

**ST LEONARDS  
PUBLIC DOMAIN  
STRATEGY**

**BACKGROUND**



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

North Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1989 (LEP) predominantly zoned St Leonards for Commercial and Industrial uses. With the gazettal of LEP 2001, most of the land in St Leonards was rezoned to Mixed Use, allowing for a variety of commercial and retail developments at lower levels and residential development above. Residential densities have been increased significantly to meet the State Government's policy to provide additional residential development close to public transport. To encourage development in St Leonards, North Sydney Council has provided a range for Floor Space Ratios on commercial and retail development and increased the height significantly to allow for additional residential development (49m at Pacific Highway and scaled down to 20m at Crows Nest).

The St Leonards Public Domain Strategy will contain a Master Plan and Plan of Management addressing improvements in the public domain to correspond with this planned commercial and residential growth in St Leonards.

It is Council's position that growth within St Leonards is to be "public transport led". The recent upgrade of St Leonards Railway Station and the "Forum Development" has provided a good precedent for future public domain improvements.

## **2.0 SITE**

### **2.1 Location and Context**

The Public Domain Strategy will generally incorporate that part of St Leonards zoned Mixed Use. There is some area to the East of Oxley Street zoned Residential C. The project area is generally South of the St Leonards Railway Station, East of the Pacific Highway, West of Hume Lane and North of Crows Nest (shown on the map attached to the Brief). Good public transport attracts people to St Leonards for work. It is a place of interchange between various modes of transport. It functions as an important commercial centre distinct from Crows Nest and the North Sydney Centre. There is a diverse range of living and employment opportunities within St Leonards that attract both local and regional populations and this contributes to its vibrancy. Recreation and social improvement to the public domain such as pedestrian networks through buildings and the provision of new open space will improve current opportunities.

St Leonards is hilly in nature and slopes down to Crows Nest and the residential areas of Wollstonecraft. Busy roads, commercial and retail development, lower scale residential neighbourhoods and large residential towers to the North surround the area. St Leonards tends to lack a sense of place, which can be attributed to the ongoing redevelopment and changing nature of the area.

### **2.2 Retail & Commercial**

In 1996 the net office floor space in St Leonards was estimated to be 250,000 square metres. Some of which is outside the North Sydney Local Government Area. More recently, there has been a substantial increase in commercial floor space with the "Forum development" providing an additional 30,000 square metres of office floor space, and 207 Pacific Highway providing an additional 23,042 square metres of commercial office space. St Leonards has a strong business culture focussing on property and business services, advertising, service industries, information technology, technical services, finance and insurance, health and community services.

Opportunities for additional office space are expected in the area bounded by Christie, Chandos, Oxley, Albany Streets and the Pacific Highway.

St Leonards is recognised as a secondary centre in the metropolitan strategy and has metropolitan significance as a commercial centre that is quite distinct from Crows Nest. The area also provides a high quality office environment with close links to the North Sydney Central Business District to the South and Chatswood to the North.

In 1996 gross retail floor space amounted to 65,000 square metres. It is expected that St Leonards will experience a steady growth in retail floor space in the long term with the introduction of a Mixed Use zone.

### **Recent approvals**

- 11-17 Chandos Street (mixed use development including 16 residential units)
- 13-19 Atchison Street (mixed use development including 92 residential units)
- 36 Albany Street (mixed use development including 49 residential units)
- 92-94 Alexander St (mixed use development including 22 residential units)
- 599 Pacific Highway (mixed use development including 173 residential units)
- 38-46 Albany Street (mixed use development including 49 residential units & basement parking 64 vehicles)

### **2.3 Recreation and Entertainment**

St Leonards is intensively used Monday to Fridays but has a significant drop in vibrancy over weekends. Recent developments such as the “Forum building” are changing the occupancy rates during the weekends. Further residential growth is anticipated which will contribute to the area’s vibrancy during this time. The Public Domain Strategy will need to accommodate for this increase in residential growth and provide for cultural opportunities in the area.

There are several community facilities in proximity to St Leonards such as Gore Hill and Hume Street Parks, North Sydney Indoor Sports Centre and other sporting clubs, The Royal North Shore Hospital, various health clinics and many health and social support groups. Even though many of these facilities are located outside the St Leonards’ boundary, they contribute to the diversity, wellbeing, culture and recreation of people living in St Leonards.

Most of the open space provided in St Leonards is privately owned such as in the “Forum Development”. Part of the Strategy will be to investigate opportunities for improvements and better linkages of this land to public spaces.

Redevelopment of small spaces within St Leonards, which can be used during lunchtime, is important to the local community. Careful treatment of these smaller places is required to ensure they will function to their optimum. Collectively these smaller spaces combine to form networks of open space that attract people to them and provide a focal area for the local community as well as those who work in the area.

## 2.4 Streetscape

St Leonards already has some positive streetscape characteristics, which provide some relief from the bustle of the city centre. These include:

- High design quality of the “Forum Development” and the St Leonards Station;
- Open space at Christie Street Reserve;
- Mitchell Street Plaza (plans to upgrade);
- The system of laneways
- Wide streets
- District views along streets

### **Areas to be considered in more detail include:**

- Christie Street Reserve
- Footpath areas along Christie, Mitchell and Atchison Streets
- Sergeants, Atchison and Albany Lanes

### **Opportunities for additional open space**

- Mitchell Street Plaza

## 2.5 Traffic and Public Transport

The traffic problems experienced in St Leonards are caused by the a convoluted local street system which limits circulation capability. Within the area there are conflicting demands for on-street parking spaces for commercial vehicles, workers and visitors.

The high volume of vehicle movements on the Pacific Highway divides the St Leonards and Crows Nest commercial centres and causes pedestrian inconvenience and negative environmental impacts.

The area is well serviced by public transport, both bus and rail. However, it suffers from through traffic from local and regional private vehicles, which impact on the pedestrian accessibility and amenity.

Accessibility in the short term has been affected by the “Forum Development” which incorporates the reinstatement of the St Leonards Railway Station on the northern side of Pacific Highway. The relocation of the Station and the associated development works has significantly improved pedestrian access to Herbert Street, Royal North Shore Hospital, the UTS St Leonards Campus and the St Leonards TAFE.

## 2.6 Residential

Almost all building activity during the 1990s was focussed on high density residential developments. Meriton completed two large residential developments on the former SRA land within the Willoughby Council area that is in proximity to the St Leonards Railway Station. There were 156 units built at 19-23 Herbert Street and 212 units in Talus and Francis Streets (known as 15A Herbert Street)

The “Forum Development” provided approximately 500 residential units. It is expected that St Leonards will experience continued residential growth as the area is zoned for Mixed Use.

## **2.7 Institutions**

The Royal North Shore Hospital is located north of St Leonards Station. The area supports a variety of health clinics and community support groups.

Although there are no secondary schools in the immediate area, there are several tertiary institutions such as the St Leonards TAFE and the UTS St Leonards Campus. St Leonards is a place of interchange for many students and it is important to consider their needs.

## **2.8 Land Use and Zoning**

The North Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2001 (LEP 2001) applies to the St Leonards area. Land use in St Leonards is predominately Mixed Use. Mixed Use incorporates commercial and retail at lower levels and residential above. There is some land zoned Residential C east of Oxley Street which allows for apartment buildings up to 16 metres in height.

## **2.9 Infrastructure**

With planned residential and commercial growth for St Leonards, it is expected additional demand will be placed on streets, footpaths and existing open space to provide for recreational activities and pedestrian movement. Streetscape improvements are required to match this growth and the changing nature of the commercial area. Improvements include footpath widening, paving, shelter, security, street tree plantings, landscaping and street furniture.

St Leonards accommodates many services above and below ground. The location of service pits and the drainage network for St Leonards are shown on the map attached to the Brief. The appropriateness of service consolidation should be considered as part of the upgrade to reduce the amount of times paving is removed and re-laid for maintenance.

The St Leonards Public Domain Strategy will set standards and provide continuity in the development of public domain throughout St Leonards and compliment the Public Domain Strategy currently being undertaken for the North Sydney Centre.

## **2.10 Climatic Data**

Sydney is subject to a temperate climate. The days are generally warm to humid during January and February. However, the proximity to the Sydney Harbour ensures there are cooling breezes at night particularly from May to December. Sydney's annual mean temperature is between 15 ° and 20 °C. Relative Humidity is moderately high throughout the year. Frosts are rare.

Rainfall averages about 125mm a month from March to June, and about 70mm to 75mm in September and October. However, southerly winds make the rainfall unpredictable and daily total rainfall in excess of 120mm can occur in all months with magnificent thunderstorms.

Winds in Sydney are generally easterly in summer and westerly in winter. St Leonards at times can be affected by strong winds created by surrounding high-rise development particularly along Christie Street and Pacific Highway. Average monthly wind speeds range from 10km/h to 12km/h.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PLANNING STUDIES**

Council has not adopted all of these studies for implementation and it is important to note their recommendations are still under consideration.

#### **3.1 Growth in Centres Study 1996** - lower North Shore employment corridor demand study, Economic aspects of Metropolitan Planning, Technical Paper, Department of Planning

St Leonards is characterised by its major institutions and office accommodation for relatively small businesses involved in the service industries. The study recommends:

1. Rezoning Light Industrial areas in St Leonards to business uses
2. Doubling the existing commercial floor space involving an increase of 250,000 square metre
3. Considering common urban planning and management strategies and policies for the three local government areas that comprise St Leonards
4. Considering opportunities for redevelopment of existing poor quality office, commercial and light industrial building stock
5. Focusing on office development activities around St Leonards Railway Station
6. Further discussion as to whether some constraints to development should be considered because of traffic congestion problems in St Leonards

#### **3.2 North Sydney Pedestrian Network & Amenity Study 1999** – Final report, Keys Young

The provision and relative attractiveness of public transport is linked to walking. Most people access bus stops and rail stations on foot and if that connection is not perceived as safe, convenient and comfortable then patronage will suffer.

The study recommendations are to:

##### **Land Use Planning Measures**

1. Provide opportunities for through-site links and adjacent footpath upgrades in major redevelopment sites
2. Encourage local retail and services within walking distance

##### **Provision of Pedestrian Facilities**

3. More audible traffic signals and signal controlled crossings
4. Introduce tactile surfaces
5. Regularly maintain pedestrian crossings and warning markings
6. Continue the program of introducing refuge islands and associated medians
7. Make pedestrian crossings more visible
8. Ensure footpaths are included in all new developments
9. Maintain footpaths by repairing, cleaning and mark walking surfaces, trim overhanging vegetation and maintain lighting

10. Encourage the provision of weather protection for all non-discretionary pedestrian routes
11. Improve permeability by providing through-site links
12. Upgrade and seal the informal track from Chandos Street to existing path through St Thomas Rest Park

#### **Overcoming Barriers to Pedestrian Movements**

13. Improve links to public transport
14. Improve continuity of weather protection, safety, lighting and wheelchair accessibility
15. Ensure underpasses at St Leonards Station provide convenient access for all pedestrians

#### **Encouragement**

16. Encourage education on public transport
17. Provide guided walks, maps and brochures, promote walk to work day and employer incentives such as flexitime, casual dress day, provide showers and lockers.

The redevelopment of the St Leonards Station has been a major pedestrian generator in its own right adding residential, commercial and retail floor space to a centre consolidating as a significant business, and now residential area. It will be important to ensure convenient access to the complex is provided from the southern side of the highway. This grade-separated link can then become part of the general public pedestrian network as well as an entry to the Station. It must be wheelchair accessible. Most of this centre lies in Willoughby, including the major regional resource, Royal North Shore Hospital. Rail reservations south of the highway presents an opportunity for improved catchment routes to the station but also for the development of a strategic recreational route from the station to Smoothery Park and hence on to Gore Cove.

### **3.3 North Sydney Recreation Needs Study**

There is a need to improve connectivity and linkages between recreation facilities and venues and other key land uses such as residential areas, commercial and retail areas, the St Leonards Station and the North Shore hospital. Major road and rail lines are major barriers for pedestrians and cyclists to access open space and parklands. Improved access through improved walkways and bike paths in St Leonards would increase access for the working population. The study recommends:

1. The provision and improvement of wheelchair access to facilities
2. Improved safety and security through increased provision of lighting in parks and at key facilities and the implementation of innovative design to increase visibility
3. Informal recreation facilities for workers in St Leonards for example civic squares with seating and shade used at lunch time
4. Improved pedestrian walkways and cycle paths for workers to access during lunchtime
5. The introduction of informal recreation activities including arts, cultural and educational leisure activities in balance with active sporting facilities. Informal recreation activities cater to all ages and both genders

6. Development of different recreation opportunities should encompass and enhance cultural diversity
7. The provision of a substantial open space area in St Leonards for activities such as busking, art exhibition and school group performances
8. Developing recreation facilities with regard to the needs of children, youth, adults, families, aged persons, people with disabilities
9. Continuation and improvement of maintenance processes to enhance the amenity and image of the area
10. Provision of pathways to accommodate strollers and prams
11. Markets, special events and festivals to increase usage.

### **3.4 North Sydney Strategic Traffic and Transportation Study- final report, PPK Environment & Infrastructure Pty Ltd, June 1999**

The study recommends:

1. Support and encouragement of public transport usage
2. Restricting commercial car parking
3. Maintaining short stay street parking and underground public parking station
4. A traffic management plan to reduce speeds, narrow roads
5. Reducing the barrier of Pacific Highway for pedestrians
6. Improving interchange for buses and passengers at St Leonards Station
7. New development at St Leonards does not limit access to station after hours
8. Investigating the provision of cyclist facilities
9. Improving pedestrian accessibility from residential areas to support a 'walk only' mode of transport.

### **3.5 St Leonards Town Centre Study – Conybeare Morrison & Partners, 1997**

Principles for redevelopment should include:

1. Consolidation of existing commercial sites to allow larger footprint development, with underground parking access
2. Promote flexible residential developments, with mix studios, and larger garden apartments, to accommodate singles, families and empty nesters
3. Create new open space opportunities coordinated with existing street grids
4. Preserve existing low scale residential, with new residential development addressing near lanes
5. Redevelop park, with underground parking station, to expose southern façade of historical substation
6. Promote low scale mixed residential/retail edge facing park on Hume, Clarke and Oxley Streets
7. Promote high rise development along southern edge of the district
8. Develop high rise envelope which enhance landmark quality of existing development
9. Utilise level changes to access public parking (accommodated underground) within street alignments
10. A series of open spaces to be integrated with the major pedestrian movement these include a range of spaces such as mid-block north-south pedestrian corridor between Chandos, Atchison and Albany Streets to be used as outdoor

cafes and residential entrances

11. Existing vacant sites to be converted to pocket parks to terminate vistas of the mid block crossing. Upgrade existing Council park by removal of the carpark
12. When sites are consolidated widen existing streets to provide for a street tree planting programme

### **3.6 Regional Bike Strategy**

### **3.7 Other Relevant Material**

- **Area Character Study**
- **North Sydney Residential Development Strategy**
- **North Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2001** (available on Council's website)
- **North Sydney Development Control Plan 2002** (available on Council's website). This document provides a character statement and specific controls for St Leonards
- **Plan of Management for Neighbourhood Parks** (Christie Street Reserve)
- **NSC Corporate Manual**
- **Street Tree Strategy 1997** (available on Council's website)