SITE     Public Domain Strategy

PROPOSAL     Stage 1 of the Strategy - An ideas phase that examines the potential of the North Sydney CBD public domain that identifies community expectations and ideas, opportunities to better align existing policies and provides a framework for future public domain upgrades.

DATE / TIME     08 May 2018; Commenced 1.30 - Concluded 2.40pm

HELD     Supper Room, North Sydney Council Chambers

ATTENDANCE
Chair     Philip Graus
Panel Members     Angela Koepp; Peter Webber; Anita Morandini
Council staff     Emma Booth; Jennifer Lawley; Marcelo Occhiuzzi
Council’s consultant     Simeon King – Aspect; Joanna Tanus – Aspect; Matt Hollenstein -Stewart Hollenstein; Alan Stewart – PeopleTrans

Background

North Sydney Council is working to create a more engaging and resilient CBD that offers a greater range of activities and unique public spaces for workers, residents and visitors. To achieve this, a comprehensive planning review of the North Sydney CBD is being undertaken.

The preparation of a Public Domain Strategy (PDS) for the CBD forms part of this review. It will establish a vision for the centre’s public domain, identify a suite of short to long term projects on both private and public land and put in place a business plan for delivery.

The PDS will be used to align both private and public investment in the CBD around a common vision for its future. It will inform Council’s: statutory and strategic planning decisions; capital works program; discussions with state agencies and the development industry on development in the centre.

The PDS is being undertaken in two stages:

Stage 1 is an ideas phase that examines the potential of the North Sydney CBD public domain. It will identify: community expectations and ideas opportunities to better align existing policies, a framework for future public domain upgrades short-medium term projects that address known issues and mitigate the impacts of construction longer term, place-specific projects and visionary, high-intervention opportunities.

In Stage 2, work will be undertaken in-house to develop the strategy. This will ensure proposals are achievable, supported across Council and adequately funded. It will draw heavily on the Stage 1 work.
Detail presented

- Simeon King [SK] introduced the panel to the overall project and talked them through the problems and the changing elements of the CBD identified in their initial research. SK then went through the key vision ideas that will form the basis of the projects. Followed by a more in-depth look at each idea/project in sketch development. Alan Stewart [AS] provided some transport input surrounding the research and findings that PeopleTrans have been undertaking in developing the key components of the vision ideas.

Previous Panel involvement:

- This is the first Public Domain Strategy presentation to the panel. No walk-around was undertaken given the scale of the project.

Key Panel comments:

Overall the panel strongly applauded the Council initiative to develop a holistic public domain strategy for Central North Sydney. A strong vision, built on the community’s values as well as long term strategic view, backed up by a rigorous evidence base is critical to the success of the harbor CBD.

An essential component of the strategy must be a commitment to ‘cutting-edge’ initiatives in all projects to enhance environmental sustainability of the CBD.

The panel were keen to see relevant data/research reflected in the development of the designs. Projected patronage numbers analysis of the CBD to ensure future growth is accounted for was also mentioned as a key piece of research required. Further to this, key data to understand pedestrian movement paths and desire lines moving north and south through the CBD was also highlighted as a pivotal study required. Forensic rigorous data collection will form the backbone of the PDS and provide the advocacy required to be able to drive the delivery of these projects.

Key question posed by panel: ‘How does the other council public domain strategies and transport masterplans feed into the development of this masterplan?’ Marcelo Occhiuzzi [MO] provided some feedback regarding the development of the North Sydney CBD Transport Masterplan and highlighted that these two documents will ultimately be working together to inform Stage 2 of the Public Domain Strategy along with our other CBD Public domain projects.

The clear delineation of the high-density CBD from immediately adjacent residential areas which have strong heritage and social values is a critical characteristic of the central part of North Sydney, and this must not be compromised. Planning controls introduced in the ‘Ted Mack’ era were instrumental in preventing unsympathetic and insensitive intrusions into these areas.

Further comments:

A diagram/commitment to existing key active places around the CBD is required. The council’s Civic Park was mentioned as a ‘marvelous oasis’ in the city and has a long history of providing key community facilities, in particular the excellent Library, the Community Centre and young children’s play/education centre. How does this space fit into the PDS?
A further illustrative drawing of the total area of the CBD is required that brings to life a plan for all the streets. The Masterplan for Ward St should also be layered in.

Explanations on how the proposed dual/shared zones will work and function is required.

Focus on what is unique to North Sydney as it provides a different set of opportunities to the Sydney City CBD: Some of the unique features discussed:

The topography; the elevated harbor position; the Harbour Bridge vaults and the connection to the bridge; the avenues of trees; Miller St amenity; the schools in the heart of the CBD and the relationships of these spaces to the quality of public space/amenity.

**Topography**

The siting of North Sydney lends itself to a study of the Belvedere opportunities as well as a study of the existing Belvederes (accidental and planned) to ensure the PDS has taken advantage of this unique characteristic of North Sydney.

**Harbour Bridge – ‘Kirribilli Walk’**

What’s the bridge’s relationship to the city? The bridge pedestrian activity is growing - How are these existing pathway connections working? The roof-tops of the vaults and vaults themselves are certainly a unique opportunity but so are the pathways to the bridge and improving these present a unique challenge.

**Quality of public space**

By providing seating throughout the city – you are providing ‘cultural buy-in’ currency but what else is being developed?

**Forecourts**

Fine grain analysis of the curtilage forecourts around existing buildings and the opportunities these represent with a map covering the locations and areas of these forecourts and then proceeding to layer this with the overall strategy of Public Domain will be a valuable exercise.

Leading on from this what are the short term goals, medium term goals, long-term goals? These will provide the foundation of the VPA’s for the overall development strategy in the CBD to ensure the future forecourts are designed to the PDS requirements/ vision.

**Built-form strategy** – How does the future built-form strategy relate to the PDS? There needs to be a relationship between the two to understand form, shadow, wind impacts on existing/future public domain spaces.

A critical contributor to the character of public domain is the built form interface. It is recommended that a suite of ground floor frontage types and corresponding development controls are included as part of this study. These could directly correlate to the hierarchy of thoroughfares presented by Aspect. Additionally, classification of frontages based on a sliding scale of priority activation may
reinforce the outcomes of the pedestrian desire line study and contribute to the various roles/character of the precinct.

Transport & Access

4 key transport aspirations need to be clarified; if this is work being developed in the Transport Masterplan – what is the relationship to the PDS work? In addition to this - has consideration been made for major State RMS projects currently under development?

New metro station

How does the Metro impact on the existing? Provide a today vs tomorrow diagram.

A Rob Adams ‘inspired’ sequence of diagrams was recommended to demonstrate the ‘change over time’ scenarios for pedestrian and vehicles movements heavily influenced by the Metro and key city-change mechanisms delivered as part of this study.

General comment

The submission included on the one hand suggestions such as Pedestrianisation of intersections etc. which will involve protracted negotiation with State authorities, (and in some cases may not be achievable) and on the other enhancement of small spaces which could readily and independently be implemented by Council in consultation with individual owners/residents etc. The latter could readily proceed independently of the former, and the study should recommend priorities with this in mind.

Document Structure

To clarify the purpose and objectives of the PDS it is suggested the document may benefit from restructuring. An indicative structure might be;

Introduction: Set out the purpose and objectives of the PDS

Strategic Context:
- Scope the extent of PDS and its relationship to greater LGA
- Set out the relationship of the PDS to other council vision, strategies, policies, design and technical codes

Urban Framework: set out studies of existing context, identifying assets and opportunities with regard to each urban element contributing/detracting from the public domain (e.g. street typologies, active frontages, transport and access, pedestrian movement, built form and heights, public spaces, heritage, community facilities, landscape, water management, etc.)

Strategic Directions: on basis of the urban framework, make recommendations and set out proposed strategies and actions

Coordination Considerations:
- Design Coordination; Identify design relationships to ensure coordinated implementation of each strategy
- Implementation coordination; Identify potential pathways and key stakeholder cooperation necessary to enable implementation

Meeting concluded at 14.40pm
SITE  |  Public Domain Strategy
---|---
PROPOSAL  |  Stage 1 of the Strategy - An ideas phase that examines the potential of the North Sydney CBD public domain that identifies community expectations and ideas, opportunities to better align existing policies and provides a framework for future public domain upgrades.

DATE / TIME  |  20 AUGUST 2018; Commenced 3.15 - Concluded 6pm
HELD  |  Ross Crichton, North Sydney Council Chambers

ATTENDANCE
Chair  |  Philip Graus
Panel Members  |  Angela Koepp; Peter Webber; Anita Morandini
Council staff  |  Emma Booth; Jennifer Lawley; Marcelo Occhiuzzi
Council’s consultant  |  Simeon King – Aspect

Background
The PDS will be used to align both private and public investment in the CBD around a common vision for its future. It will inform Council’s: statutory and strategic planning decisions; capital works program; discussions with state agencies and the development industry on development in the centre.

The PDS is being undertaken in two stages:

Stage 1 is an ideas phase that examines the potential of the North Sydney CBD public domain. It will identify: community expectations and ideas, opportunities to better align existing policies, provide a framework for future public domain upgrades, identify short-medium term projects that address known issues and mitigate the impacts of construction longer term, identify place-specific projects as well as visionary, high-intervention opportunities.

In Stage 2, work will be undertaken in-house to develop the strategy. This will ensure proposals are achievable, supported across Council and adequately funded. It will draw heavily on the Stage 1 work.

The previous DEP meeting was held on 8th May 2018 with the same panel members. Simeon King [SK] introduced the panel to the overall project and talked them through the problems and the changing elements of the CBD identified in their initial research. SK then went through the key vision ideas that will form the basis of the projects. Followed by a more in-depth look at each idea/project in sketch development. Alan Stewart [AS] provided some transport input surrounding the research and findings that PeopleTrans have been undertaking in developing the key components of the vision ideas.
Overall the panel strongly applauded the Council initiative to develop a holistic public domain strategy for Central North Sydney. A strong vision, built on the community's values as well as long term strategic view, backed up by a rigorous evidence base is critical to the success of the harbor CBD.

Previous Panel involvement:

• This is the second Public Domain Strategy presentation to the panel. No walk-around was undertaken given the scale of the project.

Key Panel comments:

The panel congratulated council for undertaking a CBD wide public domain plan for North Sydney and were impressed with the depth and scale of the Placebook developed to-date. It was evident to the panel that a cohesive ‘vision’ for the Public Domain of the CBD is coming together and this document will form the ‘catalyst for a better place’. The strategic importance and critical timing of the document was acknowledged with the panel indicating that in principle they support the ideas and initiatives included throughout the document.

The Placebook will need to clearly state that the strategies and visions put forward is how North Sydney intends to keep up with growth thus ensuring an adequate public domain environment is provided for the users of the CBD well into the future.

Further comments:

Document Structure

Generally speaking, the document contains most of the required information but requires a re-think on how it’s communicated and what aspects of the PDS are given prominence over others. It is recommended that the document moves from the more general to the particular, starting with the CBD’s broader context using a plan like that on page 41 showing the harbour context.

The Executive Summary needs to clearly communicate the intent for Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the project. Stage 1 is about ideas grounded in evidence. Stage 2 is the ‘how to’ and the audience need to understand this. Part 1 does need to acknowledge that a detailed implementation and funding strategy will be developed once community input has been sought. It is important that the community’s views are understood before moving to implementation.

The executive summary should also address the Council’s position on pedestrian tunnels and bridges to ensure the audience understands the objectives of the PDS.

The document tends to jump around between themes – this should be reviewed.

The history section should be brought forward in the document to better paint the picture. It is unclear how/ if the historical information has informed the current Vision. There is the opportunity to more directly weave the past, current and future character into this document and overall strategy.
Miller Place, Miller Walk and Civic Spine seem to be spilt and repeated throughout the document. Consider putting all of these together?

Needs a map further to the front of the document (NS note: the overall structural map is still to come). The idea of a ‘tourism map’ was floated as a way to capture the key projects/destinations/lovable places.

The overall document is quite long and requires a good review to see which areas could be edited down to core messages. The document should be reduced to say 60 pages with additional information included in an appendix.

The strategic importance of this document and how it relates to other strategic documents has dropped off – this needs to be included in the front of the document. (eg. The Ward Street study)

Has the school community been adequately addressed in the document? This could be further developed.

The document would benefit from continual reinforcement of the vision and ‘place-making’ objective. Using key images and cropped ‘focused’ emotive images of the rendered sketches throughout the document would greatly assist in communicating the message and intent - avoid stale images of the CBD where possible – use them only as a tool if required.

‘Vision’ messaging

The introductory section needs to focus more on the distinct ‘vision’ for North Sydney. Its distinctive characteristics needs to be better identified and celebrated. It has both a quirky past and distinctive topography which needs to be clearly articulated. Be mindful to not generalise about desirable urban outcomes.

Ensure the vision character is not limited to physical characteristics but also experience-based information that references its historical past.

City Precincts pg.20

‘Places & feels’ – Do each of the CBD precincts have a distinctive feel and character? This should be explored more and explained. What sort of places are they? Document existing characteristics and opportunities for retention, celebration and evolution.

Pg.23 – The iconic and interesting fringe section would be better represented on a map to show proximity and context...

Pg.24 – City in transition – page lacks structure and emphasis – perhaps edit down to succinct statement and include elsewhere? Key transition projects should be included

Ward St masterplan

This critical project for the CBD should be included on all key maps and relevant sections of the PDS. It delivers new public spaces, laneway activation and provides the cultural ‘heart’ of the CBD. As there are currently two options on exhibition both options should be referenced.
Public Spaces

The PDS should endeavor to ensure all existing publicly accessible spaces remain ‘unconstrained’ public space.

Ensure that the facts and figures used relate clearly to the associated diagrams used.

Include involvement of schoolchildren in design of spaces both for their needs and their potential ongoing contribution to public artworks such as wall murals (refer Forsyth Park).

Note concern raised by recently formed community organisation ‘The Committee for North Sydney’ about the opportunity for a major public space where the new Victoria Cross metro station is to be located. Council noted a submission was made by Council to the Victoria Cross OSD Major Projects Application (SSD 17_8874) which is currently under review by the State Government.

Street awnings

Include policy requiring continuity of awnings and their design to complement street trees along designated street frontages.

Constrained Public Space

Pg.29 Illustrates the limited public open space opportunities in North Sydney. Much of the public realm is located on the streets, so these spaces need to work hard to provide high quality places that are flexible, functional and desirable to be in.

The Strategy might place more emphasis on the role of streets. Raising the ambition for streets with a collaborative, design-led approach as key to achieving new standards of excellence. The role of streets fundamental to improving the public realm and providing an enhanced quality of life.

Sustainability and Trees

Sustainability and environmental initiatives should be a key focus of the PDS. A benchmark for tree canopy should be included at 15% (note: This is already the NS target as set out in the North Sydney Urban Forest Strategy and should be noted in the PDS). How can the PDS contribute to the target?

Further to this point – what is the relationship between trees and awnings? Design standards for awnings? (see note above regarding street awnings)

History Section

Whilst the history itself is well detailed it is focused heavily on transport and does not mention the successes before and after the “after the Freeway” era (such as Civic Park, North Sydney Oval and extensive planting of street trees in CBD) and the pioneers such as Ted Mack (one of the first community based members of parliament). Introducing some of the positive historical moves is recommended which can then lead to identifying the good things and expressing how we can elevate these successes.
Topography

Pg. 18 & 19 illustrate the topographic challenges of North Sydney at the macro scale.

The undulating terrain which characterises North Sydney creates challenges and potential opportunities which should be addressed in the Strategy. More localised topographical sections and precedent images are required to illustrate strategies which address this particular physical characteristic of North Sydney.

A section showing how the new metro entrances will transform the accessibility of the upper CBD blocks would be highly beneficial. The location of Victoria Cross North Metro entry provides a potential catalyst for the development of the north CBD.

The Strategy would benefit from additional focus on the walkability of North Sydney. Significant grade changes in topography are recognized as hindering easy and convenient pedestrian (and cycling) movement throughout the CBD. The north metro entry, located near the crest of the hill and in proximity to St Leonard’s Park is likely to contribute to an ease of pedestrian movement to the northern CBD.

Implementation Strategy – timeline:

This would be better represented as a diagram with the overall implementation programme further developed in Stage 2.

Pacific Hwy

This section needs expanding. Bring in the research and development and discuss the options that were considered (appendix may be suitable) – critically discuss the findings of the transport masterplan and the speed reduction targets which would assist greatly in meeting the increased safety targets of the PDS.

Miller St – Omotesando reference

Needs clarifying as relevance not clearly articulated.

Urban Frame

The concept here is unclear – how does a ‘frame’ make a better place for people? Needs clarifying and a different diagram. The hierarchy of street importance and its relationship to the proposed way-finding and place-making strategy should be further explored.

Are we describing the ‘catalyst’ precinct defined by fine streets and fine grain block structure? This precinct might lead with streets prioritized for pedestrian comfort (above vehicles movement); with a focus on facilitating the most comfortable and enjoyable means of moving around the city in concert with street activation and the creation of places to stay and enjoy.

It is suggested the concept be extended to include future phases north of Berry Street reaching to St Leonards Park.
Cycling Facilities

What is the current State Government position on this? This should be included (a brief statement will suffice)

Walkability

The Strategy may be enhanced by further highlighting the vision of reclaiming the streets from traffic to create the most enjoyable and comfortable walking environment. Borrowing from Transport for London Walking Action Plan - July 2018, walking makes “efficient use of street space. It is good for individuals’ health. It produces no emissions or noise. It is safe and encourages interaction, which improves lives. It is good for business.”

A City of Education

Pg.22. North Sydney is major metropolitan education hub.

As noted on Pg.22, “students mostly get to school or university on foot, bike or public transport”. Ensuring safety on the streets and a highly friendly pedestrian environment is fundamental to the wellbeing of these students. These needs reinforce the reasoning as to reduction in road speeds, widening footpaths, providing generous pedestrian crossings, cycleways etc.

The contribution of student life to the city’s economy, vitality and cultural diversity is also of importance to highlight. How do these students and their guardian’s behavior inform the development of the public domain?

More than Offices

Building on ‘A City of Education,’ it is worth acknowledging the transformation/ evolution of user groups including students and increased residents. Mapping the various users will result in an understanding of day/ night and seasonal activation which should inform public realm design and spaces.

Speed Limit Reductions

Pg.50 The reduction of speed limits with in the CBD underpins the rehabilitation of streets which have been degraded by prioritized road traffic. Each street has a unique function, performance and character which must be balanced to ensure the needs of the users are met while reflecting and enhancing the character of the place.

The Strategy would be strengthened by providing speed reduction precedents, such as Transport for Londons, Vision Zero Action Plan, which recognises lowering speeds is one of the most important things that can be done to make streets safer. This progressive speed limit policy for London road network, will see 30km/hr becoming the default speed limit within the central London and town centres. Therefore proposed changes in speed limits need to be evidenced by rigorous analysis to validate assumptions.

The associated benefits of reduced traffic speeds should be emphasized; such as the potential to widen footpaths, increase refuge islands, provide cycleways.
Wind

The wind environment can be a major determinant of amenity in public places. The Strategy should include wind amelioration as necessary to ensure streets and public places have wind conditions that are safe and comfortable for walking and sitting.

Vision and Five Elements pg.57

Vision needs refining as previously mentioned and the principles to establish the elements should be noted here.

The elements represented are more like connectors whereas the elements are things like ‘heart’ and topography – consider rebranding...

Ownership

The ‘ownership’ diagrams (p.27) demonstrate how much space which appears to be in public hands is in fact privately owned, the open space above Greenwood Plaza for example. The height, scale and floor area of many of these developments were approved only on the condition that such open space was provided. Future strategies should include policies to ensure that such quantum of spaces remain permanently available to the public should sites be redeveloped, whether by way of legal covenants, strata title etc.

Active Edges p.102

Graphic needs to be rethought as it currently reads with the intent to activate/ frame a central plaza (that is actually a building). This diagram would contribute more as an Active Facades plan identifying active, friendly and passive façade principles/ requirements. This could attempt to bridge the gap between the public domain and architecture/ interface section; particularly with the reduced content of the architectural section.

Precedent images

Consider adding a by-line over each image covering why it’s been included in the document to ensure the message is clearly communicated.

B5 Architecture and interfaces

Built form design excellence is fundamental to a high quality public domain. The public domain is the cumulative experience of streets, open spaces and buildings. While detail building design excellence provisions can perhaps be included elsewhere, this report needs to clearly state the relationship between built form and the public domain. This section therefore needs careful review and details would be better suited for Stage 2. For Stage 1 the overall principles and exemplar precedents should be the focus. The current words seem to embed dogmatic rules and should not be included.

Meeting concluded at 6pm.