

PYRMONT PENINSULA PLACE STRATEGY – SUBMISSION COUNCIL OF ULTIMO/PYRMONT ASSOCIATIONS (CUPA)

Overall assumption – residential population

The Pyrmont peninsula (ie Pyrmont/Ultimo) is a vibrant mix of residential community and workplaces. It is already the most densely populated area in Australia, yet its residents have succeeded in making connections with and providing support for each other. The idea that it should become an extension to the CBD is anathema to those who live here. Why add another 8,500 residents to this area? What about the other suburbs close to the city - Darlinghurst, Chippendale, Woolloomooloo, Kirribilli, Waverton, Wollstonecraft?

Overall assumption – economic benefits

Increasing the number of workers to 23,000 seems excessive, given current trends towards decentralisation, flexible working arrangements, empty office space in the CBD, and the capacity of other areas close to the city to accommodate businesses. The draft strategy clearly gives more weight to economic development than to the legitimate needs of present and future residents.

Jobs and industries of the future

No-one knows what these will be by 2041. However, workplaces will need to be more flexible, and may not require the size and shape of existing offices. More people working from home, greater digital connections, fewer face to face meetings – all need to be considered before building more office towers, especially as there are already empty office buildings in the CBD and surrounds.

Development that complements or enhances an area

Very tall towers in Blackwattle Bay and the Star cannot possibly “complement or enhance the area”. Although there are high-rise buildings, especially at the northern end of the peninsula, they align with the Harris Street ridge and the topography of Pyrmont’s ex-quarries. These heights should be respected, to avoid overshadowing and wind tunnels. High-rise buildings should only be built away from the harbour foreshore.

Centres for residents, workers and visitors

Much more planning is needed to provide spaces for community activities – a water sports centre and access to the water in Blackwattle Bay, a recreation centre on the underused Maybank Centre site, an indigenous cultural centre/museum, sporting facilities for children and young people.

Union Square can be made more usable for community events if it is remodelled, moving the war memorial closer to Pyrmont Street (it has been moved before), removing dangerous graded half-steps, and levelling the central area.

A unified planning framework

This makes sense, provided that the City of Sydney is included in all planning decisions. Several planning documents need to be updated. This must be done with community representatives.

The designation “state significant planning” should not be used to achieve results desired by developers, that do not accord with the directions agreed to in the Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy.

A tapestry of greener public spaces and experiences

The foreshore walk must be wide enough to accommodate the many walkers, runners and cyclists expected (cf Glebe Foreshore Walk, the Bay Run) and include indigenous plantings to reduce CO2 and provide shade.

Wentworth Park is leased until 2027. Even if it is returned to public open space, this will not compensate for all the needs for green public space in Pyrmont/Ultimo. Other possible public uses include a social, cultural, arts and sporting centre to meet the needs of the numbers of residents and workers that are anticipated. The area currently occupied by the greyhound stadium has the potential to serve Pyrmont, Ultimo and Glebe. It also has the potential for development as a much needed secondary school, and possibly by then a larger primary school. Careful planning and serious community consultation will be needed to identify the best uses of this large publicly-owned space.

Creativity and culture

The 24/7 nightlife at Darling Harbour is likely to develop further and provide more entertainment for residents, workers and visitors. However, it must be managed to protect the needs of nearby residents.

Heritage

This must begin with our indigenous heritage. The draft strategy pays only lip service to this. An indigenous cultural centre/museum must be included in the early planning stages.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be part of the peninsula, there must be enough social and affordable housing to accommodate them. All new developments must include Affordable housing, as well as maintaining the existing social and affordable housing in the peninsula.

The sculpture *Curtain Call* must be rescued from storage and returned to a prominent position in Darling Harbour. It reminds residents and visitors of the key role played by the wool industry in early European settlement.

Making it easier to move around

Harris Street is the second most congested street in Australia. It can take an hour in evening peak hour to drive a few blocks on Bank Street. To add 8,500 homes, especially 2,055 more people in Blackwattle Bay, will turn the new fish market precinct into a car park at the busiest times of the day. This area cannot accommodate so many more residents until public transport (including a metro station and ferries) enable people to leave their cars at home.

The Glebe Island Bridge must be retained and developed to allow pedestrians and cyclists easy access from White Bay and Glebe Island to Pyrmont.

Traffic lights currently enable cars to move more quickly. They need to be re-set to allow more time for pedestrians to cross, especially the increasing number of older pedestrians.

A lift from lower Mount Street to Upper Mount Street, beside the very steep steps ("the stairs of death") is needed to connect these areas and especially provide better access to and from Pyrmont Community Centre.

The Fig Street walkway needs to be extended to provide a direct link from Harris Street to the CBD. The lift is often out of order, and cyclists and pedestrians, including those with disabilities or prams either have to negotiate steep stairs, or return to Harris Street

and find another route. This direct access is vital for visitors, residents and workers from Ultimo and Pyrmont.

Building now for a sustainable future

Cars are not an answer. Public transport must include a metro station, ferries, greater capacity on the light rail network, and improved bus services, so that locals can get to Glebe and Broadway shopping centre.

Great homes to suit the needs of more people

To meet the needs of all residents, much more consideration must be given to social infrastructure. Children need preschools, schools, places to play. Young people need places to meet and socialise – facilities to accommodate social clubs, land and water sports, indoor and outdoor exercise venues. Older people need good public transport, access to social clubs, medical facilities, indoor and outdoor exercise venues. Everyone needs green, open spaces.

A collaborative voice

This must apply to community as well as business. The draft strategy refers to “an industry-led Business Improvement District, as proposed by the Western Harbour Alliance and the Committee for Sydney”. It makes no reference to community-led protection of the rights of residents, including families with children, to a safe and healthy environment, with facilities for fulfilling activities and avenues for connecting with others.

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