

Ultimo Village Voice

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12 September 2020

Submission

In response to

Submission on Draft Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy July 2020

Submitted to:

Project Leader
Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy
Department of Planning Industry & Environment
Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124

Prepared by:

Ultimo Village Voice
Sunday, 12 September 2020

For further information on this submission, please contact

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Submission lodged online: planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-for-your-area/priority-growth-areas-and-precincts/pyrmont-peninsula.

Ultimo Village Voice

For nearly 20 years, Ultimo Village Voice (UVV) has supported local residents, provided an avenue to gain information on important issues that impact the local area and benefits from the collective knowledge of long-term residents. Further, UVV liaises constructively with State and City representatives to drive positive community and local business outcomes. Chaired by Yimmy Seifert, the UVV collective takes responsibility for oversight, identification of issues and drafting of responses that represent the community views, aspirations and locally generated opportunities for improvement in the following areas:

- Local developments
- Public facilities (e.g. Powerhouse, Ian Thorpe)
- Education facilities and capacity
- Environmental Issues
- Social Issues
- Traffic impacts
- Police issues

UVV has been instrumental in developing improved safety and design outcomes in many recent developments in the local area. UVV has had at least one representative at all PPPS meetings and has kept abreast of the issues surrounding this large-scale, complex redevelopment that covers many areas of Pyrmont and has great potential to impact on the local residents of Ultimo as well as Pyrmont.

We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft PPPS.

Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy

We support the PPPS' big moves to create a continuous link in the foreshore walk, a new Metro station and to return Wentworth Park to the community as public open space. However, as we have already submitted, we feel the Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy (PPPS) has been unnecessarily rushed through public consultation, environmental and social assessments and has been prioritised on values that are contrary to the health, well-being and amenity of local residents. UVV residents are not ignorant to the need to develop and generate productive space. However, we feel strongly there are innovative options that will provide these opportunities while proving the concept of redevelopment that improve community connection, safety and health and reduce the environmental footprint rather than the inexorable increase in carbon and loss of green space. The current draft does not meet these aspirations and merely promulgates an outdated mode of thinking for development.

Such an ambitious project has the potential to speak to the Australian public and our visitors in a different way – a way that recognizes our First Australians and their culture as our own – a culture to be proud of and to celebrate. In collaboration with the people of the Eora Nation, stories can be shared and brought to the fore as stories that belong to all of us. Co-design must be a key element of all aspects of the redevelopment. We continue to hope for some tangible recognition of First Australian's use of important elements.

Recommendation 1 – Co-design this precinct with First Australians at the table in a meaningful way. Appropriately recognize the First Nation’s cultural connections to the area.

The draft Economic Development Strategy which has driven the development of the PPPS was developed before the Covid-19 pandemic. The underlying assumptions and drivers of activity in the area are likely to be significantly outdated, given the huge economic and social impact of the virus, including a massive move towards working from home and away from collective offices. Further, tourism activities in the area will continue to evolve in ways that will depart from the current norms.

A new needs assessment must be completed to determine that this level of development is meeting a need.

The Strategy does include some public benefits in its proposed Five Big Moves for Pyrmont (pp 38 – 43) and we ask that the affected local communities (Pyrmont, Ultimo, Glebe) be meaningfully involved in the more detailed planning for their implementation, through membership of the committees moving forward. Further, we again encourage the engagement of more innovative thinking and entrepreneurs who have shown interest in developing the area in a sympathetic way, such as Mike Cannon-Brookes, co-founder of Atlassian – a significant potential investor in the area.

The 10 Directions

Direction 1 – Development that complements or enhances the area

We reject the premise that the area’s character and attributes will be preserved and enhanced by the intrusion of towers ranging from ~51 storeys (The Star and Harbourside), 45-storeys (Blackwattle Bay), and up to 70-storeys (UTS Ultimo) (PPPS p79). Ultimo maintains a strong character of a village with a mutually supportive community and generous nature to all newcomers. This has persisted despite the barrage of new developments, increasing the population that far outreaches the meagre public amenities and services provided in this area. The current proposals will undoubtedly stretch the local community to the point where high quality of life and community cooperation are overtaken by a further increase in crime, reduced access to transport, education and police services leading to reduced diversity of residents and physical and psychological safety for new residents. The current outsized proposals do not reflect the topography or the current built form and scale of heritage residences, former wool stores and warehouses and mid-height buildings which enable air movement and sunlight to bathe our streets, our homes, and public spaces.

Darling Island Precinct - We reject the notion that a 51-storey tower built at the Southern end of The Star site will somehow “complement or enhance” the heritage buildings and layout of the local areas, including Union Square. Further, the close-by 16-storey tower would impact significantly on the local resident amenity, light, air and livability.

Blackwattle Bay Precinct - Similarly, we reject Infrastructure NSW’s proposal to construct three 45-storey towers on the edge of Blackwattle Bay. This is completely out of character with

buildings in the vicinity including the Harbour Mill, Wattle Crescent apartments, Bulwara Road houses, terraces and apartments. Their impact on light and air movement would significantly reduce amenity in housing and community use of Paradise Reserve. Finally, the visual impact of these towers from multiple angles would invoke a perception of the area that is completely contrary to the current environment and culture.

Ultimo Precinct – Rather than proposing a standard strategy of large scale high rise buildings in the area, we submit that there is opportunity for sensitively designed buildings such as that at Central Park. Further this innovation could create a vibrant hub that does not exceed height limits, developed with the community in mind and extend the use and reputation of the Innovation Corridor. We oppose the recent delisting and any redevelopment on the site of the historic Tram Sheds/Harwood Building. We do support using these buildings for cultural and social purposes (e.g. railway workshop buildings at Eveleigh and the ATP).

Wentworth Park Precinct - Please do not allow the former City of Sydney depot at the corner of Fig and Wattle Sts to exceed height limits. As referred above, these limits were set to protect area livability and amenity of the community residents. We have often requested and spent many hours talking with City and NSW staff to assist with the rational development of a school that will meet the needs of our changing community.

Recommendation 2 – Buildings should meet the LEP and not exceed legal height restrictions, and be designed to complement existing building forms in Pyrmont and Ultimo.

Direction 2 – Jobs and industries of the future

UVV supports “investment and innovation to boost jobs, creativity, tourism and night life” (PPPS Direction 2). However, we believe that these towers are not the solution we seek for the area. Ultimo is already home to many design and technology highlights for Sydney including TAFE, UTS, the Powerhouse Museum and start-up hosts and accelerators including Fishburners, Climate Kic and Pandalabs – all important elements of the NSW globally recognised Sydney Innovation and Technology Precinct (https://www.business.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/267787/prospectus-sydney-innovation-and-technology-precinct.pdf). Further, there are other recent developments that will add office and residential space including 21 Harris St (2,000 workers), the former TAB site now has hundreds of residential apartments, both largely in line with the LEP for the area.

However, communities, small businesses (especially retail and service sector) have struggled, coping with overcrowded rentals, a highly concentrated nightlife and lack of public access to the area. What is required are more appealing cultural venues such as a revitalised Powerhouse and an art walk around the White Rabbit and other local galleries and the development of community art and performance spaces that encourage local investment and support local businesses spending while in the area. We require an active retail presence in line with the character that attracts people during the day rather than having people simply drive through. The City of Sydney has advocated for extended retail trading hours to 10pm and we have supported this proposal.

One way to achieve night-time activation is to locate venues, centred around the area's heart - Harris Street, that lead people on a walking trail through to the neighboring areas, revitalizing and generating new micro-venues that have been shown to generate business and activity, without high risk alcohol fuelled danger of large scale, high capacity night clubs and dance venues. Such amenities should be accessible and designed to support activity in the Ultimo/Pymont/Glebe area from work for evening shopping, dinner, a show or a film and then a drink with locals and explore the holes in the wall that have and could again characterize the area.

Recommendation 3 – The push to boost jobs and economic growth through the development of large scale, high capacity venues that have caused major safety issues in King's Cross should instead reflect the friendly, inclusive nature of the area by promoting the development of micro bars and pop up restaurants such those found in Melbourne, and even in York St, Chippendale etc.

Direction 3 – Centres for residents, workers and visitors

Direction 3 purports to promote “new lively and attractive centres for everyone to enjoy”. There is no doubt that Harris Street requires attention to turn the make-shift residential, massage parlours and real estate agents into a vibrant, active retail and restaurant destination, rather than merely a thoroughfare.

Equitable access is a feature of any great Place, and a basic right for residents. We have long advocated for improved access to public transport and accessible walkways between Ultimo and the rest of the City of Sydney. Instead, there is increasingly restricted access to Darling Harbour (walkways with no option but to use lifts that are often out of service), to the CBD and Town Hall (loss of bus services despite a significant increase in local population) and to the rest of the inner west (Balmain peninsular has more than 6 times the number of buses with connectivity both east and west despite similar population). Ultimo residents are extremely diverse in many ways including age. It is increasingly difficult for residents to navigate the area due to changes in infrastructure, and are only possible in many ways due to the support of other community members. Additional support from public agencies at the State and City level must improve to protect and augment this community cooperation and access for all residents.

Further, office workers need effective and safe public transport to return home after an extended stay in the area. We support the construction of a Metro station in Pymont, and we recommend increased capacity for the light rail service. Further, improved connection to the new light rail system through the CBD and East would restore some access to the lower CBD lost through ceased bus routes.

Recommendation 4 – We support a Metro station in Pymont, and request the restoration of access routes to Town Hall and the lower CBD that have ceased in recent years.

Darling Island Precinct - We reject the assertion and have seen no evidence that the community needs the Star to expand its influence in the area, either through gambling or hotel accommodation. Please advise what community needs this is fulfilling, particularly in light of a declining tourism trade and government enquiries into the way this business is run. The ad hoc

approval of competitor Crown should not be used as an opportunity to further expand this industry in the area, particularly given the oversized influence it has on livability for residents in very close proximity and the ambience of the area generally, for visitors and residents alike. The latest redevelopment has significantly impacted on local residents and businesses and is not welcoming or attractive to passers-by who could otherwise be encouraged to spend more time in the neighbourhood. This expansion will create a wall that is unwelcoming and yet invasive into the community – it is difficult to both get away from its influence (noise, smoke, light) while not emanating a feeling that the community is welcome. Further invasive development of this site will not improve either of these community oriented issues and the motives for this development must be examined.

Recommendation 5 – We reject the need for high rise hotel/residential development on the Star sites.

Tumbalong Park Precinct - Similar to the redevelopment at Darling Harbour, we see this as an opportunity to open Harbourside up to residents and visitors to Pyrmont and Ultimo – allowing better flow of people, culture and engagement in a more meaningful experience - we agree, there is a need to “create attractive, safe and easy-to-use streets behind the ICC” (p55) and this proposed new development has some way to go.

Recommendation 6 – Encourage street activation behind the ICC and Harbourside developments, in a community friendly way that supports long walks through the city, providing context, diversity, adventure and self-discovery just as great cities of London and New York do.

Blackwattle Bay Precinct - The new Sydney Fish Markets are an opportunity to attract visitors and enliven the area for extended periods. Again, we suggest innovation, decentralisation and the opportunity for people to explore and discover on their own the unique character of the area. Only through a large scale, integrated Place Strategy can this be done, but the opportunity to activate local investment and revitalisation has been squandered. Creating single large scale, multi-use destination points creates the need to transit to and from rather than journey to somewhere through a wonderful maze of cultural and heritage walks.

We note throughout the document the need for community access to power. There is great opportunity for innovation in this area to demonstrate, test and inspire people to engage with renewable energy – yes solar and wind but also the body as a source of energy. This could be a trail of innovation and adventure that created energy – imagine being power positive rather than one more development that was a power sink.

Priority No. 2e to “create active transport connections to Harris Street from surrounding areas” for Ultimo is particularly important to our local community as we experience lack of connectivity in terms of public transport with some services removed over the years, and it should also extend to the entire Harris Street up to the northern end. We request improved public transport services to and from Ultimo/Pyrmont to neighbouring suburbs and to reinstate the bus service to the Broadway Shopping Center.

We support the development of multiple cultural facilities at Blackwattle Bay and up through Ultimo – multiple galleries, artists' studios, rehearsal, learning and creative spaces.

Recommendation 7 – The Place Strategy should engage expanded thinking and think of activating the entire area, not just building large scale complexes as seen in the suburbs. The unique character of the area would be better reflected in micro bars, multiple galleries and creative spaces. Think of innovation opportunities (and collaborating local businesses/agencies, e.g Climate Kic, Atlassian) for producing power not just using it.

Recommendation 8 – Planning should improve bus services to link the Peninsula with Broadway Shopping Centre, University of Sydney and RPA beyond.

Pymont Village Precinct – Safety incidents and concerns in this area have been steadily increasing with increased population, overcrowding of accommodation and generally poor presentation of many buildings along Harris St. The re-instatement of a local police station and consistent police presence in the area would provide an excellent opportunity for engagement with long term issues in the area and a relationship with the community that no longer exists. Ultimo residents have recently experienced a highly charged incident with police – something that is reminiscent of America and would not happen in a neighbourhood where the police have a relationship with the community. We also suggest a safety audit be conducted to highlight areas that do not have sufficient lighting at night to ensure the safety of pedestrians.

We support the redevelopment of the Maybanke Centre site in Harris Street as the Maybanke Community Sports and Recreation Centre.

Recommendation 9 – reinstate the police station and police presence in the Pymont-Ultimo community.

Recommendation 10 – Redevelopment of the Maybanke Community Sports and Recreation Centre on the City of Sydney's Maybanke site.

Ultimo Precinct – A Sixth Big Move – Provide Adequate Education Facilities

Throughout the draft document, there are altogether 20 mentions of “education”:

- In the Minister's foreword “... that the time is right to improve access to the harbor and to public spaces, to active and public transport, to education and jobs, ...”
- In the Premier's Priorities (p90) “The Premier's priorities for 2019-2022 focus on improving education standards, improving the health system and creating a better environment.”
- The other references to “education” are in context of higher education of UTS, TAFE and the Powerhouse Museum

There is no mention at all of education facilities in the form of a high school in the Peninsula and we desperately need a comprehensive high school. Currently the high school for year 7-10 for Ultimo and Pymont is Sydney Secondary College Balmain Campus in Balmain (4.5km distance) or for years 11-12 the option is the Sydney Secondary College Blackwattle Bay Campus in

Glebe. The Inner Sydney High School in Cleveland St seems to cater for the Eastern suburbs and excludes Ultimo and Pyrmont in its catchment area.

We propose to add another Big Move to the existing 5, to build a comprehensive high school on the current Fish Market site. It is a rare opportunity for a big parcel of public land to become available and we should not squander the opportunity to provide essential education facilities to the local community to cater for current needs as well as for the projected population growth. Instead of the 3 scenarios for over-sized towers that were proposed for this site, can we add another scenario to devote part of this site to education purposes and the rest for residential development?

Another alternative will be to send Ultimo/Pyrmont secondary students to the Inner Sydney High School in Cleveland Street and build new high school facilities closer to the less heavily developed Eastern Suburbs that Cleveland Street now has within its catchment.

Recommendation 11 – Purchase the former City of Sydney depot site (Fig/Wattle Sts) for a comprehensive Secondary School campus.

Genuinely Revitalise the Powerhouse - For many years, the community has fought the unsubstantiated decision to move the Powerhouse Museum. We consider the current decision to leave the main gallery space in Ultimo but repurpose the storage sheds is still potentially a danger to the amenity and culture of the local community. Redirecting the articles in storage in the Tram Sheds/Harwood building opens up excellent opportunities for community engagement and to make obvious the skills, diversity and opportunities for employment that exist in the Ultimo/Pyrmont area. This could be done without compromising the heritage value of the buildings themselves and would attract visitors of many ages – although we note that before the most recent cuts it was still one of the most visited Museums in NSW and even Australia. Further, leveraging off investment in the Goods Line and Darling Harbour area could create a knowledge and adventure pathway through many cultural sites to the Australian National Maritime Museum. Any new buildings should not overshadow this cultural heart of Ultimo in the Innovation Corridor and risk devaluing the recent government investments.

Recommendation 12 – The PPPS must contain a plan for the current and future needs of the community and provide adequate education facilities.

Recommendation 13 – Restore the Powerhouse Museum as a highly valued, world-class museum with improved connection to the community.

Wentworth Park Precinct - We strongly support the end of Greyhound Racing and the return of the site for public use when the current lease expires.

Direction 4 – A Unified Planning Framework

We believe that planning controls, no matter how they are administered, should be fair and transparent. We are also concerned that the building heights under the PPPS planning controls should not be a “one size fits all” but should be sensitive to and complements the neighbourhood of the development, to agree with Direction 2 “Development that complements

or enhances that area". A few examples of the proposed high density and height developments are:

- the rejected Ritz-Carlton Hotel DA which it is not sympathetic to the heritage area in the neighbourhood
- the new building up to 56 storeys at the Harbourside Shopping Center site
- the proposed residential blocks up to 50 storeys on the current Fish Market Site (it does not comply with priority No. 4 for Blackwattle Bay)

Each of the above proposed developments, including any future ones, should be carefully considered with full community consultation.

Direction 5 – A tapestry of greener public spaces and experiences

Darling Island Precinct – We support most measures to upgrade open spaces outlined on p51.

We also support the extension of the foreshore walkway, ensuring that it in no way damages or encroaches on the heritage buildings in its vicinity.

Use of any outdoor sports and recreation facilities provided on rooftops must not impact negatively on nearby residents.

Recommendation 14 - use of open space on rooftops should not disturb nearby residents.

Ultimo Precinct – We support the recommendation (No 15, p59). We particularly encourage the planting of local native street trees. There should be no overshadowing of the few parks that are located in this precinct and, possibly, the installation of pedestrian islands with trees in suitable local streets. We encourage innovative thinking and the deployment of green wall technology that is now well proven and could be developed further to provide food as well as environmental and social benefits.

Recommendation 15 – We support the provision of more green space and trees in Ultimo and encourage the use of this initiative to experiment with new thinking in green urban planning.

Blackwattle Bay Precinct – We strongly oppose the 45-storey towers proposed in INSW's 3 scenarios for the redevelopment on the current Fish Markets, however we would welcome the opportunity to work with planners to develop a Place Plan that achieves the objectives of Direction 1, including provision of green space.

Direction 6 – Creativity, Culture and Heritage

We strongly support the provision of new creative, cultural and heritage however, we urge planners to ensure any new entertainment/event venues do not reduce residential amenity and are located away from residential areas

Any new tourist and/or entertainment development in this precinct should be required to incorporate venues affordable and appropriately designed for community events. The Star's proposed development included a Neighbourhood Centre. While the attempt was not fit for purpose, we appreciate the attempt.

Recommendation 16 – Provide affordable, flexible new community focused places that attract, engage, entertain and educate visitors.

Direction 7 – Making it Easier to Move Around

We have already strongly advocated for reinstated and significantly improved public transport. We ask for a review of the ceasing of the right turn into the Western Distributor from Harris St – this has created the perverse outcome of sending traffic down Bulwara Rd at speed endangering pedestrians along the shared zone through the Quarry Green and past two kindergartens on Bulwara Road. The incidence of speeding has become much worse since the change.

Improvements to pedestrian access are also highlighted here: Upgrades to the Western Distributor exit to the CBD meant the loss of direct pedestrian link between Harris Street (at Fig Street) to the CBD. The new lift is often out of order, and cyclists and pedestrians, including those with disabilities or prams either having to negotiate steep stairs, or retrace their steps to Harris Street and find another through. This direct access is vital for visitors, residents and workers from Ultimo and Pyrmont.

Recommendation 17 – Extend Fig Street walkway directly to the CBD, reverse the decision to halt traffic turning right onto the Western Distributor from Harris.

Direction 8 – Building now for a sustainable future

The current design shows no evidence that it has tomorrow in mind. It shows a lack of innovation and no flexibility to incorporate emerging technology that is currently developing. Emerging energy and green space technologies should be incorporated wherever possible to improve the sustainability of the area to fulfil the opportunity to act as a showcase and attractive hub for inspiration, engagement and trial of new technologies. Basic amenities including EV charging stations would also be beneficial.

Recommendation 18 – Generate innovation workshops with local technological experts and community to develop, install and promote new ideas that meet the public need for information, the ability to try and even generate energy for use within the precinct itself.

Direction 9 – Great homes that can suit the needs of more people

We are pleased that the Place Strategy team recognizes the value of community diversity and that this is led by diversity in housing. While we have a substantial amount of social and public Affordable Housing, it is not yet the amount stipulated in former agreements associated with the first transitioning of the Pyrmont Peninsula. We have a wonderfully strong and diverse community and recent developments as well as reduction in services have put that to straining

point several times. This Plan has the opportunity to not focus entirely on the dollar but on health and wellbeing of the community and visitors.

Recommendation 19 - Commitment to protecting and enhancing ALL existing affordable housing in situ.

Direction 10 – A collaborative voice – We look forward to a meaningful interaction with the planning team moving forward as members of committees and consultation groups.

In Conclusion

UVV would appreciate favourable and meaningful consideration of our feedback above and look forward to engaging in community consultations in the development of Ultimo and Pymont.

Regards

Yimmy Seifert

Chair – Ultimo Village Voice

Ultimo Village Voice (UVV) was established in 2004 and is the official successor organization to the Ultimo Precinct Committee sanctioned by the City of Sydney and relied on by the Lord Mayor to provide resident feedback, advice and guidance to many matters related to aspects of the maintenance, development and administration of Ultimo. We meet a number of times per year with the Lord Mayor, Council Members and City Officers to that end. UVV generally meets at 6:30 pm on the first Thursday of the month (February to December) at the Ultimo Community Centre (40 William Henry St, Ultimo, entrance from Bulwara Road). Currently our meetings are held in an online format.

Ultimo Village Voice

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16 August 2020

Mr Steve Driscoll
Project Leader
Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy
4 Parramatta Square
12 Darcy Square
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

By email to: steve.driscoll@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Steve

Proposal – Maybanke Community Sports and Recreation Centre

We refer to the letter from Pymont Action dated 25 July 2020 and confirm that Ultimo Village Voice fully supports the proposal to revitalize the Maybanke Community Sports and Recreation Centre and agrees that “Such a Centre would benefit residents - and workers from Pymont, Ultimo and nearby Darling Harbour and Haymarket. ”.

We would therefore request favorable consideration of this proposal in the context of the PPPS and a concrete plan to progress this proposal.

Regards
Yimmy Seifert

Chair
Ultimo Village Voice

cc Clr Clover Moore, Lord Mayor, Monica Barone, CEO, City of Sydney
Alex Greenwich, Member for Sydney, Jamie Parker, Member for Balmain

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