bring to cities.

Planning and advocacy for the project by the City began more than 20 years ago, and I acknowledge the role of Jan Gehl, the Danish urbanist, who endorsed the George Street route for light rail.

I also acknowledge the former NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, whose Government finally agreed to the transport project in 2014 after years of lobbying by me and the City of Sydney. The project's delivery involved complex negotiations and technical challenges, but our vision endured.

“That this transition has been achieved in such a contested urban place sets a benchmark for what is possible in every street, in every city and town in Australia”, the Jury said.

It is one of our finest achievements. Congratulations to all involved and, in particular, I note the important roles of Kim Woodbury, our Chief Operating Officer, and Bridget Smyth, City Architect and Executive Manager City Design and Public Art, and their teams.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note that the transformation of George Street has been recognised at the 2024 Australian Urban Design Awards: Winner of Built Projects - City and Regional Scale, and that the City also received a Commendation in Leadership, Advocacy and Research - Local and Neighbourhood Scale for a Height of Building and Floor Space Ratio alignment study, that we did in conjunction with Hill Thalys Architecture + Urban Projects and Olsson Architects; and
- (B) congratulate the Chief Executive Officer and Executive, in particular Kim Woodbury, Bridget Smyth and their teams, and City staff for their ongoing commitment to the transformation of our city.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor