

CITY OF SYDNEY PLANNING

City of Sydney in 2050

The City of Sydney (the City) has been engaging with residents, businesses, visitors and stakeholders as it shapes its long-term future plans for Sydney.

Engaging with business is an essential input to this process, given the strategic and essential nature of the economic role Sydney plays, both for the State but also the nation.

In keeping with the City's commitment to engagement and innovation, a dynamic workshop for businesses was held in early May to explore key themes and aspirations the many businesses of the City have for the future.

The City invited over 100 small and medium businesses to attend a half-day workshop, where three challenging presenters explored key issues and opportunities for the future and participants worked in small groups to answer a number of questions.

RPS, a leading engagement and communications consultancy, facilitated the event and with the City's team, designed the activities. These consisted of:

- Big picture visioning of what Sydney would look
- Aspirational imagining of what Sydney will be known for
- Descriptions of the customers that will be in Sydney in 2050.

These activities were undertaken at tables, with a mix of participants across all business types.

Following a short break, participants then sat in groups of the type of business that best represented them, and worked through a series of questions relating to realising the visions they had imagined and identifying the key challenges that would need to be overcome for each of the main themes (Main Streets, Sydney and the world stage and Customers)

The business sectors were:

- Retail
- Property
- Finance and Services
- Tech start-ups
- Tourism and Hospitality
- Creative
- Social enterprise
- Education
- Government
- Other

This succinct report captures the major themes and issues identified on the day, for the City to use as another input to future planning and for participants and stakeholders to have as a record of their participation.

What will Sydney look like?

When asked what Sydney will look like in 2050, there were a range of key themes surrounding transport, density, retail and the environment.

There are thoughts that the population of Sydney will expand, calling for more shared working, retail and communal areas. At the same time, it was discussed that advances and accessibility in technology will allow for more flexible work arrangements – dispersing the business traffic out of the city centre.

Further advances in technology will impact the transport industry with less, cleaner or autonomous cars on the road – suggesting that Sydney’s roads will be changing, and the city will become more pedestrian friendly.

Online retail will call for experiential retail in the real world, and more temporary stores and pop-ups will be necessary. It was noted by participants that there will be a “major shift in consumer behaviour related to sustainability”, with trends in “local, second-hand and recycled goods”.

Sydney’s nightlife will be either affected or supported by regulation. It was discussed that Sydney would have more 24/7 availability to align more closely with other global cities. Our nightlife would be “more immersive, inclusive and culturally relevant”.

Shared working spaces was a consistent and recurring theme, influenced by the need for connection and flexibility. Participants voiced that Sydney in 2050 should be focussed on the environment and green spaces.

The following word cloud captures the key words participants used on the day:



What will Sydney be known for?

The participants overwhelmingly agree that in 2050, Sydney will be known for lifestyle, diversity, opportunities, environment and safety.

Lifestyle attributes include quality of life, work-life balance, relaxation areas such as beaches, the city's beauty and liveability.

Participants said that Sydney would be known for multiculturalism, history and diversity. The future of Sydney could be "designed to honour and enjoy cultural diversity and diverse experience".

Opportunities will be abundant in 2050 – for education, jobs, innovation and the overall economy.

The environment, climate and weather will all be attractors for Sydney as it is a "coastal city" and considered "more temperate". Sydney will also be known for safety, security and political stability.

In 2050, Sydney will be influenced by and more connected with Asian markets than ever before. The participants foresee Sydney as being populated by a diverse range of people and visited by tourists, students and short-stay travellers.

Entrepreneurs will be drawn to start businesses in Sydney because of access to technology, market and Government support.



Who will be the customers of Sydney?

Participants believe that the customers of Sydney in 2050 will include a well-informed global market who have an “increased consciousness of environment”.

Customers who will be seeking meaningful, intimate and bespoke retail experiences.

Opportunities for businesses will include increasing local focus, ability to sell globally, opportunities for shared resources and spaces, a highly skilled workforce and possible incentives from sectors and government.

Threats for businesses may include increased bureaucracy, rising costs, climate risks, misuse of data and international competition. Changes in technology are both an opportunity and threat depending on how they are managed.



Sector feedback - overview

Several key themes emerged consistently across all sectors. These included:

Technology – reliable, high speed internet and access to nimble, fit for purpose technology. Automation, Artificial Intelligence and Augmented reality all featured prominently across all sectors. Customer experience and engagement across all platforms and elevating the customer experience through technology were both suggested. These were seen as opportunities to realise the vision but also identified as potential challenges if they were not enabled, resourced, supported and accessible

Connectivity – human experiences, people to people connections were identified consistently across all sectors. These were seen to be essential for successful business experiences but more importantly to well-being for individuals and the community as a whole. Suggestions included co-working spaces, creating

neighbourhoods, closing the CBD on Sundays, utilising under-utilised spaces and places for culture and creativity, evolving and elevating the customer experience but also harnessing the goodwill of people for social good

Public open space – human centric design, lighting, safety and security were all identified multiple times across sectors as an essential element of our future vision for the city. Places to meet, share ideas, hubs, creativity places and events, freeing up public space so it can be used more by people. The Tourism and Hospitality sector proposed viewing the harbour as a Main Street in 2050 – an idea that opens up suite of possibilities and opportunities

Regulation – almost universally every sector identified that regulation was needed as an enabler but was also one of the most significant challenges. Over-regulation, restrictive regulation and regulation that favoured the few over the many. While the late-night economy dominated most comments (where Sydney is not seen as a 24/7 city because of restrictions on night entertainment) regulation was identified as an issue for Finance and Services, Creative, Tourism and Hospitality, Property, Education and Government

Transport – clean, prompt, accessible transport and the embrace of new advances – hover vehicles, on demand – is seen as a major aspiration and challenge. There was a strong emphasis on a walkable city and a suggestion for a ‘Parking Day’ – where you surrendered your car parking spot.

Sustainability – a city with a strong beating green heart, sustainable in all senses of the word, emerged as an aspiration for nearly every sector. Green open spaces but sustainability in energy, transport, design, materials were all seen as an essential part of a vision for the future. Establishing Sydney as a leader in sustainability was suggested more than once

Social outcomes – while the Social Enterprise sector suggested direct social outcomes and engagement as a vision for the future, it was clear that other sectors also aspired to human connections that occurred as a social good for the community as a whole and not just for individuals. Collaboration, co-working, partnerships, engagement were all proposed as necessary elements of a future that will live up to aspirations

Diversity – in all its forms. One suggestion was for Sydney’s brand to be the Welcome City where strangers and visitors are warmly welcomed, supported, connected with others in a tangible, practical way. There was strong support for maintaining a city of diversity in language, culture, but also economic diversity where everyone felt supported and part of something – ‘sense of community, village, belonging, sharing, caring, central, social’

Access – to technology, events, activities, business, jobs, transport, open space, opportunities, support – access was essential. There was almost an underlying theme of creating a ‘can-do’ framework so that the city becomes a place that whatever it is you want to do, you can easily, simply and affordably realise that in some form or other.

When separated into their relevant sectors, the participants envision the future being supported by providing opportunity and support, embracing diversity, celebrating culture, creating virtual and physical meeting spaces and “integrating AI in authentic and personalised experiences”. It was further identified that it would be beneficial to “foster communication between key industry leaders and the government to [improve] policy making”.

The key challenges identified by participants for their sectors included the online market, including the global competition and mobility it brings, as well as overhead costs of physical businesses and overall rising costs, and increasing customer expectations. Challenges are also seen for obtaining and retaining talent. The desire for building a 24/7 city raised challenges about the change in the way business, transport and hospitality will be managed. Further challenges were recognised about both physical and data security for customers and businesses.

Each sector’s feedback is summarised below, with the full data available in the Appendices. Please note that each group set its own pace for conversations and some clearly spent more time on discussing some questions than others:

Each sector's feedback

Table 1: Feedback by theme for each sector

Main streets	Sydney and the world stage	Customers
Retail: realising the vision		
Rent and space optimisation essential	Diversity Better and faster connected/access/delivery	Evolving and elevating the customer at each touch point
Relevancy – culturally, brand values and in place design		Redesigning how customers interact across online channels
Tangibility around humanising brands, value, experience		Virtual spaces, engaging across platforms
		Integrating AI in authentic and personalised experiences
Retail - challenges		
Online, global competition Accessibility and communication – cutting through a cluttered environment Expectations Flexibility and responsiveness Physical challenges for changing, fewer products,	Languages and communication Connectivity – internet Competition in terms of delivery, shipping, import/export We are slow and expensive!	Seamless online and offline journey, which is personalised and has authenticity – a big ask Evolving needs and expectations Timing – I want it/need it now Transparency, privacy, data, security and all this implies
Sector: Property realising the vision		
Autonomous vehicles and diverse mobility – need to set up new systems well		Industry primed to develop much more flexible, sophisticated solutions
Seamless digital interactions with humans		Property as a service
Free up public space		Emergence of a more open real estate market
Diversity in facades		Places, less data asymmetry including blockchain
Property - challenges		
Synchronised transportation		Lack of available property data
Activating 24/7 precincts		Breaking down information symmetry
Opening up the vertical plane		Revamping of property law, teasing – to allow greater flexibility of property solutions to tenants
Quality of densification; surveillance and privacy		
Finance and services – realising the vision		
	Foster communication between key industry leaders and govt for better policy (investment regulations)	Tax incentives
	Create more connections between universities and the business world (commercialise research, support incubators/business accelerators)	Facilitate intercultural events (bilateral chamber of commerce)

Main streets	Sydney and the world stage	Customers
	Expand role of City Mayor	Govt programs/events to connect immigrants with local businesses
Finance and services - challenges		
	Quality of life (security, leisure, education, environment)	Investment environment
	Immigration and global mobility	Key regulations
	Investment attractiveness	Tailor your offering to global market
		Language/cultural barriers
Tech start-ups – realising the vision		
WIFI available on streets/parks	Environmental/clean tech!	Focus on emerging industries – innovation support
Collect public data to improve public service – transport, security	Grants, investment, taxation, stock options	Personalisation – product and technology
Open data for business	Good governance/business case cost and benefit	Open space/community to encourage human interaction
Heatmap how people commute to design city and transport	Smart city	Vertical space for retail and transport
	Pontoons to land spacecraft – aerospace, connecting	
	Access to capital, talent	
Tech start-ups - challenges		
Lighting	Talent – obtaining and finding	Global customers
Bandwidth	Internet speed/infrastructure	Selling online (global)
Wayfinding (physical and digital)	Better bridges between government education and research and tech and commercialisation	Ideas that might happen cost – risks need to be taken
Mainly WIFI public and private, internet of things	Costs – living, lifestyle, tech, connectivity	Cyber, quantum tech may be the future (Moor's Law seems to have run its course)
Community buildings/spaces	Transport	Customers want less complex, safer products, creative realistic ideas, true data
	Social network	Bandwidth, quality, speed
Tourism and Hospitality – realising the vision		
Lively – cultural entities, diversity, walkability, keeping the buzz of vibrancy and keeping residents happy	24 hour city	Technology enabling experiences – AI and AR
Harbour (water) as a main street!	Supportive regulation (aligned level of govt; DAs; trial periods; licensing conditions; education)	Tourist experience – story telling
Tourism attraction – public/private access for boats/wharves, transport	Culture and creative – global, inclusive	City residents – authenticity
Transport – late night options, cars/kerbside access	Under-utilised spaces used for culture and creativity with hospitality to support	24 hour city – safe, transport, regulation to support integrated into planning
	Transport	

Main streets	Sydney and the world stage	Customers
Governance		
Tourism and Hospitality - challenges		
Services not matching the businesses, 24 hr city -need a mindset change	Acoustics – planning, residential attenuated to external noise	The lounge room – UberEats, Netflix
Onerous regulatory environment – costs time, money	Government leadership narrative is negative – needs to change	Affordability – transport, food and beverage, staffing, AI and AR
Tension between communities and commercial	Collaboration between state, local govt and industry	Regulation
Affordability of main streets - rents Conflict of interests between landlords and tenants	Advocacy for business	Automation – human interaction in a digitised environment
		AI/AR experiences seamlessly integrating
Creative – realising the vision		
Design thinking	Close the CBD to traffic on a Sunday, have a massive block party	Enjoy the experience – unique and bespoke
Automation will remove much of the mundane, freeing up individuals to be more creative	Activate the city parks with creativity	Associate value to creative experience
All strategy is creative!	Data collection opportunities	Creativity connects – it is not alone; enabled by technology
		Activity city parks with creativity, drop in and free
		Car free streets
		Parking Day – take back your car spot
Creative - challenges		
Value of creative content – how to positively impact your business	Red tape	Value creativity and fund it
Stigma to creativity	Think bigger	Not just major festivals and events – have more regular activations
Need for education about creative content		Red tape
Speed of change – skills changing month to month		Congestion
		No network/connected resource for creative activities to encourage participation
Social enterprise – realising the vision		
Community interaction, connection/cultural connection, support	World leaders in renewables, energy, resources	Attract people who want to make a difference
Alternative business models	Sustainability – housing, events, infrastructure, lowest carbon footprint events, infrastructure, transport	Customers part of the solution/want to act
Affordability/accessibility	Connecting people to address social issues	Creating presence, visibility, trust
Partnerships and collaboration – space sharing, complimentary collaboration	Ongoing social and cultural experiences impact across Sydney all year round	Education and action

Main streets	Sydney and the world stage	Customers
Enabler for commercial/CSR – opportunities for market	Increase opportunities for partnerships and shared spaces between social enterprises, corporate and govt	Reuse, recycle, restore promotional materials
Platform to collaborate, connect, harness the goodwill of community with social enterprise		Active programs, more channels of engagement
		Support of digital innovation
Social enterprise – challenges		
Creating neighbourhoods	How to attract globally to Sydney to minimise footprint	Connecting people to issues and being active in solutions
Affordability/access		Fake industries in social enterprise – indigenous
Developing partnerships, business models		Building trust in market/products
Visibility		Engagement – govt, customers, business
Creating opportunities to access markets – ie tourism		Education
Education – realising the vision		
Leaders in innovation and technology startups, world class facilities	Welcoming diversity	Virtual education in real time/real people
Attract overseas students, entrepreneurs, STEM	Celebrating heritage	Financing technology
Culture of welcome to new businesses, students, new comers	Distinguish ourselves – focus on Aboriginal heritage to distinguish us in global world	Maintain sustainability
Places to meet, share ideas	Lifestyle -laid back, happy -maintain in face of rapid change	Flexibility in delivery/connection to learning
Cultural hubs	Beautiful city – maintain sandstone, greener city	Lifelong learning, skills, relearning
Transport		Visual technology
Develop and maintain relevant skills		AI – retrain people in new fields
Sense of community, village, belonging, sharing, caring, central, social		
Education – challenges		
Transient populations	Competitive markets – Melbourne vs Sydney	Retrain teachers in technology/STEM
Language and cultural barriers	Rate of change and resistance to it	Cost of education
Lack of sense of belonging	Regulations inhibiting change	Cost of living/accommodation
Way to welcome to Sydney	Adaptation, financing, transport	Ambiguity re future employment
		Need world class technology
		Slow internet
		Language – overseas students
Government – realising the vision		

Main streets	Sydney and the world stage	Customers
Public domain – strong heartbeat, lighting (smart), colour, pedestrians, CCTV, amenity	City of culture and lifestyle	Citizen juries – democratisation of citizens
Smart cities – 5g, on demand travel, hover lights, hovercraft transport	City that is safe, secure, well-designed	Sydney brand – global city
Less visual clutter	Strong environmental credentials	Eliminate/reduce inequality
Human scale – open space, green spaces, natural environment	Strong visitor economy that supports various sectors	Encourage and support diverse business group
Experience	24/7 city that is people-friendly, inspiring, encourages creativity	Responsive, agile, transparent and connecting
Green	Continue to deliver safe city – enviro urban night life	Brand Sydney – attracting talent, global businesses
Safety	Celebrating of culture	Access to equal opportunity
Government - challenges		
Relevance of main street in 2050	Inequality arising from globalisation	Government layers
Urban heat	Reputation of Sydney as a 'closed' city for night life and culture (ie not global)	Managing growth and inequality
	Hyper competition from other global cities	Population growth
	Refugees from climate change, economics and war	Housing affordability
	Needing to process/manage waste	Protecting character
	Distrust in government	Brain drains
	Technology and currency disruption	
	Privacy and security	
Other – realising the vision		
Community facilities	Clear identity beyond tourism	Diversity, inclusiveness and tolerance
	STEM	Climate- natural beauty, environment, bridge, Opera House, beaches, lifestyle
	Development nexus for new population/transport/tech	Talent access – work life balance, innovate
	Carbon neutral	Natural beauty – sustain and lock it in as an enabler, bring people together to work, socialise, collaborate, meet, leverage, attract talent, investments
	Fast	Access to Asian markets
	Source of city pride and identify – unification, connection	
	Sustainable practice	
Other – challenges		
Online shopping	Distance – we are still a long way away	Safety – terror
Large shopping complexes with free parking	Sustainable, fast, long distance travel that doesn't use carbon fuel	Building tangible tolerance
Poor business acumen/marketing by business owners	Time zones	Harmony in diverse community

Main streets	Sydney and the world stage	Customers
Regulation – footpath dining	Differentiating ‘Australia’ and ‘Sydney’ from the whole regional economy	Integration
Security – terrorism	Population growth – 40 million	Attractive conditions for business entrepreneurs
Greed (landlords)	Maintaining things we value in the face of massive growth	Transport
		Viewing cultural migration as more than ‘just good’