



DRAFT
March 2022

Oxford Street LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy (Framework)

We acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation
as the Traditional Custodians of our local area.

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Cover photograph: C.Moore Hardy, courtesy City of Sydney Archives.
Gay and Lesbian protest rally, Oxford Street, winter 1994.

Introduction

Our iconic Oxford Street is the heart of the LGBTIQA+ community in Sydney. As Oxford Street evolves, new investment and planning changes bring opportunity to revive and bring fresh life into the local area. However, our community wants to feel confident that changes along Oxford Street won't impact on the important connection this place has to LGBTIQA+ people and culture, and that the history and character of the street will continue. Indeed, the community want to strengthen the identity of Oxford Street by celebrating the past and building upon this legacy for a vibrant and inclusive future.

We have worked with and listened to feedback from LGBTIQA+ community stakeholders to identify aspirations, needs and concerns for Oxford Street, informing the priorities and actions set out within this draft framework for a LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy. This draft Place Strategy framework articulates our proposed approach to recognising and preserving the LGBTIQA+ history of Oxford Street, maintaining contemporary LGBTIQA+ character, increasing visibility and spaces for LGBTIQA+ culture, and keeping the community connected and safe.

We are exhibiting this draft Place Strategy framework to seek feedback from the community and collect further ideas for Oxford Street's future. The actions outlined in this document are for the City to deliver in collaboration with community and local business. They are intended to complement activity already undertaken by the community, as well as align with and build on planning for Sydney WorldPride 2023.

You can provide feedback for the Place Strategy on our website:

www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/vision-setting/lgbtiq-cultural-and-social-place-strategy-for-oxford-street

Background

Oxford Street history and the LGBTIQA+ community

Oxford Street runs along an elevated walking track used by Gadigal people to connect to sources of food and sites for ceremony. British colonists built upon the track to connect the south head to the city, and along with this roadway came the emergence of Darlinghurst and Paddington. In 1875, it was named Oxford Street, and like its London namesake, it became a centre for shopping. In the 1960s, a scattering of nightclubs catering to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender crowds began to emerge. Over the following decades, more bars, clubs, restaurants, saunas and shops appeared giving the strip its celebratory name, 'The Golden Mile'. In the 80s and 90s, as the HIV/AIDS crisis gripped the community, nearby St Vincent's hospital was at the heart of Australia's response, and community action groups were founded and forged in venues on Oxford Street. In the surrounding neighbourhoods, a once hidden community burst into vibrant and visible life. Surviving and thriving. An annual protest march evolved into Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, the world's biggest and brightest celebration of contemporary LGBTIQA+ identity and an important platform for social progress. A global beacon for pride, diversity and solidarity, Oxford Street is synonymous with LGBTIQA+ life in Sydney, and the LGBTIQA+ community is now central to Sydney's social and cultural identity.

As the community evolves, so does its connection to place, with LGBTIQA+ venues and communities integrating and dispersing across the city. This, and the changing face of retail, nightlife and inner-city living is having an impact on Oxford Street. Like other big, inclusive cities around the world, Sydney needs to think, plan and act in order to maintain the LGBTIQA+ character and culture that brings so much benefit to our communities, even as our iconic precinct changes.

Oxford Street Cultural and Creative Precinct

Over the past year, the City consulted with communities on ways to revitalise Oxford Street. This included proposed changes to the planning framework to support more cultural and creative activity around Oxford Street.

We have identified Oxford Street as a key cultural centre within the Eastern Creative precinct in the City's Local Strategic Planning Statement. In this precinct, we are encouraging cultural uses as a driver of enterprise, a source of job creation and potential for place-making. This builds upon existing creative business clusters within the area and capitalises on the proximity of the area to long term establishments including the National Art School and UNSW Art and Design Campus.

Our proposed planning controls allow for greater height and floor space and they protect heritage items, public spaces, and architectural character. Importantly, they will create more space for creative businesses and cultural venues.

The new planning controls:

- retain existing entertainment, creative and cultural floor space
- encourage new creative and cultural activity by allowing extra floor space and height on existing buildings, in return for additional cultural and creative space
- encourage entertainment venues at basement levels
- protect the fabric, features and structural integrity of heritage items
- support the night-time economy
- discourage residential development in order to maintain commercial space and reduce conflicts

The planning proposal will amend the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 and the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012. If adopted, these changes will be implemented mid-2022.

Extensive community consultation was undertaken to inform the planning controls for the Oxford Street Cultural and Creative Precinct. This consultation process highlighted the need to acknowledge the historical importance of Oxford Street to the LGBTIQA+ community and consider how the City, community and local business can re-imagine and revitalise the local area moving forward.

LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy for Oxford Street

The renewed planning controls and community feedback for Oxford Street and preparations for Sydney WorldPride 2023 present opportunities to explore the protection, preservation and strengthening of Oxford Street as a focal point for LGBTIQA+ community life and culture.

In October 2021, a Minute by the Lord Mayor asked Council to:

...investigate developing an LGBTIQ+ Cultural and Social Place Strategy for Oxford Street, similar to those developed in other cities, in consultation with WorldPride 2023, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Pride History Group, QTopia, BuildingPride and other LGBTIQ+ community organisations...

The Resolution of Council also noted that a Place Strategy should build upon the work already undertaken by the community and the City to support our LGBTIQA+ places and communities.

Sydney WorldPride 2023

In February 2023, Sydney will welcome Australia and the world to celebrate Sydney WorldPride 2023. This festival will span three weeks and be one of the largest events in Sydney since the 2000 Olympics. It will showcase our city to the world and bring together LGBTIQA+ communities, friends, and allies. Sydney WorldPride 2023 will celebrate connection and belonging and aim to promote and advocate for LGBTIQA+ human rights while building the capability and capacity of the pride movement. Showcasing our city to the world, Sydney WorldPride 2023 will demonstrate that Sydney is a welcoming and inclusive city for all.

Oxford Street and the surrounding neighbourhoods are long recognised as the heart and home of Sydney's LGBTIQA+ communities. Oxford Street will be a major focal point for celebration during the festival, with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade and other events and activations taking place at the same time.

The City recognises the importance of Sydney WorldPride 2023 and the opportunities this event brings to Australia. This Place Strategy will therefore aim to complement and build on the events, programs and initiatives that Sydney WorldPride 2023, the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and other community organisations are undertaking as part of the festival. It will be an opportunity for the City to work with community organisations and local businesses to highlight the history and future of Oxford Street and the LGBTIQA+ community.

Consultation to develop a draft framework and actions for the LGBTIQA+ Place Strategy

In 2020, we asked the community to consider opportunities to revitalise Oxford Street as a cultural and creative precinct. This feedback informed a review of the planning controls that guide how property in the area can be used and redeveloped.

This feedback also captured the community's love for Oxford Street, the significant role the precinct has played in the lives of LGBTIQA+ people, its role in the history of the LGBTIQA+ community and its influence on contemporary culture. The community strongly indicated their wish for this connection to be recognised, maintained, and celebrated.

Alongside this detailed community feedback, we also worked closely with key LGBTIQA+ stakeholders from community organisations and businesses, to identify aspirations and goals for Oxford Street. These stakeholders included:

- Sydney WorldPride 2023
- Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras
- Pride History Group
- Building Pride
- QTopia
- ACON
- Twenty10
- Darlinghurst Business Partnership.

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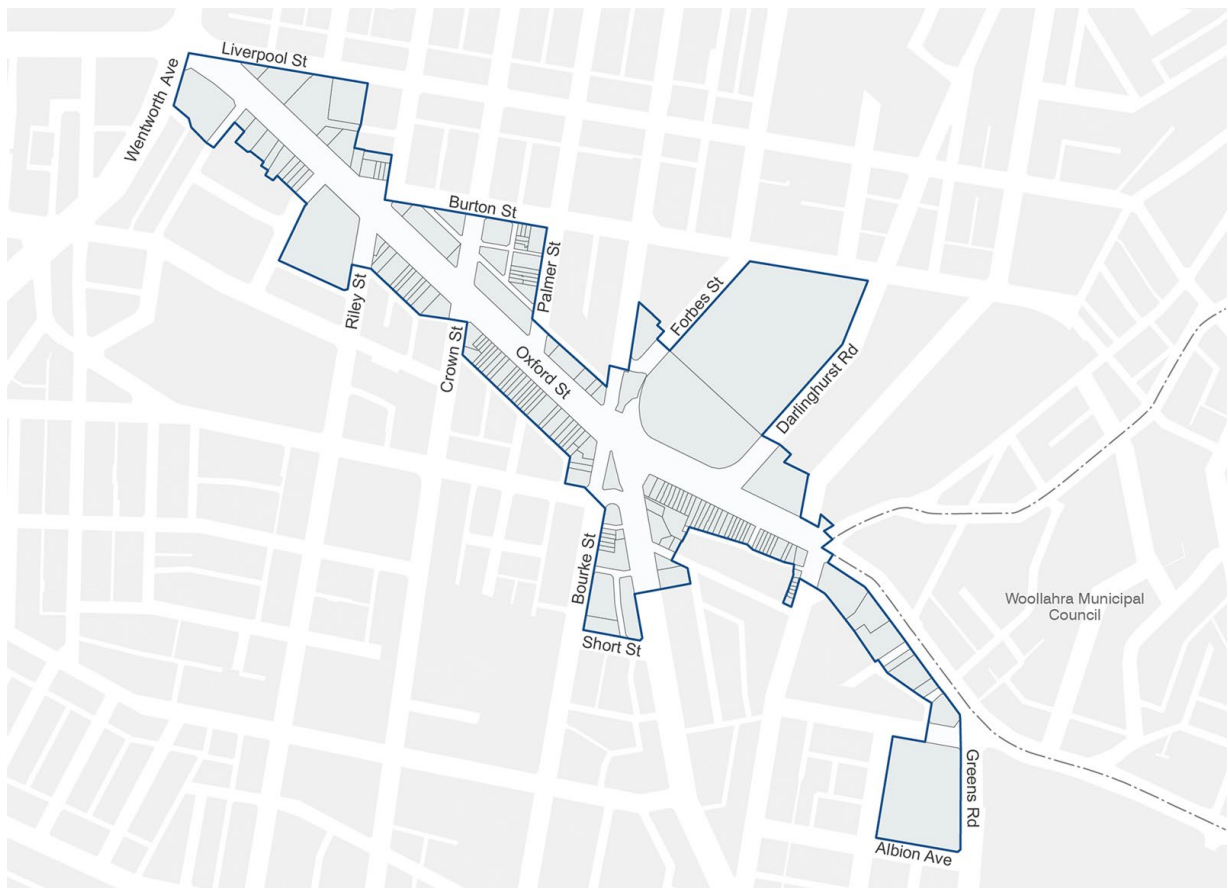
We have then considered how the City can enable these aspirations to be achieved and proposed a series of draft priorities and actions for a LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy for Oxford Street.

This is the beginning of a wider process of consultation to further develop and finalise the LGBTIQA+ Place Strategy for Oxford Street that will be driven and delivered collaboratively between the City and the community.

Defining the Precinct

When we refer to the Oxford Street Precinct, we mean the stretch of the street from Whitlam Square in the North to Greens Road in the South, including adjacent blocks, the National Art School and UNSW Art and Design Campus.

The following map provides an outline of the Oxford Street Precinct.



Principles, priorities, and actions

Principles

Oxford Street is on Gadigal Land. The significant connection that the LGBTIQA+ community has with Oxford Street is interwoven with tens of thousands of years of cultural connection to place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Oxford Street Creative Precinct Planning Controls seek to maintain and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural space in the precinct. The LGBTIQA+ Place Strategy should also prioritise opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and businesses.

Community led, City supported: our approach to this strategy is that the vision and priorities for the future of Oxford Street's LGBTIQA+ identity be led by the community. The City's primary role is to listen, articulate and support the delivery of the community's aspirations.

Responsibility for actions: the delivery of actions within this Strategy will be mostly led by the City, however collaboration with the local community and businesses and advocacy to other levels of government are also key to delivering the priorities. Through ongoing consultation and input from community, this strategy may inspire community solutions, local collaboration and investment from property owners, businesses and other levels of government, resulting in further actions delivered by other parties.

Inclusive language and community: The term LGBTIQA+ represents Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and limitless other diverse expressions of gender or sexuality. This Place Strategy may also refer to Lesbian, Gay and Queer when relevant to a historical movement or place or group of people who use that terminology.

Priorities

Five key priorities have been identified as part of the Place Strategy:

1. recognising historic LGBTIQA+ places and spaces
2. reflecting the contemporary LGBTIQA+ community within local businesses and venues
3. increasing LGBTIQA+ cultural and social spaces
4. increasing LGBTIQA+ visibility and identity throughout the Precinct
5. ensuring the local community is safe and supported.

Actions

Several actions were identified under each of the priorities. The following action tables outline the timeframes (short, medium, and ongoing) for actions to be delivered and the City's role (lead, collaborate and advocate). The City will lead on most of the actions, however they are intended to complement and collaborate with work undertaken within the community and by local community organisations. Actions to be delivered within the next 12 months aim to align with and support initiatives and projects being implemented as part of Sydney WorldPride 2023.

Key:

Timeframes:

Short term: actions to commence within the next 12 months, and mostly prior to Sydney WorldPride 2023.

Medium term: actions to commence within the next three years.

Ongoing: actions that are currently business as usual or will become businesses as usual once implemented.

The City's role:

Lead: the City will take the lead to deliver the action.

Collaborate: the City will partner and work with key community organisations and businesses to deliver the action.

Advocate: the City will advocate to other levels of government, private landholders, businesses and/or the community.

Priority 1: Recognise and remember historic LGBTIQA+ places and spaces

The LGBTIQA+ community want to see the history of Oxford Street recognised and remembered. Generally, people feel Oxford Street needs renewal, but they don't want to see redevelopment erase the tangible connection the community has to its history.

To help achieve this goal, the City's heritage planners, historians and archivists will work with the community to identify important sites of significance to LGBTIQA+ people. We will work to update the heritage inventories for these sites so that their statements of significance include these histories.

For important sites not currently registered as a heritage item, we will aim to list those sites on the grounds of their social and cultural significance to the LGBTIQA+ community.

The City will review the wealth of photography in the City's archives that documents the Gay and Lesbian rights movement, the rise of Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, queer activism, arts and culture. We will work towards a diverse public catalogue of photography and ephemera that can be used by the community for cultural projects, heritage interpretations and artworks in the Precinct.

We will recognise the important social role that sex on premise venues have played, particularly in gay male culture and in sexual health awareness. We will update the character statement for the precinct in our planning controls to note that sex on premise venues contribute to local character.

1. Recognise significant social, cultural and historical LGBTIQA+ places and spaces in Heritage Inventories

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
1.1	Conduct an audit of existing heritage items in the Oxford Street Precinct to identify places of LGBTIQA+ social, cultural and historical significance.	Short	X		
1.2	Identify places and spaces of LGBTIQA+ social, cultural and historical significance currently not listed as heritage items. Conduct heritage assessments and where appropriate, propose the places and spaces for inclusion in the Local Environmental Plan as additional heritage items.	Medium	X		

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#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
1.3	Review and update the inventory sheet for the Oxford Street Heritage Conservation Area including the Statement of Significance to include buildings identified as socially, culturally and/or historically significant to the LGBTIQA+ community.	Medium	X		
1.4	Review and update the inventory sheets for identified heritage items to include or strengthen references to LGBTIQA+ social significance in their Statements of Significance.	Medium	X		
1.5	Collaborate with the NSW Heritage Council State Heritage Register LGBTIQA+ Working Group to progress a State Heritage listing at Taylor Square which tells the story and evolution of Sydney's Mardi Gras, including a section of Oxford Street and the former Darlinghurst Police Station.	Short		X	
1.6	Provide a publicly accessible catalogue of photographs documenting the gay and lesbian rights movement, queer arts and activism, and other LGBTIQA+ histories across the Precinct.	Ongoing	X	X	

2. Celebrate the social and cultural history of the Oxford Street Precinct

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
2.1	Explore opportunities to acknowledge, recognise and reflect the culture of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the precinct, particularly in the public domain.	Ongoing	X	X	X
2.2	Require new developments to deliver heritage interpretation which acknowledges significant LGBTIQA+ places and spaces, for example through interpretative artworks, plaques on buildings or in the pavement.	Ongoing	X		

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#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
2.3	Continue to collect and share oral histories and stories related to LGBTIQA+ places and spaces within the Precinct. Explore opportunities to connect these oral histories to physical locations within the precinct through on-site promotion of online content.	Short	X	X	
2.4	Review and update the City of Sydney's Culture Walks walking tours to include LGBTIQA+ content, especially around the Precinct.	Short	X		
2.5	Explore options for signage and wayfinding that connects the AIDS memorial in Green Park, Darlinghurst to Oxford Street, including promotion of online content relating to the memorial.	Short	X		

3. Acknowledge the social significant of sex on premises venues

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
3.1	Review and update the Locality Statement in the Development Control Plan to include sex on premise venues in the description of character for the Precinct.	Short	X		

Priority 2: Sustain and reflect the local character of Oxford Street through contemporary LGBTIQA+ venues and businesses

The community deeply values the LGBTIQA+ businesses and venues on Oxford Street and recognises their role in sustaining the local character. It is the flavour of the neighbourhood that is created by the people, their attitudes and behaviours that the community most want to see maintained, even through the regeneration of physical spaces. The primary challenge of this strategy is to maintain the local queer culture of Oxford Street even as tenancies and ownership transfers, properties are redeveloped and retail industries change.

We propose a two-pronged approach to maintaining Oxford Street's character.

The first approach is through Plans of Management. Plans of Management are part of development consent for late trading venues. They are compliance documents that are enforceable by the City and the police. We propose to introduce mandatory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTIQA+ inclusion guidelines for all businesses in the Precinct who are required to have Plans of Management. Inclusion guidelines would set standards by which LGBTIQA+ customers and community are welcomed and respected in businesses in the area.

The second approach is the development of a Precinct Business Charter. Businesses who choose to opt-in to the Charter would agree to a set of expectations around promoting the LGBTIQA+ character of Oxford Street. This may include targets for the employment of LGBTIQA+ people, diversity and inclusion training for customer service and security staff, the provision of non-gendered bathrooms and other inclusive facilities or messaging, and a commitment to coordinated efforts across the precinct to address and reduce anti-LGBTIQA+ behaviour or sentiment.

The City's role would be to facilitate this, but the Charter would be developed and led by the community and local businesses. If implemented, the City will look to provide ongoing support to assist businesses to implement their obligations under the charter. A marketing campaign supporting those businesses signed up to the charter will be a further incentive.

We hope, through these actions, to actively work towards maintaining local character and grow the precinct's renowned, inclusive brand and identity, which will drive visitation, loyal customers and connection to place.

4. Monitor and map current and emerging LGBTIQA+ businesses and venues

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
4.1	Conduct an annual audit of all businesses within the Precinct and identify those which are LGBTIQA+.	Medium	X		

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#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
4.2	Explore opportunities to promote the location of LGBTIQA+ businesses and community spaces in the Precinct through online maps and/or marketing.	Short		X	

5. Encourage businesses in the Oxford Street Precinct to celebrate and support the LGBTIQA+ community and culture

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
5.1	Implement a requirement for all late trading businesses within the Precinct to include Diversity and Inclusion (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTIQA+) principles and guidelines within their Plans of Management.	Short	X		
5.2	Support the development of an opt-in LGBTIQA+ Precinct Business Charter for Oxford Street. The Charter may include initiatives to increase employment opportunities for LGBTIQA+ people, a commitment to providing inclusion and diversity training to venue staff and security, the provision of non-gendered bathrooms and other inclusive facilities, coordinated efforts to address and reduce anti-LGBTIQA+ behaviour or sentiment.	Short	X	X	
5.3	Explore opportunities to support and assist businesses to meet the responsibilities of the LGBTIQA+ Precinct Business Charter.	Short	X		
5.4	Continue to provide grant funding to venues and businesses to produce and program LGBTIQA+ themed social and cultural activity across the Precinct.	Ongoing	X		

Priority 3: Increase LGBTIQA+ cultural and social space

There is strong community support for more cultural space on Oxford Street. Our creative precinct planning controls will help increase the amount of space available for creative industries and cultural activities in the precinct. Spaces like galleries, small theatres, cabaret restaurants, music venues and nightclubs. These cultural and social spaces also become a catalyst for greater economic diversity and growth. Through this strategy we will explore how the City, landholders and the community can work together to ensure that these new spaces have a distinctly queer flavour and revitalise this 24 hour precinct with inclusive and diverse offerings for the broad spectrum of the LGBTIQA+ community and its friends and allies.

The City will investigate a matching service that will connect LGBTIQA+ organisations and businesses with available floorspace and start-up grants to help new ventures establish in the precinct. We will also explore opportunities to deliver an LGBTIQA+ Cultural Centre or Museum within the Precinct.

6. Increase LGBTIQA+ cultural and social space across the Oxford Street Precinct

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
6.1	Explore opportunities to deliver a LGBTIQA+ Cultural Centre or Museum in the Precinct.	Medium		X	X
6.2	Explore opportunities to re-purpose the toilet block and substation on Taylor Square (North) for social and/or cultural use.	Medium	X		
6.3	Support the delivery of a "matching service" that will connect cultural operators, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTIQA+ operators, with vacant commercial space or new floorspace generated through the Oxford Street Creative Precinct Planning Controls.	Short	X	X	
6.4	Explore a Cultural Spaces Start-Up Grant to assist new LGBTIQA+ cultural and creative businesses to establish in the Precinct.	Medium	X		

Priority 4: Increase the visibility and reflect the identity of the LGBTIQA+ community across the Precinct

Through consultation we have heard that visibility is vital. We need to see rainbows and we need to see LGBTIQA+ culture and communities reflected across precinct. This does more than create a vibrant welcoming destination, it feeds the symbolism that Oxford Street is known for globally. There are many suggestions for how we can increase LGBTIQA+ visibility across Oxford Street and this strategy will seek to explore and support public art, positive messaging, flags, banners and other creative interventions in the public domain.

7. Increase LGBTIQA+ visibility and identity across the Oxford Street Precinct

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
7.1	Continue to fly the Progress Pride Flag at Taylor Square and Sydney Town Hall.	Ongoing	X		
7.2	Continue to fly the Progress Pride Flag City banners across the Precinct during key events and at key times throughout the year.	Ongoing	X		
7.3	Update the Rainbow Crossing at Taylor Square to reflect the Progress Pride Flag design.	Short	X		
7.4	Explore opportunities for additional Rainbow Crossings throughout the Precinct.	Short	X		
7.5	Through the Art and About Program, commission local artists to deliver street murals that celebrate local LGBTIQA+ icons.	Short	X		
7.6	Ensure that hoarding treatments throughout the Precinct reflect LGBTIQA+ history and artists, including as a priority the 2022 Site Works suite of hoardings artworks.	Short	X	X	
7.7	Through the development application process, explore opportunities for public art to be produced by LGBTIQA+ identified artists.	Ongoing	X		

Priority 5: The local community is safe and supported

For Oxford Street to continue to thrive as a global LGBTIQA+ destination, our local community needs to feel safe and supported. This Place Strategy proposes collaboration with the Surry Hills Local Area Command to develop a precinct safety plan prior to Sydney WorldPride 2023. The City will advocate for opportunities to improve access to relevant programs, services and safe spaces for young LGBTIQA+ people, transgender and gender diverse people and older members of the community. We will also explore opportunities to improve connections with support and outreach services for our vulnerable communities.

8. Improve access to support services and programs for the LGBTIQA+ community across the Oxford Street Precinct

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
8.1	Continue to connect outreach services and programs to vulnerable communities within the Precinct, including people sleeping rough, people experiencing mental ill-health and people experiencing substance abuse.	Ongoing	X	X	X
8.2	Identify opportunities to advocate for diverse housing and accommodation options for young LGBTIQA+ people in the Precinct.	Ongoing			X
8.3	Explore opportunities to increase services and programs within the Precinct that support Transgender and gender diverse people, and older members of the LGBTIQA+ community.	Ongoing	X	X	X

9. Deliver a safe and welcoming environment across the Precinct

#	Action	Timeframe	Lead	Collaborate	Advocate
9.1	Develop an Oxford Street Precinct Safety Plan in collaboration with Surry Hills LAC and NSW Police to increase awareness of safety issues for LGBTIQA+ people and improve safety in the area, at day and night.	Short		X	
9.2	Explore opportunities to implement LGBTIQA+ inclusive and supportive messaging across the Precinct, through City owned street furniture, signage, and creative lighting or artworks.	Short	X		

Next Steps

Exhibition (April and May 2022)

This draft framework for an LGBTIQA+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy for Oxford Street will be placed on public exhibition for 6 weeks. During this time the community can review the draft and provide us with feedback.

Consultation (April and May 2022)

We will be offering several ways to provide feedback on the draft Place Strategy Framework. We will also invite community organisations and stakeholders to get involved in further developing the priorities and actions in the draft Place Strategy Framework. We will be seeking community partners to deliver the actions.

Adoption (Approx. June 2022)

An updated final draft of the Place Strategy will be reported to Council mid-2022 for adoption.

Collaboration (July 2022 onwards)

If adopted, we will begin to implement actions right away, with many due for delivery prior to Sydney WorldPride 2023. We will collaborate with the local LGBTIQA+ community, local business, community partners and other levels of government to deliver the actions.

