

Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy

Submission from the Committee for Sydney

February 2022

About the Committee for Sydney

The Committee for Sydney is an independent think tank and champion for the whole of Sydney, providing thought leadership beyond the electoral cycle. We bring people together to solve the problems of today and tomorrow.

With over 150 member organisations, we work on behalf of Sydney, not the interest of any industry or sector. Our goal is to build on our already strong history of shining a light on critical issues shaping our city and developing a suite of actions for a better future.

Introduction

The Committee for Sydney has always taken a close interest in the planning and development of the Pyrmont Peninsula. We have argued in earlier submissions that the precinct has the capacity to support a much greater density of development and play a greater role in the economic, cultural, and social life of Sydney.

Sydney's CBD is constrained by the Harbour, parklands, like the Domain and Botanical gardens, and neighbouring residential suburbs and heritage precincts. Notwithstanding the temporary setbacks caused by the pandemic, Sydney will soon need more space if it is to continue to contribute to our nation's economic, social, and cultural wellbeing. The Pyrmont Peninsula offers the best, and possibly only, area where the CBD's growth can be accommodated in the future.

However, in supporting this growth, it is important that we don't repeat the mistakes of the past. Development must be guided by societal need and be protective of the local environment. Future plans should strive for a better balance between the economic, social, and environmental needs of the precinct. In recent years, the Committee has published several Papers and studies on how to build better neighbourhoods and cities. Places with active streets, good urban design, smart technology, connected neighbourhoods and sustainable and resilient buildings and parklands. In responding to the draft Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy (the Strategy), the Committee has drawn on the many ideas and recommendations in these Papers, as well as the expertise of our members.

10 Directions and 5 Big Moves.

The **10 Directions** outlined in earlier iterations of the Strategy are supported. As aspirations, they cover the competing needs and pressures on the precinct and how they should be balanced against each other. However, while we agree with each Direction, the Implementation Strategy should articulate in more detail how each is to be achieved. We are concerned that Implementation Report is overly reliant on planning and land use controls, while important, these are not, in themselves, able to deliver all the things we need if Pyrmont is to achieve its potential. In the following section we make some suggestions for other policy tools and levers which should be considered before the Strategy is finalised.

The **5 Big Moves** are strongly supported and will be essential if Pyrmont is to achieve its full potential. Sydney's famous harbour foreshore walk, founders when it passes through Pyrmont. Fixing this is long overdue.

Establishing the area as 24 hour cultural and entertainment destination will do much to restore Sydney's night-time economy, which has struggle with the impact of Covid and former 'lock-out' laws.

The investment in a new Station on the Metro Line will finally remove the biggest hurdle which is stifled investment in Pyrmont – its lack of connectivity with the rest of Sydney. The new Station will support greater density of development and intensity of activity and help decouple the local economy from the private car. The Committee is pleased that the Metro station has now been identified as a key site.

With climate change posing an existential threat to our metropolis, championing Pyrmont as a low carbon, high performance precinct and showcasing the latest in sustainable development and living is welcome. And finally, creating more and better activated public spaces, should make Pyrmont Peninsula a more liveable and greener place.

However, if we are to capitalising on these 5 Big Moves, the Implementation Strategy should consider further strategic interventions, policy tools, and investments. The following are some ideas and policy tools which the Committee has been advocating for to ensure new places, neighbourhoods and precincts are liveable, loveable, and sustainable.

Heritage Floor Space Trading.

The Committee has been calling for an expansion of the CBD's Heritage Floor Space Scheme to other parts of Sydney, and Pyrmont is the perfect place to start. While the Strategy highlights and celebrates Pyrmont's rich built heritage, these buildings and places need more protection than the design controls and setbacks, being proposed. Including the Pyrmont peninsula in the CBD scheme would drive investment in the renewal and ongoing protection of the precinct's heritage.

A reimagined Pyrmont Peninsula.

The Committee recently released a report outlining the findings of our Commission into the future of Sydney's CBD [Link](#) . Many of the recommendations we made for the CBD, are also applicable to Pyrmont, and will assist in delivering on the including:

- Install plug-and-play creative infrastructure across the peninsula.
- Fund cultural institutions, like the MAAS and to stay 'open late' all week and open up boundaries.
- Investigate options for different housing models and develop creative co-operative housing.
- Create 'shared streets' where pedestrian movement is high.
- Develop 'the Aboriginal custodian-identified framework for the Pyrmont in line with the Sydney CBD Aboriginal Strategy.
- Form a logistics industry and government working group to sponsor the roll-out of positive logistics initiatives in Pyrmont.

Sites capable for change and Key sites

The Committee supports the approach being taken in the implementation strategy to focus reform and change on those sub-precincts and places best suited to accommodate growth. However, this should not preclude change elsewhere in the peninsula nor sterilise precincts where other changes are possible. Delivering on the 10 Directions and capitalising on the 5 Big Moves will require more than just land use and density changes.

In our submission to the previous Strategy, the Committee supported the identification of Key sites which we believed had the most potential to drive the renewal of the peninsula. It is pleasing that each of these sites have now progressed or are under active consideration. While each is important in themselves, collectively they will drive new development and investment across the Peninsula.

The Star is the mainstay of Pyrmont's 24-Hour night-time economy and makes a significant contribution to Sydney's visitor economy. The addition of a second theatre, as proposed in the draft masterplan, will help fill the gap in Sydney's cultural infrastructure- the lack of suitable venues for live performance. Likewise, the development of a 6-star hotel, will help rebuild our international tourism market as the pandemic recedes.

The **UTS** Masterplan will do much to improve the amenity of a sub-precinct which has suffered from badly designed built form in the past and currently has a very poor pedestrian experience. Fixing these deficiencies will help support the precincts growing education and training industries and make it more attractive to international and domestic students.

The two **Metro sites** are a welcome inclusion in the strategy. These two sites are the future gateway through which most workers, visitors and residents will enter the peninsula. Their enhanced connectivity with the wider Sydney should afford them the capacity for significantly higher development potential.

Further Considerations

Planning and Land Use.

The Committee supports the suggestion that Sydney City Council should be involved in determining Pyrmont's future land use mix and we agree that this is best done through the update of the Sydney LEP 2012. Having a single, unified planning regime will provide industry and landowners with the certainty to invest. However, as the largest landowner, it is important that the State continues to take an active interest in crafting the new Local Plan.

In doing so however, we would like to ensure that any future planning controls are flexible and designed to deliver each of the 10 Directions in the Strategy. The current B8 Metropolitan Centre Zone which applies in the CBD should be also considered for much of the peninsula. This performance-based zone provides for a wide mix of uses and activities and is flexible, allowing the Peninsula to adapt and change over time. Alternatively, this precinct might be suitable for the new SP4 Enterprise Zone. As far as practical, the Council should avoid single use zones, in favour of controls which permit a range of activities and uses.

Governance

In our earlier submissions we made some recommendations for new governance models to guide the development and renewal of the Peninsula. As a founding member of the Western Harbour Alliance, we canvassed options, including an industry and landowner led BID. The Strategy released in 2020 suggested these and other options would be considered in future Plans for the precinct. We would welcome the opportunity to progress these in the future. Pyrmont has suffered a lack of coherent and joined-up governance and has lacked a single voice to advocate for the place. This must change.

Conclusion

The Committee is pleased that Government has progressed the implementation of the Pyrmont Strategy and we look forward to working with Department and Sydney City Council on the next stages in the process.