

**ITEM 6. CHINATOWN PUBLIC DOMAIN PLAN****FILE NO: S076637****SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval for the exhibition of the draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan.

The draft Chinatown Public Domain Study was received and noted by Council on 1 June 2009, with recommendations to conduct community consultation and prepare an implementation plan. The draft Chinatown Public Domain Study and recommendations of Council from 1 June 2009 have been incorporated into the draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan.

The City engaged landscape architects Spackman Mossop Michaels to test the guiding directions of the draft Chinatown Public Domain Study, to consult with the community and to produce a plan that includes a preliminary feasibility and implementation study for Chinatown. Spackman Mossop Michaels have developed a series of projects that will help deliver the guiding directions of the draft Chinatown Public Domain Study. The projects have been prioritised, weighing up the greatest strategic gain, community desires and achievability.

It is recommended that the draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan be placed on public exhibition for a period of three weeks. The plan will then be formally presented to Council for adoption.

The recommendations of this study have been assessed for their alignment with the City's strategic directions and projects. Priorities for implementation have been identified to assist the City in the formulation of future capital works budgets.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 sets forward a vision to improve the pedestrian environment of our City and create a "Lively Engaging City Centre". The delivery of the improvements in Chinatown will deliver on this vision.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is resolved that Council approve the public exhibition of the draft Chinatown Public Plan, as shown at Attachment B to the subject report, for a period of three weeks.

**ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A:** Resolution of Council – 1 June 2009

**Attachment B:** Draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan

**Attachment C:** Consultation Reports – Elton Consulting

- Chinatown Community Engagement Workshop 1 – 10 November 2009

- Chinatown Street Intercept Survey – Outcomes Report
- Chinatown Community Engagement Workshop 2 – 9 February 2010

**Attachment D:** Chinatown Public Domain Study – Existing Conditions Report by ARUP

**Attachment E:** Chinatown Public Art – Future Curatorial Directions

**BACKGROUND**

1. Chinatown is a distinctive and significant area within the City of Sydney. It has been the continual focus of the Chinese community in Sydney since the nineteenth century. It is a highly valued part of greater Sydney. It is currently a premier tourist destination Australia-wide for domestic and overseas visitors.
2. Chinatown was the subject of public domain upgrades in 1997-1998, focused mainly on Dixon Street, Sussex Street and Little Hay Street.
3. The draft Chinatown Public Domain Study was received and noted by Council on 1 June 2009 (refer Attachment A). The recommendations of Council have been adopted as reported below.
4. The City engaged Spackman Mossop Michaels, with sub consultations Tony Caro Architecture, Arup and Elton Consulting, to test the guiding directions of the draft Chinatown Public Domain Study, consult with the community and create a Public Domain Plan, and test feasibility and implementation of the plan for Chinatown.
5. This report outlines the findings of stakeholder consultation and the draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan.
6. A series of projects have been developed to help deliver the guiding directions of the Draft Chinatown Public Domain Study. The project team have also prioritised the projects, weighing up greatest strategic gain, community desires and achievability (refer Attachment B).
7. This study focuses on the area traditionally understood as "Chinatown" within this larger area. This is the area between Liverpool Street George Street, Harbour Street and Quay Street.
8. In parallel with the Chinatown Public Domain Plan, Kimber Lane, Factory Street and Little Hay Street (subject of a separate report to Council) have been identified as 'Early Start Projects' to revitalise Chinatown.

**Guiding Directions**

9. As reported in the draft Chinatown Public Domain Study, the Plan has four guiding directions:
  - (a) Strengthening Haymarket – drawing more people to the area and increasing street activity;
  - (b) Fostering the mix of traditional and contemporary – through new public art projects, better settings for local icons, and preserving and improving street character;
  - (c) Facilitating festivals and events – options for broadening the Chinatown events calendar, and ways to expand street markets; and
  - (d) Improving streets for walking, cycling and accessibility – better pedestrian and cycling access and greater use of laneway spaces, plus new street trees, furniture, paving and lighting to improve safety.

**Winning Back Public Space to Protect the Core**

10. Dixon Street is recognised as the ‘heart’ of Chinatown and has been the focus of public life in Chinatown with outdoor dining, public resting / seating and Chinatown Night Markets all located in the street.
11. At the first community workshop, while the community held it in high regard and noted the desire for more streets like Dixon Street, it was also noted as a highly congested and sometimes uncomfortable place to be due to the pressure put on it, with high levels of activity concentrated in the relatively short and narrow street.
12. The recommended strategy for improving the public domain in Chinatown is to win back more public spaces for public life and to protect the heart, or core, of Chinatown around Dixon Street, while improving the connections between the key streets. The introduction of more pedestrianised spaces in Chinatown will relieve the pressure on Dixon Street which is currently the only pedestrianised street in Chinatown.
13. In order to create more formalised pedestrian-priority space in Chinatown, the existing pattern of traffic usage must be reconfigured.
14. One of the key recommendations is to take out ‘through traffic’ from Hay Street and much of Thomas Street to win back a significant amount of space for pedestrians in the heart of Chinatown, where the conflict between pedestrian activity and traffic is currently at its most acute.
15. The ‘edge’ streets of Chinatown such as Quay Street, Dixon Street North and Valentine Street are also recommended for improvements, as they provide vital links into Chinatown.
16. In line with the City’s broader Laneway Strategy, the laneways of Chinatown such as Douglass Street and Lane and Egar Street and Lane have been recommended as streets for further activation and improved pedestrian amenity.
17. This study proposes two types of projects to improve Chinatown’s public domain:
  - (a) Chinatown-wide ‘Overlay’ Projects – that aim to improve specific aspects of the public domain experience throughout the entire study area; and
  - (b) Place-specific Upgrade Projects – that aim to make physical improvements to particular parts of Chinatown. These projects focus on discrete areas of Chinatown, and can be implemented independently of one another.
18. The primary objectives that direct these projects are to:
  - (a) increase the amount of public space available to pedestrians and cyclists;
  - (b) improve the quality of the public domain experience;
  - (c) create better pedestrian and cycle connections between Chinatown and the surrounding urban areas; and
  - (d) create distinctive public spaces that reinforce and enhance the unique characteristics of the Chinatown urban experience.

### Overlay Projects

19. The special character of the public domain of Chinatown comes from its vibrant shop fronts, neon lights and distinctive signage. These characteristics should be encouraged and allowed to thrive in Chinatown. The public domain should not be overly 'themed' but should sit as a 'back drop' for improved public life in Chinatown and allow for users of Chinatown to 'enliven' the spaces.
20. Whilst recognising Chinatown's unique character and the community's aspirations to retain Chinatown's special characters, the project team has set out the following design objectives for the introduction of 'overlays' on the Sydney Streets Design Codes (City Centre Palette):
  - (a) **Lighting** – Improve overall public lighting in Chinatown while retaining and considering existing contributing characteristics such as the decorative art lighting, neon signage, and lights and vibrant shop frontages;
  - (b) **Materials Overlay** – Upgrade the public domain paving in accordance with the City's standards and introduce a layer of overlays such as material demarcation at the entrances of Chinatown's arcades to improve wayfinding in Chinatown;
  - (c) **Furniture and Fixtures** – Where possible, additional seating should be introduced in the street improvements. Furniture and fixtures should be selected in accordance to the City's palette, with allowance for custom design in selected 'special areas' or the 'core of Chinatown';
  - (d) **Street Tree Overlay** – To increase tree plantings that reinforce Chinatown as a distinctive place in the City and provide for shade in summer and sunlight in winter. The Chinatown Public Domain Plan proposes extensive footpath widening and new public spaces that would allow for extensive street tree plantings previously not possible due to constraints in footpath spaces. An update of the Street Tree Master Plan should be conducted to respond to the opportunities created by the potential improvements; and
  - (e) **Water Sensitive Urban Design** – With each street upgrades in Chinatown, stormwater reuse should be considered. The project team has also identified Quay Street and the Entertainment Forecourt as potential stormwater retention sites.

### Place Specific Upgrades Projects

21. The project team have developed a series of projects that will help deliver the guiding directions of the study. These projects have been proposed as a series of incremental improvements to 'win back public space' for the community and visitors of Chinatown. Proposed changes to streets are as follows:
  - (a) **Sussex Street** – To create more pedestrian spaces along Sussex Street while maintain provisions for loading and some on-street parking;
  - (b) **Hay Street** – Conversion to a plaza (mall) to improve pedestrian connection between Chinatown 'core' and 'south', to activate Paddy's Market edge and create space for large events in the heart of Chinatown;

- (c) **Harbour Street** – Create a ‘welcome mat’ and improve connection between Chinatown and the Entertainment Centre / Darling Harbour, extending the space for large events and additional street markets, while maintaining limited event access to the Entertainment Centre and hotel;
- (d) **Thomas Street** – Create a new meeting and gathering space and increase amount of pedestrian priority space in the south of Chinatown;
- (e) **Quay Street** – Create a new boulevard entry into Chinatown and improve the connection to Chinatown from Central/Railway Square and provide for better connections to adjacent major development sites and the surrounding university developments;
- (f) **Goulburn Street** – To improve connections between the Chinatown ‘core’ and Chinatown ‘north’;
- (g) **Ultimo Road** – To deliver on the City’s Cycle Action Plan and provide a dedicated cycle path in the core of Chinatown and to upgrade and improve the character of the street;
- (h) **Valentine Street** – To improve street quality and emphasise entry into Chinatown via George Street while maintaining the vista to the church on George Street;
- (i) **Douglass Street and Lane and Eagar Street and Lane** – To activate laneways and contribute to the City’s Laneways Revitalisation; and
- (j) **Dixon Street** – To respond to community’s concerns over the quality and overshadowing of Dixon Street (south), to improve the quality of the public domain in Dixon Street (north) and to encourage increased pedestrian flow and activity (between the north and south).

### Priorities of Projects

22. The projects have been prioritised with the following parameters:
- (a) percentage gain of public space;
  - (b) strategic potential of project;
  - (c) buildability (ease);
  - (d) community preference (based on Community Workshop 2 – refer to Public Consultation section of report);
  - (e) Council authority over land; and
  - (f) preliminary estimated costs.
23. The proposed projects, taking into consideration the community’s preference from Community Workshop 2, in order of their recommended priority are:
- (a) Hay Street;
  - (b) Thomas Street;

- (c) Dixon Street (North and South);
- (d) Sussex Street;
- (e) Harbour Street;
- (f) Quay Street;
- (g) Ultimo Road;
- (h) Douglass Street and Lane / Eagar Street and Lane;
- (i) Valentine Street; and
- (j) Goulburn Street.

### Public Art

24. A review and audit of public art has been completed, with Aaron Seeto, Gallery 4A as the consultant. The development of the draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan has been done in parallel and consultation with the public art audit and review. It is anticipated that on selected sites, new public art will be introduced to further add to the character of Chinatown (refer Attachment E for Future Curatorial Directions & Recommendations).
25. The Chinatown Public Art Plan will be developed around the following concepts:
  - (a) **A conversation with the precinct** – highlighting the layered density of textures;
  - (b) **Local culture and social history** – an invitation to engage with ideas as people traverse Chinatown. Some of these projects might develop from community collaboration and involvement;
  - (c) **The symbolic heart** – building upon the existing cluster of public art projects surrounding Dixon and Sussex Street;
  - (d) **Strengthening the edges** – acknowledging the different entry points into the precinct and the cultural and social activity occurring in these places; and
  - (e) **Talking about Public Art** – encouraging discussion and engagement with public art through public programs and information delivered through talks and various technology platforms.

### Early Start Projects – Kimber Lane, Factory Street and Little Hay Street

26. Kimber Lane, Factory Street and Little Hay Street form a network of streets in the 'core' of Chinatown, together with Dixon Street and Sussex Street. Kimber Lane, Factory Street and Little Hay Street have been identified as 'Early Start Projects' to revitalise Chinatown. The proposed improvements to Little Hay Street, Factory Street and Kimber Lane are the subject of separate report to Council, and mark the first projects ahead of the finalisation of this broader draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan. The projects have been developed in parallel and consultation with the draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan.

### Haymarket Tourist Information Kiosk

27. On 7 December 2009, Council endorsed the scope of work and the concept plan for the conversion of the existing seating pavilion at the corner of Dixon Street and Goulburn Street into a tourist information kiosk, operating 8.30am to 6pm daily. A development application has been submitted to Council, and will be the subject of a future report to Council.

### KEY IMPLICATIONS

#### Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

28. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress.
- (a) Direction 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City - considers Sydney's role as Australia's premier international tourism and business gateway. It outlines the steps needed to enhance Sydney's tourism infrastructure and branding, boost innovation, reverse a lack of investment in strategic economic infrastructure, strengthen globally competitive clusters and accelerate investment in green economy and technologies.
  - (b) Direction 4 - A City of Pedestrians and Cyclists - outlines actions that will make walking and cycling an easy option for residents and visitors in our City. It recognises the importance of these modes to improve the health and environmental sustainability of our City.
  - (c) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre - envisages a city where the Centre is opened and re-connected to the water, where the City Centre is reclaimed from traffic, where there are more, and better quality open spaces for people to linger, and where 'fine grain' character such as small retail and service spaces is increased.
  - (d) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Community and Economies - recognises and seeks to build on our diverse City communities with diverse lifestyles, interests and needs – each with an important economic and employment role.

#### Organisational Impact

29. No impact on staffing, processes and other internal impacts to the City is expected. Maintenance costs may shift from roadways to footways. Maintenance and care will be required for any 'special' elements in the public domain such as lighting and public art.

#### Social / Cultural / Community

30. The draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan propose projects that will benefit residents, businesses and visitors to the City by increasing the quality and quantity of public space and improving the pedestrian amenity in Chinatown.

#### Environmental

31. The draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan proposes water sensitive urban design initiatives for the improvements of the streets.

**Economic**

32. The improvements proposed for Chinatown will have a positive economic impact and encourage further street activation and outdoor dining.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

33. The draft Corporate Plan includes a 2010/11 budget for the Chinatown Improvements of \$3.5 million and, subsequently, \$5.65 million for 2011/2013.
34. The draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan recommends a series of projects and their priorities that could guide future budget allocations for improvements to Chinatown for at least the next 10 years. It is likely that to implement one or two of the priority projects, additional budget allocations in 2011 – 2013 will be required.
35. The 'Early Start Projects' are also funded from this Capital Works Budget Allocation.

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

36. An extensive community consultation process was conducted and included the following:
- (a) **27 July 2009 Community Forum Update** – The draft Chinatown Public Domain Study was presented at the CBD forum.
  - (b) **30 October 2009 Haymarket Chinatown roundtable with the Lord Mayor** – Key business, cultural and community leaders as well as representatives from university groups were invited to the roundtable to discuss future directions and issues in Chinatown. Meeting notes were recorded and can be found in appendix 1 of attachment B.
  - (c) **10 November 2009 Community Workshop 1** – The aim of the workshop was to discuss the guiding directions of the draft Chinatown Public Domain Study and also raise any key issues (likes and dislikes) of Chinatown. The attendees strongly endorsed the guiding directions for Chinatown Public Domain Study. In particular, support was indicated for improvements to Chinatown including:
    - (i) a more walkable precinct with more seating and the feel and energy of Dixon Street (south) expanded to other areas;
    - (ii) a balance in design approach between the traditional and contemporary; and
    - (iii) more markets, street festivals and events.

Attendees included residents, business / property owners, community / cultural group representatives, representatives from universities, representatives from SHFA, Powerhouse, Market City and Access Australia. A report on the findings of the community workshop can be found in Attachment C.

- (d) **Street Survey** – Chinatown has high levels of pedestrian activity throughout the day and at night. The study team conducted street surveys in Chinatown and found that 78% of the people surveyed arrived by foot or by public transport. When asked about what people disliked about Chinatown, 'Traffic Management' was rated highly with a report of Jay-walking as a problem in the area. When asked to rate the importance of future improvements, 'More car free streets' was rated the highest followed by 'More places to sit and rest'. A report on the findings of the street survey can be found in Attachment C.
- (e) **9 February 2010 Community Workshop 2** – The project team presented a series of projects that, carried out incrementally, would together deliver on the guiding directions supported by the community. Participants strongly engaged with project discussions and seemed to be generally supportive of the improvements being proposed in Chinatown. Participants were invited to prioritise the projects according to their preference. The projects according to the community's preference during the workshop were as follows:
- (i) Dixon Street (North)<sup>1</sup>;
  - (ii) Hay Street;
  - (iii) Dixon Street (South)<sup>1</sup>;
  - (iv) Thomas Street;
  - (v) Harbour Street;
  - (vi) Quay Street;
  - (vii) Goulburn Street;
  - (viii) Ultimo Road;
  - (ix) Sussex Street;
  - (x) Douglass Street, Lane / Eagar Street and Lane; and
  - (xi) Valentine Street<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Note: Combined to one project in recommended project priorities

<sup>2</sup> Note: Project developed after 2<sup>nd</sup> community workshop, hence not prioritised by the community.

Participants were also presented an update on the Chinatown Visitor's Kiosk, the 'Early Start Projects' and the Public Art Audit of Chinatown. Attendees included residents, business / property owners, community / cultural group representatives, representatives from universities, representatives from Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) and Market City. A report on the findings of the community workshop can be found in Attachment C.

37. The City has begun initial consultations on the plans for Chinatown with SHFA. SHFA has indicated that the proposals are not in conflict with SHFA's aspirations for Chinatown and its surrounding areas.

38. SHFA has initiated the potential handover of Dixon Street North to the City; City Property is managing the negotiations.
39. It is proposed that the draft Chinatown Public Domain Plan be placed on exhibition for a period of three weeks to give the community the opportunity to give feedback prior to Council adoption. All submissions received will be reported back to Council prior to the adoption of the Plan. City staff will also be available on a designated day during the exhibition period at the Haymarket library to provide extra information on projects.
40. It is anticipated that further consultation with key stakeholders and the community will take place during the design development of individual project components of the Plan as per standard City practice.

**MICHAEL HARRISON**

Director City Strategy and Design

Bridget Smyth, Design Director

Pauline Chan, Urban Designer