

Sustainable Sydney 2030
is a call to action.

A response to the
community's ideas
for creating a
better Sydney.



• SYDNEY

SYDNEY PEOPLE WANT A CITY...

“where people walk”

“with vibrant culture and entertainment”

“that tells its history”

“with well planned public transport”

“with walkable streets”

“that offers affordability and social diversity”

“which lifts the spirits”

“with well planned public transport”

“which celebrates outdoor life”

“that is respectful of diversity— cultural, religious, age, gender, sexuality and family structure”

“that provides public access to the harbour’s edge”

“where public spaces invite people to pause and contemplate— where public space invites humanity”

“with self contained communities”

“which is a place for people from all walks of life”

“which is not clogged by cars”



THE VISIONARY

Danish architect and urbanist Jan Gehl has focused on improving the quality of urban life for millions of people worldwide.



We have produced our ideas and vision of what Sydney could become—now it's up to the people of Sydney, and the actions of government.

Jan Gehl



The City of Sydney has great edges: its magnificent harbour, the green spread of the Domain and Royal Botanic Gardens. But where is its heart?

Its heart is congested, choking on the noise and fumes of the internal combustion engine. That is not healthy, either for the City, or for the citizens. So now that Gehl Architects has finished our Public Spaces, Public Life study, commissioned by the City of Sydney, we have one question for this City: what do you value more—your people, or your cars?

If you say people, then you need to unlock the centre of your City, so that it becomes a place people will want to go, and a place that welcomes everybody—workers, children, old people, students.

To do this, you need a long-term plan. Two great acts would symbolise this change in thinking: to demolish the Cahill Expressway and train station that sever the City from its harbour (the trains then go underground); and bury the Western Distributor whose spaghetti-tangle throttles Darling Harbour and cuts it off from the life-blood of the City.

All great cities have a heart. They attract people to their centres—not just to work and to live, but to shop or meet people, to dine, to visit a library or a gallery, to be part of the life of their City.



George Street Spine, concept by Jan Gehl, December 2007.

THE VISIONARY

Set your thinking for the long-term, and these tasks will not be impossible. Indeed, other harbour cities like Boston and San Francisco have already done it. There, all levels of government worked together to make it happen and here, there could be a similar recognition of the benefits that will flow for greater Sydney. Freed from these constricting bands, the City Centre will breathe again and be open to its harbour. It will be a welcoming place for people from all over greater Sydney.

Meanwhile, there are other steps to take. Sydney needs a coherent, attractive, walkable north-south link. All great cities have such a street—think of the Champs Elysees, or the Ramblas in Barcelona. It could be George Street, the City's most historic street, linking the two great doorsteps of Circular Quay and Central Railway. But who would dream of walking this great street, clogged as it is with buses and angry traffic?

But close it to vehicles, allowing only buses and bicycles, provide wider footpaths, canopies of trees, and three great public squares at Circular Quay, Town Hall and Central Station, and watch what will happen.

There will be human life along the whole length of it; people in cafes, people sitting on benches under the trees, people walking to their offices and shops.

George Street becomes the great organising spine, with a network of vibrant lanes like Angel Place and small plazas like Regimental Square running off it. It is edged with interesting small shops and bars and places for people to sit and rest.

Parking is confined to the city edges, freeing the city streets for cyclists, pedestrians and a light-rail system.

There is room, too, for great public art, for fountains and play-areas for children (who know how to use space spontaneously), and there are quiet places for people to sit and watch the world go by. No city should be "off-limits" to either the very young or the older people, and all cities should provide delight and surprise.

From Pitt Street Mall—which should be renamed Pitt Street Plaza to signal it is a place for people as well as shops—you can still see the curve of the Harbour Bridge, reminding you that you are in one of the world's great harbour cities. But there are other reminders of the reasons for Sydney's founding and the city should celebrate them.

Why not bring the Tank Stream to the surface in parts of the city? Purified, it could become a living symbol of the city of Sydney's commitment to be a "green" and healthy city. It would extend the harbour's reach into mid-town, cool the air and bring delight to the city streets.

Green spaces like Hyde Park should better connect to the city and to each other, with distinctive plantings around them and a more generous connection to their surrounding streets.

Sydney has a peculiar difficulty because so many arms of government have a finger in the city pie: the City of Sydney itself, and also the NSW Government through City Rail, State Rail, Sydney Ferries, Roads and Traffic Authority, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (running The Rocks and Darling Harbour and Barangaroo). Then there are the Royal Botanic

Gardens and Domain Trust and the Sydney Opera House Trust. All this in just a few square kilometres.

It makes it much harder to organise and co-ordinate the necessary improvements. But when the City commissioned our report, the Lord Mayor asked us to look at what should be done for Sydney's long-term improvement, not just at what was immediately possible. For no matter what their system of governance, all great cities need a focused, long-term vision, for without it they wither.

We were asked to see our Public Life, Public Spaces study as an integral part of the City's Sustainable Sydney 2030 project to make Sydney a more liveable, workable and sustainable city over the next generation.

We have produced our ideas, our vision of what Sydney could become. Now it is up to the people of Sydney, and the co-operative actions of government, what becomes of that vision. Who knows, with a new Prime Minister who is interested in the future of Australia's cities, you might get some Federal help to make it happen.

In Sydney, it seems to me, you sometimes say "This is too hard, it can't be done." In Copenhagen, too, 30 years ago, people of my own car-dominated city said much the same thing.

Today, it is a city of pedestrians and cyclists, a city where the people, and not the cars, come first. I hope that by 2030, Sydney, too, will be a city for its people.



We want a city of people; a city where people feel safe; a city that is interesting and lively.

Jan Gehl



Town Hall Square, concept by Tony Caro, March 2008





A Global City is more than a CBD

PATRICK FENSHAM

The economies of the world's great cities are more than a collection of office towers in so-called 'central business districts'. Think of London's financial district in the city, new office precinct at Canary Wharf, theatres in the West End, government activities at Westminster and arts venues and museums at South Bank.

Think of New York's Wall Street, Lower East Side, Greenwich Village and Times Square. Global cities contain diverse precincts and neighbourhoods connected by high quality and dense public transport. Their economies are underpinned by the creativity and constant innovation that occurs where skilled people mix in social, business and cultural activities.

The City of Sydney's Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision recognises these prerequisites for a successful city. Importantly, it also anticipates that Sydney's competitive advantage in the 21st century will derive from its world renowned liveability, and increasingly from the extent to which it is environmentally sustainable.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 has identified Five Big Moves to Transform the City that are underpinned by this understanding.

1 A revitalised City Centre at the heart of global Sydney.

The old 'CBD', north of Central Station, is re-cast as the 'City Centre', to recognise that a thriving economy needs a diversity of activities alongside pure business uses. Sufficient floorspace for business activities will be provided, but ground level cafes and shops to activate street life will be required in new developments. Distinctive retail, civic and entertainment districts will be promoted. Laneways and under-utilised areas will be activated with bars and cultural-activities. The great physical asset of the City Centre is its harbour. Bold proposals to remove the Cahill Expressway and bring the Western Distributor to ground, would allow the City Centre to be reconnected to the waterfront, thereby re-establishing Sydney's credentials as the Harbour City.

2 A liveable green network for walking and cycling

Around 50 per cent of trips by City residents are by walking and cycling, compared to an average of around 20 per cent across the metropolitan Sydney. The City's compact urban environment supports these already sustainable travel patterns, and these will be further strengthened by the proposed liveable green network.

Green corridors linking parks and reserves would be integrated with liveable streets, providing a separate, safe and pleasant way for pedestrians and cyclists to move across the city.

3 An integrated Inner Sydney transport network

The centres of other global cities are crisscrossed by fixed rail public transport (typically light rail or metro lines, like the London Underground).

In central areas the same size as the City of Sydney, Berlin has 220 kilometres of track, London 200 kilometres, Barcelona 140 kilometres, Toronto 50 kilometres and Singapore 35 kilometres. Notwithstanding its generally lower density, the Sydney figure of 23.5 kilometres of track appears far from world class in comparison.

Inner Sydney desperately needs a comprehensive and integrated light rail or metro rail network, which Sustainable Sydney 2030 proposes, to connect the City Centre with the surrounding villages, but also to connect the villages with each other.

Key corridors for early action are those connecting George Street through Redfern, to Green Square and Botany, along Regent Street and Botany Road, and between Surry Hills and Rosebery. The other key transport proposals are those which seek to 'protect the centre' from the noise, congestion and disruptive impact of vehicular traffic.

Travel by car to and through the City Centre can be minimised by a world class light rail loop, efficient and iconic interchange facilities for

moving between rail modes and complementary road and car parking management initiatives.

4 Activity Hubs as a focus for the City's village communities and transport

In Sydney, the city's economic, creative, entertainment and cultural activities are spread throughout its Villages. Education and health facilities are at the core of employment concentrations in Darlinghurst (around St Vincent's Hospital) and Camperdown (around the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and University of Sydney).

Surry Hills and Chippendale are buzzing with small, creative businesses in converted warehouses, galleries, and shops, amidst great residential diversity.

Kings Cross, Oxford Street, Newtown and Glebe have their own distinctive, small business cultures.

The 10 Activity Hubs proposed in Sustainable Sydney 2030 are about fostering these local economies, as well as providing a focus for the residential oriented community and cultural facilities and local retailing.

Each of the identified Hubs will be strengthened through local planning and business development initiatives.

5 Transformative development and sustainable renewal

Significant change and development has occurred in the last 20 years or so with, for example, Darling Harbour, Walsh Bay, Woolloomooloo, Pyrmont, and the old showgrounds at Moore Park all transformed in this period.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 lifts the sustainability bar for the next 20 years of renewal and redevelopment. Frasers Broadway, on the old CUB site, is proposing ambitious sustainability initiatives. Development at Green Square will make a significant contribution to affordable housing, and provide a shopping, business and cultural focus for communities south of Redfern.

Barangaroo, adjacent to the City Centre, is expected to be a world class district of economic activity, with a variety of large and small businesses, combined with cultural and leisure activities. The NSW Government has responsibility for this area.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 proposes that all these and other new developments should host 'green transformers'. These are gas-fired, low emissions electricity plants, initially gas-fired, which could also provide local area heating, cooling, water recycling and waste-to-energy capacity.

Ultimately, a network of green transformers would service most of the City's buildings. This is intended to not only significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also make the City energy self sufficient by 2030. The City's density should make this a viable proposition.

A key imperative is to integrate these renewal areas into the fabric of the city, so they contribute to overall liveability and sustainability. New streets with pedestrian and cycle ways should connect to existing streets, high quality public spaces should be a focus for activity, and a mix of premises should provide for a range of business types.

In the future, Sydney's globally oriented economy will be sustained by a strong City Centre and diverse precincts elsewhere hosting high quality, innovative businesses.

Liveability and sustainability will be fundamental to the City's competitive advantage.

Patrick Fensham, Director SGS Planning and Economics, led the consortium that worked with the City of Sydney's Strategy and Design team and across the organisation to create the 2030 Vision. He gives a snapshot of Sydney in 2008 and the changes proposed in a Green, Global and Connected City by 2030.

The City of Sydney cannot achieve the Vision on its own.



The success ingredient

MARIA ATKINSON

A share of the proposed actions need to be led by others.

The City of Sydney is committed to working with the State and Federal Governments, local Councils, community and business groups to implement the Vision over the long-term.

“Living in a sustainable city is a success ingredient. To be globally competitive we, business in particular, need diverse talented and inspired and informed people that are internationally connected and aware.

Image, image, image—facilities, social, affordability, lifestyle, diversity, clean and green city. So green innovation—we’ve got to adapt to the changes and the impacts of climate change. We need to reduce water usage. We need to maximise our water collection—no doubt, it rains a lot in Sydney. We need to have treatment and reuse of that water—we need to avoid waste. Transport congestion—we provide choices. The city is an ecosystem. We need to extend the boundaries, we need to manage it as a total catchment. We need to significantly improve the environmental performance of existing buildings and we need things to make it easier. Let’s all of us focus and go for best and let’s collaborate.

The Sustainable Sydney 2030 plan is one of the most exciting leadership activities I know.”

Maria Atkinson is Global Head of Sustainability, Lend Lease, and spoke at a Sydney 2030 Forum in 2007



Healing Sydney’s scars

KEN MAHER

“Great cities don’t just happen. They are the result of a sometimes serendipitous combination of design and culture. By design I refer to beautiful parks, fine streets and elegant architecture, and by culture I refer to the life of the city—street life, cafes, theatres, markets, events and interesting places to work and live.

Cities also need to be regularly nurtured, adjusted, and strategically guided towards the future. Most great cities are very public and vital places.

The new challenge facing all cities at this time is responding to the demands of climate change. If we are to manage our carbon emissions responsibly we will need to radically modify the way we live, the way we move around (by public and not private transport) and also change the way we think about the design of our cities.

The Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision is a timely and significant initiative. It takes the sustainability challenge head on, especially in the areas of energy and transport. It provides a framework for turning the balance away from cars in favour of pedestrians, away from a private in favour of a genuinely public city, and away from consumption towards responsibility in the use of limited resources. Through this Vision, Sydney can become an international exemplar, but it will only work if the leadership shown by the City Council is supported by all levels of government and the business community.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 proposes to reclaim Railway Square from the dominance of the car, giving over more space to pedestrians. George Street, which under Jan Gehl’s ideas would be a major pedestrian boulevard, can be continued past Railway Square to re-connect south of Cleveland Street and beyond to Green Square, while cross city traffic can be diverted below the square. A new green

gateway from the south can be established by a necklace of parks and squares surrounding the station precinct.

The really exciting opportunity at Central is healing the scar of the railway lines to the south of the station. By building over the rail lines, we can establish a new neighbourhood, where streets and parks can provide a public network that will provide much needed connections between Surry Hills, Chippendale and Redfern.

A mixed-use precinct with twice the capacity for housing and offices and shops at Barangaroo has the potential to create a more diversified community, evolving over time.

There is also the potential for a major venue immediately south of the station in this precinct—perhaps a site for an entertainment centre to liberate the current site in Haymarket for parkland or a new theatre.

A major public square on Cleveland Street at the George Street intersection can be a threshold to the central city from the south. Running along the west side of Prince Alfred Park, between Belmore Park and Elizabeth Street, and on to Hyde Park, a grand promenade for pedestrians and cyclists would provide a new alternative journey into the city.

If our city is to be more liveable, more amenable, and more engaging for its citizens, then we need to reclaim the public spaces, provide better connections between the parts, and “heal” the built fabric.”

Ken Maher is Chairman of Hassell, and Professor in Architecture at the University of New South Wales.

This article was published in the Sydney Morning Herald in 2008.



Looking after the cultural feeding grounds

NEIL ARMFIELD

“By 1970 I was 15, and venturing into town by myself. I found the delicious satisfactions of Rowe Street, down the hill from Richards and the old Theatre Royal, and I saved up my money from my Saturday morning job in the Burwood Paint and Paper store, and had my hair cut at Lloyd Lomas. I bought records at Rowe Street Records, cards at the little art shop next door. I bought my gear at Merivale and Mr John and the even more groovy In Shop around the corner. The details of that little street were everything, built up layer after layer across I guess, a century or so of use—and then it went. Along with the Theatre Royal, the Australia Hotel—concreted over by the banality of Seidler’s MLC Centre.

Australian writer Tim Winton asks us what are we afraid of, what are we hiding, covering up, in this very Australian desire to pull down, to rebuild, to obliterate our past. This obliteration goes way back of course, the harbour city, as the architect Peter Myers has pointed out, is the second city, built over that first harbour city of the Gadigal people. And of course, there’s money to be made. It has been the engine of growth in this town since 1788. But how do we factor into the equation the cultural and spiritual value of place?

As a kind of enlightenment dawned in the 80s and the 90s and beyond, some bold and generous advances were made. A string of remarkable performance and cultural venues has spread across the city, the Sydney Theatre, the MCA, Angel Place, the Museum of Sydney, the Conservatorium, Belvoir Street Theatre, the Carriageworks. We’re rather good at destinations, at monuments. But who’s looking after the breeding grounds, the grasses at the end of the creek, where you find the little fish feeding, the place from which a culture can grow with safety and with strength. This is what needs our attention now.

The Sydney Opera House was conceived around 1950 out of a conversation between Sir Eugène Goossens and Premier Joe Cahill. Between then and the opening in 1973 lay some 23 years. Between now and 2030 lie some 23 years. Clover Moore imagines Sydney in 2030 alive with artistic ferment. The work to be done in securing that place, in making these feeding grounds is, compared with the monumental grandeur of the Opera House, more subtle and detailed and complex. But when it’s done, it will be no less heroic.”

Neil Armfield is one of Australia’s leading Theatre Directors and Artistic Director of Belvoir Street Theatre and spoke at a 2030 City Talk in 2007.



Creative learning

ELIZABETH ANN MACGREGOR

“As cities all over the world are recognising the importance of the role of culture, what should Sydney do to secure a distinctive place as one of the world’s great cities in 2030?”

The creative aspect of the city will be fundamental to the prosperity of Sydney in 2030—not because of the need to attract tourists but because of the need to retain residents.

There is increasing recognition that creativity in business will be important in generating economic wealth in the future. At a time when an idea can spawn a billion dollar company, innovation and creativity is a bankable commodity. There is a strong correlation between arts training and creative thinking and innovation. As businesses look for ways to develop creativity in their workforce, the role of artists and arts organisations as a source of inspiration will be increasingly recognised.

Arts education plays a valuable role in developing the skills required by successful individuals in an increasingly sophisticated knowledge economy.

For Sydney to be a world class creative city in 2030, we need to invest strongly now in the institutions that can provide creative learning opportunities. Arts organisations can provide the stimulating atmosphere that helps to foster ideas that go on to become the innovations of the future. Sydney could become a global leader in creative learning for people of all ages.

By 2030 Sydney will need a thriving cultural sector, generating economic activity day and night along its harbour frontage. Recent developments along the waterfront have created more spaces for cultural activity as well as bringing economic activity to previously dormant parts of the city. Much more could be done to create the kind of ‘porous’ spaces that allow people to easily access a range of cultural experiences. By porous I mean spaces that open up more to the outside, that incorporate social activities,

that merge into public spaces where more informal kinds of activities can take place, breaking down the boundaries between the formal and informal. We have incredible artistic talent this country—we should use it. By 2030 I would love to see our artists getting the kind of public recognition we give to our sports stars and celebrities. Let’s get more artists to help visualise our public places and institutions—public and private.

Artists could make contributions to all kinds of things in the life of the city—if we treated them as critical contributors, I believe we would have a richer, more distinctive city. We need to provide our artists with places to live and work. We need to support them at all levels of their careers, not just when they are young. We can all point to examples of vibrant arts quarters in other cities, where the artists are key. Why should artists be forced out into the outlying suburbs to work as the price of real estate increases? Why can’t we invest in studio space as the British Lottery has just done in London? We need artists in the city itself, not just spearheading urban regeneration in outer suburbs.

To be a sustainable city, Sydney needs to be a city of ideas as well as a city of pleasure. To be sustainable, Sydney will need to attract the kind of educated and creative workforce that will drive the economy. We don’t want to live in a city of commuters—we need to create a city with and for artists and creative people of all kinds. Sydney should be a world leader in a new kind of cultural investment—one that has long term objectives, not short term fixes. A city that fosters creative learning and involves artists at the core of its activities is a city that looks to the future. And who knows, by 2030, we may just have the edge over London.”

Elizabeth Ann MacGregor is Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art and spoke at a 2030 City Talk in 2007.