

CITY OF SYDNEY 

jila




bangawarra

Danks Street South Precinct

Concept Design Summary

April 2023





**The City of Sydney acknowledges
the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the
Traditional Custodians of our local area.**

Welcome to Country

We acknowledge that the Country now known as Waterloo is nadunga gurad/nura (sand dune Country) known for millennia for its nattai bamalmarray (freshwater wetlands) and its connections to gari gurad/nura (saltwater Country).

Country here has always been an important refuge on the Songlines that traverse this place, providing vital shelter, food, medicines and resources on the north/south journey.

Today, we honour this enduring spirit of Country and pay our respects to all of the people connected to the kinship systems here including the D'harawal, Dharug, Eora, Gai-mariagal, Gundungurra and Guringai nations as custodians of Country.

Ngeeyinee bulima nandiritah

(May you always see the beauty of this earth)

Courtesy of Shannon Foster- D'harawal eora Knowledge Keeper and Sydney registered Traditional Owner

Where is the Precinct?



Bounded by Danks, Bourke, McEvoy and Morehead streets, this precinct is part of the Green Square urban renewal area.

The Danks Street South Precinct (DSSP) is a significant and strategically located site that sits within the Green Square Urban Renewal Area which was earmarked for mixed use residential development in the early 2000's. A significant amount of planning over the past two decades has paved the way for new residents to call this place home. It is expected that the DSSP alone will house up to 2500 future residents and be well used by existing local communities.

In 2017 and 2018, the City consulted on new planning controls to facilitate the redevelopment of this precinct. The original proposal exhibited in 2017 raised community concerns primarily relating to building heights and public transport accessibility. These were addressed by the City and the revised planning controls were re-exhibited in 2018. Heights were redistributed throughout the site and the City worked with Transport for NSW to implement short and longer term measures to improve pedestrian and bike connectivity and public transport.

The amended Danks Street South Precinct Development Control Plan (DCP), Urban Design Study and Planning Proposal were approved by Council in December 2018. The development controls allow for mixed residential uses and include new streets, pedestrian and cycle only through site links, a public central park, a plaza with heritage buildings and a neighbourhood pocket park.



What is the Danks Street South Precinct Concept Design?

1

The Danks Street South Precinct (DSSP) Concept Design reflects a new development in planning for open space designs at the City of Sydney.

It documents the research and project concept outcomes resulting from the City's early engagement of Artists, Indigenous Cultural Consultants, Landscape Architects and Community to guide private landowners responsible for the delivery of a public domain and other public amenities associated with the redevelopment of the site.

2

The DSSP Concept Design is a site wide open spaces concept design across both private and public domains that guides the future use of the open space in the DSSP.

This project was developed by the City of Sydney with the aim of ensuring community voices are incorporated into the future design and delivery of the precinct from the outset.

3

The Concept Design is the culmination of dedicated work carried out by MAPA (Moline Axelsen Public Art & Participatory Architecture), JILA (Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture), Bangawarra and local community. Beginning in 2017, the DSSP Concept Design Report was completed in May 2022 and is now available to landowners. This document provides a summary of the project.

History of the Precinct



From Mud Bank Botany Bay - mouth of Cooks River 1830
By John Thompson. Collection of the State Library of New
South Wales. [DL PXX 31, 2a] (Dixson Library)



Map of the Botany Sands Aquifer drawn by
Bangawarra, 2021.

The freshwater Country now known as Waterloo has been an important place for travel, shelter and resources for the local Aboriginal people of Sydney for millennia.

The abundant freshwater of the wetlands and Sheas Creek attracted early colonial industry including wool washers, tanneries, soap makers, breweries, and market gardens. Industry provided jobs for many including Aboriginal people wanting to escape the poverty and deplorable conditions on the missions. Country was once again a refuge for Aboriginal people and a strong Aboriginal community was formed.

In 1910 part of the site was acquired by the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply & Sewerage. The pumping station was constructed between 1923 and 1927. In 1936 the site became a major depot for the water board.

The Waterloo and neighbouring Redfern Aboriginal communities gave rise to a powerful political movement that fought for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The community has contributed to establishing important events including the 1938 Day of Mourning protest, the 1967 Referendum, The Freedom Rides, NAIDOC and an ongoing activist community that is still thriving today.



Red Hands cave on the Georges River. Image taken by
Bangawarra.



Art Deco style brick building enveloping the Waterloo
Water Pumping Station

The Danks Street South Precinct Design Strategy

A Collaborative & Site Wide Design Approach

The Danks Street South Precinct is a place where community, cultural practices, public domain, architecture, landscaping, heritage interpretation, public art, built form and urban design come together. Whether projects are located on public or privately owned land, materially and aesthetically compatible projects developed collaboratively will ensure intended narratives are accessible and legible to all residents, workers and visitors across all open spaces.

An Inclusive Approach: Artists & Community Shaping Public Spaces

In late 2016 the City sought High Level Concepts for Public Art in the DSSP to inform the design of new public spaces to be delivered on this development site. The aim was to integrate opportunities for socially engaged artists and draw on their unique contributions to shape our built environment. Early artist involvement and integration of community needs defines the DSSP Concept Design Report as a timely and important pilot project committed to an inclusive approach to designing the public domain for the various publics that will live and grow with it.

Responding to Place: Designing with Country

Guiding the site-wide approach is the genuine recognition and incorporation of First Nations cultures and peoples. The design strategies developed by the City's consultant team reinforces the importance of Aboriginal people's connection with Country and connects the past, present and future of Aboriginal peoples and culture throughout the site, as well as reflecting on the significant industrialisation of the area.

What the Community said

MAPA conducted multiple community consultation sessions in 2017 and in October 2019, the site was opened to the public for the first time in over a hundred years for a series of tours in collaboration with Sydney Water and property developers Dahua.

In late 2020, the City undertook extensive public consultation with the community, private landowners, Sydney Water and Transport for NSW. Given the COVID pandemic, engagement activities included letters to residents, a webpage and interactive online mapping tool (Social Pinpoint), on-site signage, social media promotion, and an online Zoom briefing for community and businesses in the area.

The City and consultant team presented three (3) overarching design principles and fifteen (15) high level project ideas and initiatives that were well received from both the community and private landowners. In response to the project ideas, the Social Pinpoint map showed that 78% of respondents from the public exhibition period indicated that they liked all the project ideas and 21% like some of the project ideas.

MAPA captured community stories and hopes for the future DSSP site in The Open Field Agency Public Domain and Public Art Strategy which can be downloaded from <https://www.cityartsydney.com.au/artwork/open-field-agency>.

Notably the strategy articulates the communities' emotional investment and expectation to be involved in the development of this site and the enduring significance of Country for Indigenous communities in and around the Redfern-Waterloo area. The 3 design principles and 8 project concepts below are the result of this work.



Designing With Country: 3 Design Principles

Connecting to the Enduring Spirit of Country - Galumban Nura (Home Country)

Respect the interrelationship between all things on Country – including cultural and historical references that respond to the specific site conditions over time, and the significance of this place in the wider region. This is Country that has always provided for its people. An abundant wetland, a safe space hidden in the dunes, a place of work, infrastructure for the city's survival. Water has always been key to this area.

Country Provides - Gumal Duga (People - Generosity)

Country will provide for many different people, in many different ways. The design of the public spaces should provide for all the different groups, individuals and collectives, with different needs - a truly democratic space that accommodates everyone.

Protecting Country now and into the future - Ngabay Yuoli (Planning - Protection)

This is ancient Country that has provided, healed and sheltered since the beginning of time. Since colonisation, Country here has been damaged, contaminated and neglected. As people return for the first time in a century, there is an opportunity to undo some of the damage and put in place practices which can protect Country and its many interconnecting ecosystems.

Project Concept 1: The Caretaker Residency

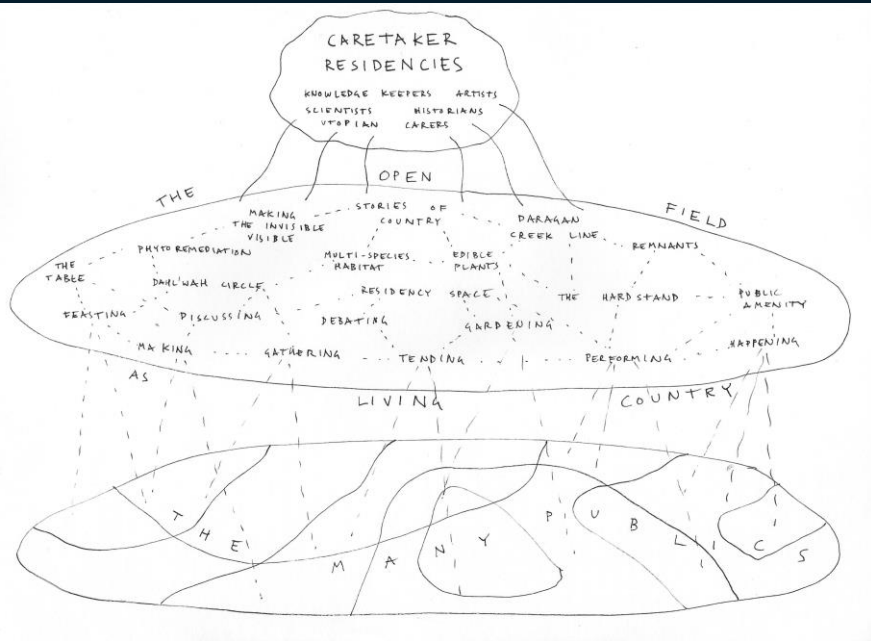


Diagram by MAPA Art + Architecture illustrating the Open Field as Living Country and the Caretaker Residency as the central mechanism for connecting the many possible publics with the place and with each other. © MAPA Art + Architecture 2021

As well as having permanent public art within the DSSP, the Caretaker Residency provides opportunities for temporary public art. The Caretaker Residency is the central mechanism for the development and delivery of meaningful public space across the DSSP in collaboration with community at three distinct stages - before, during and after development.

The Caretaker Residency Program is intended to be administered by socially engaged curators with expertise in developing and delivering participatory programs, projects and On-Country Aboriginal Cultural practices to work with artists and members of the community and other stakeholders to develop creative programs, undertake collaborative design research, cultural and educational maintenance programs.

The Caretaker Residency Program operates out of mobile residency units located on site and has a variety of public domain infrastructure at its disposal.

Project Concept 2: Remembering Daragun



In keeping with First Nations' philosophy that all things are one, are connected, and there is no notion of separateness, Aboriginal people do not "name" aspects of Country.

Daragun is the word used to describe a small water course or stream.

Although not visible, the current network of underground water is the basis for the expression of water through design. This project could become the narrative that ties the site together by forming a continuous band across the length of the site (from Danks Street in the north to McEvoy Street in the south) and form a distinctive character by telling the story of water above and below the ground.

Project Concept 3: Making the Invisible Visible



Japanese manhole covers image courtesy of <https://www.thislifeoftravel.com/japan/japan-manhole-covers>



Sydney Water infrastructure

Critically important working infrastructure supplying water to the Eastern parts of the city operates on this site.

The still vital underground infrastructure associated with the contemporary use by Sydney Water can be part of the narrative of water that connects past, present and future, by making it visible on the ground plane. Selected access points, pit covers, paving etc. can be designed to reveal the services which represent the ongoing role of water on the site.



Historic maps with water network overlay

Project Concept 4: Stories of Country



Providing space to learn the stories of Country. Image courtesy of Bangawarra.

The Stories of Country project is a basis for honouring Country, to remember and protect the many different stories of Country from across millennia, from the Nattai Bamalmarray (freshwater wetlands) to its recent industrial history into the future.

Stories of Country proposes public spaces for storytelling, coming together, learning and sharing including:

- Drawing on local Aboriginal languages to apply indigenous names
- Honouring the stories of water
- Honouring Country as shelter
- Healing Country – Phytoremediation
- Prioritising the use of native plants
- Planting complete ecologies
- Providing Community Gardens
- Integrating symbols, sounds and other elements significant to Aboriginal people; and
- Minimising damage to Country

Project Concept 5: Sheltered Edges



Example of a 'sheltered edge' of the built form. Annual street party, Kapitbahayan Filipino Housing Cooperative, Canley Vale. 2011. Architect Hugo Moline. Photo courtesy of MAPA Art & Architecture

As a means of expanding the Open Field beyond the areas designated as public domain, the architectural design of built form elements may interpret the ground floor of buildings as a continuation of public space.

Providing a human scale to buildings, composing legible, open and permeable spaces that offer visual and physical connections throughout the precinct provide access without subjecting people to commercial imperatives.

Project Concept 6: Amenity (Solar Access)



From Mud Bank Botany Bay - mouth of Cooks River 1830 By John Thompson
From the collections of the State Library of New South Wales. [DL PXX 31, 2a] (Dixson Library)

The site should be welcoming for all people and provide amenity that encourages and facilitates people to stay. It should continue to be a place of refuge for the diverse communities that inhabit the area.

Amenity includes:

- Seating and walking spaces in the sun in winter, and shade in the summer
- Public cooking facilities
- Power connections for public events
- Public wi-fi and charging points; and
- Public toilets

Project Concept 7: Urban Canopy (Tree Cover)



The shelter and protection of Dahl'wah. Image courtesy of Bangawarra.

Open spaces of the public domain need to be balanced with tree canopy for shade, biodiversity and climate mitigation - to provide shelter and feed the community.

A selection of trees should connect the site back to the indigenous landscape and encourage:

- food plants as street and park trees
- reflect the six seasons of Sydney in the planting
- work with the patterns of sun and shade from built edges; and
- restore diversity of plants and wildlife.

Project Concept 8: Recycling & Reuse



Markings and remnants of former activity on site



The ambition for this project is to reduce waste, and reuse site materials to reflect the history and character of the place.

There is ample opportunity for reuse in the precinct, with large quantities of brick and concrete present and remnants of past infrastructure.

Overall Site Plan

