



# Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan 2025–2029

ADOPTED 23 JUNE 2025

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

**CITY OF SYDNEY** 

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**Cover image:** Children's summit for the Community Strategic Plan. Photo by Damian Shaw / City of Sydney

## Acknowledgement of Country

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

We acknowledge their continued care and protection for the lands and waters of this place since time immemorial.



# Introduction

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## Our commitment to engage

Community participation is a guiding principle of effective and accountable local government. We are required to engage the communities that we serve – the people, organisations and businesses that have a stake in the future of Sydney and are impacted by the decisions made by the City of Sydney.

This document is a framework for how we engage communities in the decisions made at the City of Sydney. It outlines the legislative requirements, guiding principles, approaches and processes we use to ensure our engagement is clear, accountable, meaningful, inclusive and accessible. It describes the role communities play in our decisions about projects, policies, strategies, programs and services.

“To achieve our super connected city in every way, the first thing for us is good governance on all levels implemented to restore true democracy. This means for us meaningful community consultation at every stage.” Advisory panel member



Image 1. Emerging Civic Leaders program for the Community Strategic Plan Image credit: City of Sydney



# Informing our engagement approach

## Engaging on the community strategic plan

The City of Sydney engaged with communities extensively to develop a new long-term community strategic plan to deliver Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision.

The 18-month engagement process was awarded Australasian Project of the Year in 2020 by the International Association of Public Participation and was recognised as one of the top 3 projects internationally.

We started the process in 2018 by asking community members how we would know if our engagement with them was effective. We continued to ask participants for feedback on our approach throughout the process. This information has been used to improve and refine our engagement approach.

Feedback also included explicit recommendations on the importance of involving communities in decision-making for the future of Sydney.

First Nations community members asked us to be brave and be the first city to recognise cultural authority and embed it in governance structures and decision-making. People raised the importance of speaking for Country and listening to the voice of Country.

Children and young people told us about the importance of listening to their views in planning for the future – as they “will be the ones to live with the decisions we make now and they have unique perspectives and creativity.”

Businesses identified collaboration, co-working and partnerships as characterising the future. The creative sector said Sydney should strengthen its creative relationships and encourage collaboration and that communities should actively participate in shaping their own identities.

The final step in the engagement process was a Citizens’ Jury. This group of 43 randomly selected and demographically representative citizens considered the insights gathered from the community engagement process and recommended concepts to transform Sydney by 2050. The first 2 of their 8 recommendations addressed community participation in decision-making:

**Recommendation 1** – participatory governance: a new model of governance that genuinely engages citizens in decision-making on all levels which is responsive and adaptable.

**Recommendation 2** – First peoples of Australia leadership and representation: the Traditional Custodians of the land being able to play a central role in how to shape the city, through active participation in governance that is embedded and respectful.

We continue to engage our diverse communities on our plans to achieve the vision for Sydney in 2050. In 2025, we refreshed our community strategic plan based on community insights from more than 13,500 pieces of feedback collected between 2022 and 2024. The insights reflect a community that continues to deeply value a transparent and accountable government. Communicating how feedback has been considered in the decision-making process is important to improving the level of trust in governments.

## Resilient Sydney strategy

The Resilient Sydney strategy was developed with 33 metropolitan Sydney councils, the New South Wales (NSW) Government, business and communities. The first strategy was adopted in 2018. The current strategy, Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025 – 2030 is based on comprehensive community engagement and a resilience risk assessment carried out in 2023/24. This was funded under the joint Australian Government – NSW Government national partnership agreement on disaster risk reduction. City resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt and thrive, no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.

The engagement process for the strategy identified community agency as essential to community resilience. Communities want to work in collaboration and partnership with governments and businesses. The strategy affirms this in directions 3 and 5.

### **Direction 3: Connect for strength**

Embed dignity principles in leadership and engagement.

Engage children and young people in decision making about the future and their wellbeing.

### **Direction 5: One city**

Promote and participate in collaborative governance and engagement for Greater Sydney.

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## Ongoing insights

We also drew insights to inform this strategy from the City of Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel and the Disability (Inclusion) Advisory Panel and ongoing engagement with businesses and the creative sector. We spoke with City of Sydney staff who deliver services directly to communities and have expertise in working with particular groups. We evaluate our engagement and we continue to seek feedback from community members about what works for them.

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## Accessibility

There is an online [guide to council decision-making](#) which explains how the council makes decisions and how community members can be involved. This guide was developed with the Disability (Inclusion) Advisory Panel.

This community engagement strategy is also available as an [Easy-Read version](#).

# Understanding the legislative and decision-making framework

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## City of Sydney decision-making

The City of Sydney is a local council responsible for a range of services within its designated local area.

We seek input from communities when we develop projects, strategies and plans. These views are put to council, made up of 10 elected councillors, to discuss and vote on. We provide councillors with the outcome of community engagement to assist in their decision-making.

At the City of Sydney, issues are discussed and considered at regular council committee meetings where members of the public can speak to specific decisions before council. Then a formal decision is made at a council meeting the following week. The council can also delegate certain decisions to the Lord Mayor and to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The council committees where members of the public can address councillors are:

- Corporate, Finance, Properties and Tenders Committee
- Environment Committee
- Cultural and Community Committee
- Transport, Heritage and Planning Committee

There are the guidelines for speakers at council committee meetings.

Members of the community can also speak at meetings of the Central Sydney Planning Committee and our Local Planning Panel. The Central Sydney Planning Committee determines applications for major developments with an estimated cost of more than \$50 million. The committee was established under the City of Sydney Act 1988 and is made up of the Lord Mayor, 2 councillors and 4 members appointed by the Minister of Planning.

The Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee considers proposals where required by NSW Government delegations, or where there are a significant number of opposing views in the community after community engagement.

This body considers the needs of people who walk, drive or cycle in our area and gives technical advice to our council. It includes representatives from the City of Sydney, NSW Police, Transport for NSW, local members of the NSW Parliament, and other NSW government agencies. The Committee enables coordination across responsible authorities. However, it does not have decision-making powers. Members of the community can address the Committee on matters listed on the meeting agenda.



Some elements of community engagement are directed by state government legislation. This includes the Local Government Act 1993 and Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 which both require plans outlining how the City of Sydney will engage the community to inform decisions. Others include Crown Lands Management Act 2016 and Roads Act 1993.

Appendix A includes a list of NSW legislation, standards or policies that outline requirements for community engagement.

There are many other occasions where we seek community insights and involvement in the development and delivery of projects, strategies, programs and services. In some cases, community engagement is required to inform a decision of council and at other times input from the community is incorporated into the project, program or service in implementation.

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## Local Government Act and integrated planning and reporting

All councils are required to have a community strategic plan that sets long-term goals and outcomes. This plan, along with a long-term financial plan and delivery program ensures the needs of the local area and communities are planned for and met. These documents along with other mechanisms, including a community engagement strategy, make up the integrated planning and reporting framework.

The Local Government Act identifies community participation as a guiding principle of local government. It states that councils should actively engage with their local communities, through the use of the integrated planning and reporting framework and other measures.

The Act also requires councils to “establish and implement a community engagement strategy for engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs and for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters).”

The Office of Local Government has guidelines specifying the community engagement strategy should be reviewed and adopted by council every 4 years. This document aligns with the Office of Local Government guidelines and standards.

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## Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and community participation plan

We apply a community participation plan in carrying out our planning functions. This plan meets the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which specifies community planning panels and mandates community consultation in planning matters for all councils in the Greater Sydney region and other specified areas. It describes mandatory requirements that the City of Sydney must meet for public exhibition and notification processes for land use planning matters.

The City of Sydney’s community participation plan is included in this document to make it easier for community members to understand. However, it can read as a stand-alone plan that responds to the requirements of the Act.

There are mandatory statutory timeframes for the public exhibition of planning related documents and applications including planning proposals, planning agreements and development applications. These are set out in the Act and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.

Mandatory public exhibition timeframes for relevant planning matters and the associated notification processes are described in the chapter on land use planning and in appendices C, D and E which make up the community participation plan.

Both the community engagement strategy and the community participation plan follow the guiding principles identified in this document (chapter 5). These are additional to the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and but reflect good practice in engagement and the City of Sydney's overall approach.

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## Privacy

The City of Sydney is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information we collect from our community. Our Privacy Management Plan explains how we manage personal and health information under NSW privacy laws including the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002. It includes information on how to access and amend personal information. It also guides our employees on how to comply with the NSW Information Protection Principles and Health Privacy Principles when we collect, store, use or disclose personal information.

We collect personal information in a variety of ways in order to perform services and functions. We assess the appropriate level of personal information to be collected on a case-by-case basis with a view to minimising the amount of personal information we collect and manage. We use personal information for the purpose for which it was collected and may use it as is necessary for the exercise of other council functions.

We actively engage with our communities through a range of methods outlined in this strategy. We use personal information, such as contact details, in different ways to interact with community members depending on the nature of the project, strategy or service.

Where legislation requires us to inform and engage our communities, we use personal information, including rates records, that we already hold for other purposes to contact people.

We also use personal information provided to us by individual members of our community, such as email addresses, to involve them on other issues that we think might be of interest or relevance to them and to better meet our community engagement commitment. For example, we may email participants who have provided feedback on previous community consultation initiatives (through Sydney Your Say) about new plans for their area. We may invite specific program attendees to subscribe to a program newsletter or attend other information sessions.

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## Non-residential rolls

Non-residents are owners, occupiers and rate paying lessees of rateable property in the City of Sydney local government area, or their nominees, who are enrolled to vote in another local government area. Eligible non-residents can voluntarily make a claim to be on the non-residential roll.

# The communities we serve

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## Defining community

The Local Government Act requires councils to engage their “local community”. Defining the local communities the City of Sydney serves is complex.

We have over one million people – residents, workers, students, businesses and visitors who spend time in the local area, every day. A mix of cultural organisations, educational institutions, international tourism sector, corporate headquarters, peak bodies, advocacy groups and government departments are based in the local area because of Sydney’s role as a capital and global city. We also have non-resident property owners and occupiers – with properties, both large and small.

These communities are diverse. The people who rely on Sydney as the place they live, work, study, do business, access services or visit are also connected to other places around the world. The City of Sydney recognises our responsibilities that are created through these connections of our communities to other communities.

Our local communities are all of these people and organisations that have a stake in the decisions the City of Sydney makes.

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## Recognising diverse communities

One way to understand the complexity of the communities in the City of Sydney is through how communities of people relate to an issue or decision. The types of communities described below overlap and intersect.

### **Communities of place**

Many of our projects aim to improve places. Often the most interested and impacted communities are those that live or work around these projects. For example, when consulting on improvements to a neighbourhood park, we aim to reach the local residents, property owners, schools or childcare services and nearby businesses.

Communities of place also include groups of people who hold a particular connection to a place because of its historical or cultural significance, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with Redfern; people of diverse sexualities and genders with Oxford Street and diverse Asian cultures with Haymarket and Chinatown.

People may also closely associate with the activities that take place there, for example members of sporting, community garden or cultural groups. They might belong to less formal groups, such as skaters who use a skate park or people using the local library or community centre.



### **Communities of interest**

Communities of interest organise around an issue or activity. These may include:

- different business sectors, such as tech startups or hospitality
- large corporates or owners of small local businesses
- professions we engage with such as architects and urban planners
- peak bodies, advocacy and industry groups, like NSW Council of Social Services, People with Disability Australia, Property Council or Committee for Sydney
- not-for-profit organisations and services with a common purpose such as sustainability or affordable housing.

Communities of interest may form advocacy groups and networks that the City of Sydney can tap into, such as business chambers, resident action groups and interagency networks. These communities may also convene around a shared activity – sporting or recreational clubs, bush care and gardening groups, cultural and creative communities and people involved in informal activities like dog walking.

### **Communities of identity**

These communities define themselves. They include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ communities, and multicultural communities. These communities may gather around cultural and religious beliefs. Communities of identity may associate by age, for example groups of young people or older people. Sometimes these groups form because of shared experiences, for example social housing residents who live in a particular neighbourhood. People's lives are shaped by their identities, relationships and social factors.

It's important to remember there is diversity in these communities meaning there may be smaller groups within them. It is also important to remember that intersectionality exists, and people's identity can overlap across these communities. For example, a person can be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander as well as a person with disability.

### **Communities of need**

The pandemic reminded us that the needs of people must take priority.

People are facing food insecurity, housing stress or homelessness and economic hardship. They may have difficulty accessing services including digital information channels.

The City of Sydney works in a way that ensures people's needs are understood and addressed so they can take part in daily life and our decision-making processes.

"Hopefully there will be more kindness and tolerance now." – City of Sydney community recovery plan survey respondent (May 2020)

### **Communities of the future**

Perhaps the most important communities to consider in our decision-making are the communities of the future. Their perspectives are often difficult to consider. Two ways we can try to include the perspectives of communities of the future in our engagement are:

- consulting children and young people who will live with the impacts of our decision-making the longest
- asking the people who we consult to consider the needs and perspectives of those who may not be here yet.

**“We are the ones who are going to have to live through the things we choose right now” Youth Summit participant**



Image 2. Children's Summit for the Community Strategic Plan. Image credit: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

### **Government and institutional stakeholders**

The City of Sydney works in an environment of other levels of government with overlapping or complementary responsibilities. We consult each other when we develop and implement our strategies and projects. State government agencies also consult communities in our local area. When this happens its important people are clear about who and which level of government – local, state or federal – is responsible for making decisions.

We have Principles of Cooperation with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council respecting their status under the Land Rights Act 1983.

We engage with educational institutions including the tertiary sector, schools and early learning centres that provide important community connections in our local area. An example is our memorandums of understanding with the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Sydney.

We're working more with health providers to understand community needs, respond to urgent situations and plan for the needs of future communities.

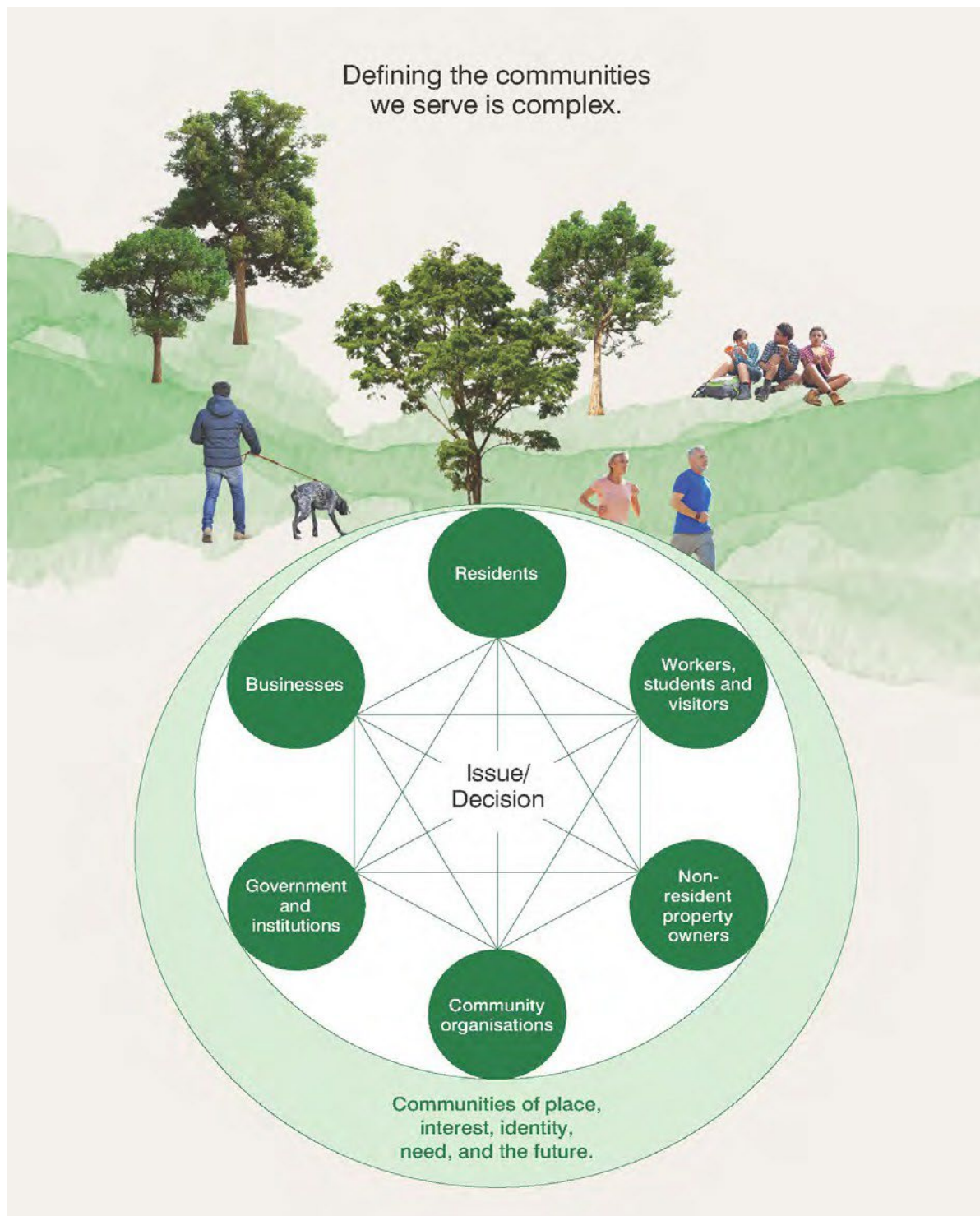
We work collaboratively with state government agencies and local services in developing shared approaches to support social housing residents across the city and to ensure their voices and needs are heard and understood, particularly with urban renewal projects.

The City of Sydney works with the 33 Greater Sydney councils on issues that cross local government boundaries on the Resilient Sydney strategy and programs focusing on economic, environmental, cultural and governance development.

We also work with state government agencies to inform Greater Sydney and state level policies, plans and strategies. We champion engagement with communities to better inform approaches to land use planning, infrastructure provision, program development and city-wide targets and benchmarking.

We're a member of national and international groups including the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors, global Resilient Cities Network and C40 Cities Climate Change Leadership Group.

Figure 1. Defining community





## A snapshot of our city

By June 2024 the City of Sydney local government area was home to an estimated 237,278 residents. There were 40,039 new residents compared to 2023.

There were an estimated 520,000 jobs located in our area.

The City of Sydney's gross regional product is estimated at \$146 billion (2023), which represents 21.4% of the gross state product.

### Demographic profile

City of Sydney residents are relatively young, with a median age of around 34 years (2021). This compares with a median age of around 37 years in Greater Sydney residents.

Over 22% of residents live alone in one person households. Nearly 63% or nearly two thirds of city residents live in family households with a partner and/or children or other relatives. Group households accommodate another 15% of residents.

City of Sydney residents are well-educated with 53% of those aged 15 and over holding bachelor or higher degree and 11% attending university. This compares with 33% with bachelor or higher qualifications across Greater Sydney and 6% attending university.

Higher educational attainment is also represented in the 2021 employment profile of our residents. A total of 42% of employed City of Sydney residents were professionals – more than any other category – while 19% were managers – the second highest occupational group. In comparison in Greater Sydney 29% were professionals and 15% managers – the next highest occupational group.

### Cultural diversity

Almost half of our area's residents were born overseas, with 35% of the overseas-born residents arriving in Australia between 2016 and 2021. Residents born in Asia comprise one-quarter of the population of the city.

More than one-third of city residents speak a language other than English at home, the most prevalent of which is Mandarin followed by Cantonese, Thai, Spanish, Indonesian, and Vietnamese.

### Work and transport

There was a 69% labour force participation rate among City of Sydney residents in 2021. This represents the number of people working or looking for work as a percentage of the total residential population aged over 15 years. Of this group, 94% were employed and 6% were looking for work.

Almost two thirds – 64% – of City of Sydney's resident workers were employed locally.

On the 2021 census day (during Covid-19 lockdown), 63% of resident workers either worked at home or did not go to work, compared to 11% in 2016.

### Housing

A total of 54% of City of Sydney residents were renting their home privately. A further 31% of households were purchasing or fully owned their home and 7% lived in social housing (2021). The balance did not state their tenure.

# Community engagement framework

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## What is community engagement?

Community engagement or public participation is the process of involving people in the decisions that affect their lives.

Community engagement strengthens our planning and delivery of projects and services by helping to:

- create a vision and new ways of thinking
- understand the needs and aspirations of communities
- challenge our assumptions
- check that we are on the right track
- refine and implement projects, programs and services
- empower communities to act.

It enables good governance and informed decision-making by promoting shared responsibilities for decisions. It supports an open approach to managing risk by providing a strong foundation for understanding decisions and building trust within our community about the decision-making process.

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## Engagement outcomes

Community engagement at the City of Sydney aims to:

- create better solutions for our local area. Drawing on local knowledge from a diverse group creates solutions that are practical, effective and responsive to needs.
- increase trust in our governance and decision-making processes. Working together improves communication and understanding.
- develop sustained collaboration, partnerships and new ways to involve and empower communities to achieve Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision. Engaged and active communities will drive change.

## The process of community engagement

One way to understand different types of engagement with the community is through a continuum from informing through to empowerment.

**Informing** takes place when a decision has already been made or action is required, and we need to make sure that those affected are aware of the facts. *We are keeping you informed*

**Consulting** takes place when a project requires some input or feedback before part of the project or decision is progressed. *We care about what you think.*

**Involving** takes place when we work with the community to develop alternatives and identify preferred approaches. *You are helping us think and act differently about the issue.*

**Collaborating** takes place when we partner with stakeholder or community groups to work out what needs to be done and to develop and implement solutions. *Your leadership and expertise is critical to how we address this issue*

**Empowering** takes place when final decision is put in the hands of the public. *We will implement what you decide.*

All engagement processes need to inform and most will have some level of consultation. Some projects will require community involvement and collaboration. On a few occasions, the City of Sydney is able to delegate decision-making to members of the community on all or parts of a project.

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## Engagement principles

The City of Sydney's approach to community engagement is guided by the following principles:

These principles are informed by the core values of the International Association of Public Participation. They apply to everyone who participates in the City of Sydney's engagement process no matter what their age, gender, views, interest in the outcome, wealth or cultural background.

### **Our engagement processes have integrity.**

We will make sure our engagement is clear in scope and purpose. Our engagement will be timely, accessible, well-planned and meaningful.

### **Our engagement activities are inclusive and accessible.**

We will strive to capture a range of values and perspectives. We will design engagement activities that overcome barriers to people being able to participate. We will strengthen the capacity of our communities to participate in decision-making.

### **Our engagement is two-way.**

When we engage, we will promote dialogue and open up genuine discussion. We will support people with accurate information and create a space to weigh up options and develop common understanding.

### **Our engagement influences the decisions we make.**

We will publicly report the outcomes of community engagement and show how these influenced the decision. We will provide feedback to participants on the results of their contribution. People will be able to see and understand the impact of their involvement.

These principles are informed by the core values of the International Association of Public Participation. They apply to everyone who participates in the City of Sydney's engagement process no matter what their age, gender, views, interest in the outcome, wealth or cultural background.



## Planning engagement that is fit for purpose

There is no single perfect approach to engagement. The City of Sydney delivers a range of different strategies, projects, programs and services. It is important that the community engagement process matches in each case and is fit for purpose.

When we plan engagement on a project, strategy, program or service we consider:

### **Impacts**

Who are the people who will be impacted by the decision? How many people will be impacted? And what are the impacts?

### **Context**

Why are we doing the project? What is the history of the project? What other issues may impact that community? What constraints do we have, such as timeframes set by other levels of government?

### **Scope**

How much influence can the community have on the outcome? What are the negotiables and non-negotiables? What is the scale of the project? What is its budget?

Based on the answers to these questions, engagement can range from simple to complex. Our analysis shows us when we should engage deeply with communities or simply inform them.

The amount of effort we apply to an engagement process fits the requirements of the decisions being made. This informs the combination of engagement activities we use each time.

We list types of engagement activity in appendix B.

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## Reporting the results of engagement

The information we collect through community engagement helps our staff and councillors make decisions. It is also important that the community can easily access the outcomes of community engagement.

The City of Sydney publicly reports the details and outcomes including:

- consultation activities undertaken
- activities to promote participation in the consultation (for example letterbox drops)
- number of people and organisations who participated and key demographic information
- feedback from our communities (for example survey results and workshop outcomes)
- summaries of key issues and themes raised and how we intend to respond to each of these
- online engagement activity, such as number of visitors, document downloads, video views and comments and social media statistics.

Engagement reports can be found as supporting documents to council papers and we share the results on the consultation pages of the City of Sydney's website. People who participated in the engagement and provided contact details are always notified when results are available.

Using developments in digital technology, we continue to increase the channels and tools we use to report the outcomes of community engagement.

## Evaluating engagement

We evaluate our community engagement against our guiding principles and in line with the complexity of the engagement process. We use the knowledge gained through evaluation to continue to improve our engagement practice.

We use community feedback, insights from project teams, information from our website and the demographic information we collect to understand how well our engagement activity measures up against our guiding principles.

### Value: Integrity

Goal	Measure
The project is clear in scope and purpose.	Feedback gathered through engagement is relevant and useful.
The project is well designed and implemented.	Engagement plans are developed identifying impacted communities.
Communities are informed	Projects are publicised and materials are viewed.

### Value: Inclusiveness

Goal	Measure
We capture a range of perspectives from different people.	Feedback is received from a diverse range of people identified in the engagement plan.
The participation experience is accessible.	Activities are accessible and suitable for diverse communities.

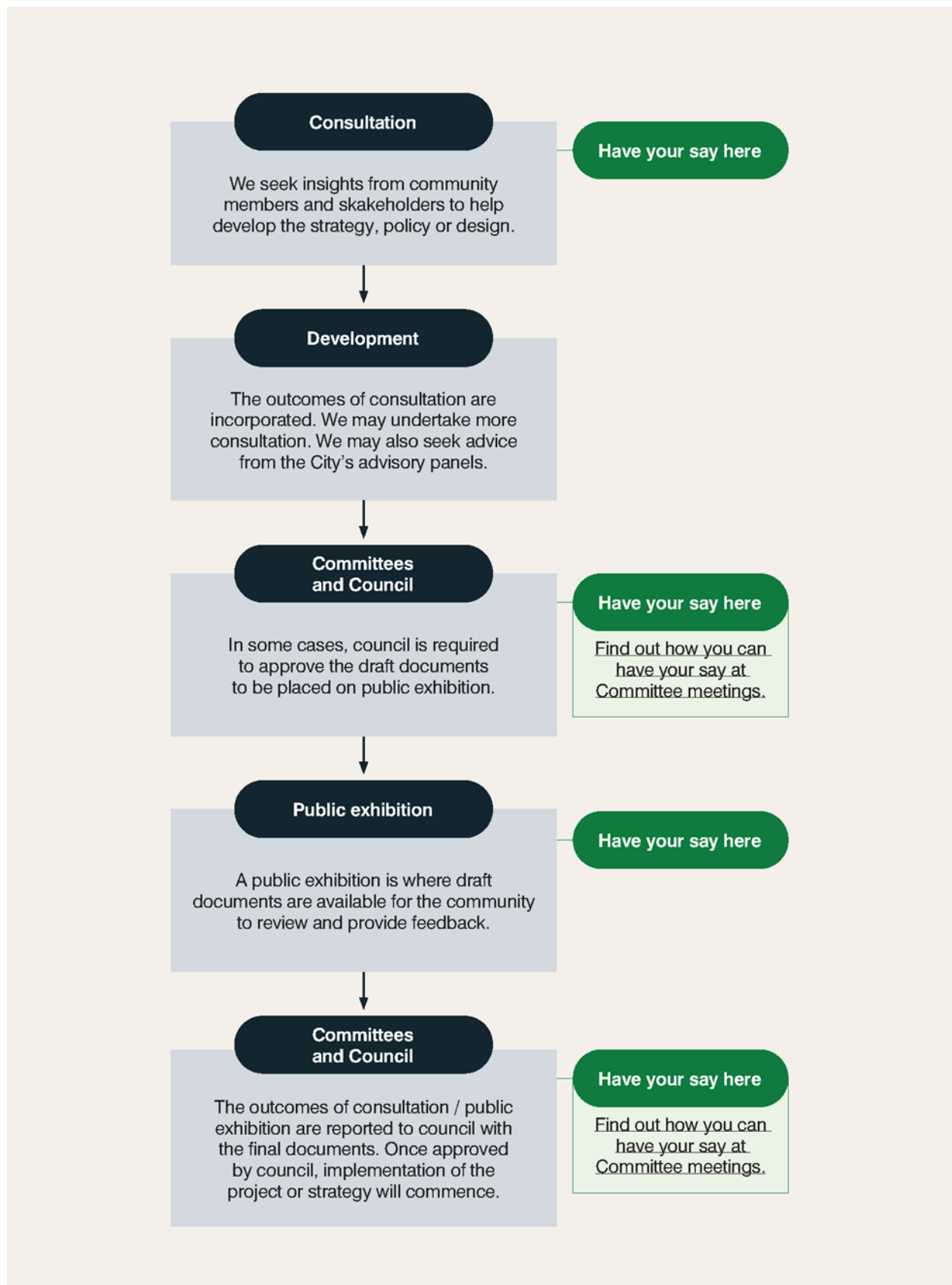
### Value: Dialogue

Goal	Measure
We make space for people to exchange views.	Techniques promote a two-way conversation, providing an opportunity for people to hear each other.
We listen to people.	People tell us they feel listened to.

### Value: Influence

Goal	Measure
People can see and understand the impact of their involvement.	Engagement reports are published detailing the feedback from the community. Council reports explain how feedback has influenced the decision.

Figure 2. When can I have my say?



Find out how you can have your say at Committee meetings  
[cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/guides/guidelines-for-speakers-at-council-committees](https://cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/guides/guidelines-for-speakers-at-council-committees)

# Engagement approaches

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## Keeping the community informed

The City is committed to keeping the community informed about our projects and plans. Sometimes it is appropriate to simply inform. In most of these cases, consultation has already occurred, a decision has already been made, and a project is about to begin.

The City's ongoing asset maintenance and renewal program, which is undertaken according to approved City codes and technical standards, is one example where we will notify surrounding residents and businesses. Our notifications will always have a City staff contact and community members are encouraged to speak to us if they have any questions.

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## People-centred engagement

### Listening and respecting

Participating in engagement should be an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. It should be delivered in a respectful and welcoming way. It should create an environment where all people feel they can share their ideas without fear, while listening to and respecting the views of others.

**“People were welcoming and respectful and wanted to hear what a young person had to say.” Workshop participant**

### Information channels

Individuals relate to different forms of information – visual, audio and written mediums. People also like different amounts of information. To provide information in a way that best suits different people we use summaries and long-form documents, easy read versions, translations, images, videos, data maps, virtual reality experiences, workshops and presentations. Using different formats helps overcome barriers to participation.

### Strengthening civic efficacy

Positive and effective engagement invests in the civic efficacy of society. It builds people's sense of empowerment and belief in their own ability to participate and make a difference. Effective engagement communicates the important role communities can play in council decision-making. It also builds knowledge within communities about how decisions are made.

Evidence shows that people who participate in sustained and impactful engagement processes are likely to use those skills and sense of empowerment to become more involved in community organisations and groups.



### Engagement that builds relationships

Hearing the views of others builds understanding and empathy.

When evaluating our engagement, we found that 69% of respondents valued hearing the views of other people. People also spoke about the importance of conversations that crossed generations and of making sure the diversity of their community was involved. Students spoke about how much they enjoyed hearing the views of peers from other schools and of building networks and connections.

In our conversations with diverse communities – First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people facing vulnerability – we are regularly reminded of the importance of ongoing relationships between the City of Sydney and the communities we serve.

**“I’ve had a really good time collaborating with people from other schools. It’s been really, really interesting because, the future we are going to be living in 2050, we have the power to change that.” Youth Summit participant**

When people can see the results of their input and build connections within their communities, they will continue to participate in the City of Sydney’s community engagement and develop an ongoing role in democratic decision-making.

**“A happy thriving community of citizens who want to and feel like they are able to give ideas and will be listened to.” Workshop participant**



Image 3. International Students Leadership and Ambassadors Program workshop Image credit: City of Sydney

## Citizens' Jury recommendations

The City of Sydney held a Citizens' Jury as part of the consultation on our community strategic plan. This group of 43 randomly selected and demographically representative community members was convened in late 2019. The jury considered and made recommendations on concepts that should be introduced by 2050 to help realise the communities' vision for Sydney. They considered the insights gathered from our community engagement process and proposed 8 transformative concepts. The first 2 of their recommendations address community participation in decision-making:

### **Recommendation 1 – Participatory governance**

**What:** We want a new model of governance that genuinely engages citizens in decision-making on all levels and is responsive and adaptable.

**Why:** There are currently concentrated power structures making decisions for citizens, rather than citizens holding the power. We want a city influenced by diverse views, needs and wants. We want to rectify imbalances and inequities.

**How:** We can achieve this through:

- participatory budgeting
- citizens' panels of sizeable scale for true representation
- innovative online voting system
- data to be used by council to generate economic benefit, and help communities

### **Recommendation 2 – First Peoples of Australia leadership and representation**

**What:** We want the Traditional Custodians of the land to help shape the city, through active participation in governance that is embedded, respectful. We want Sydney to be a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices influence the identity, design, and functioning of Sydney (Eora).

**Why:** We recognise that our history has displaced the First Peoples of Australia, and that current systems do not adequately allow First Nations' perspectives, values and priorities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities possess wisdom and knowledge that must be valued in shaping how we care for our Country and our communities – in governance, planning, education and health. This has the capacity to enhance social and emotional wellbeing for all. We must recognise the cultural authority of the First Peoples of Australia. We want a society that shares the respect for and connection to this land that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had for 60 000 years.

**How:** We need to promote First Nations' self-determination and empowerment so that ideas are not imposed on people and we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. In line with the principles of reconciliation, we want to place responsibility on non-Indigenous people to adapt their systems and practices to value and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and encourage discourse and community reflection. We need a process of truth telling and recognition that deals with the impacts of invasion and colonisation.

### **The City of Sydney's response**

The recommendations of the Citizens' Jury were reported to council in December 2019. The 8 transformative concepts have informed the project ideas and principles in Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision and the outcomes in our Community Strategic Plan.

We acknowledge the intent of the transformative concepts to deepen and expand the ways government works with communities on decision-making. The City of Sydney will continue to explore these approaches to help realise the communities' vision for 2050.

## Deliberative approaches

### Depth versus breadth

Many of the City of Sydney's engagement activities reach out and target input from as large and diverse a group of interested community members as possible. This delivers lots of opinions and ideas from the community to the decision-makers. A high level of participation in engagement is important to us in terms of understanding the needs and aspiration of our communities, providing confidence in decisions and building relationships.

However, in some cases, considering an issue in depth is the priority. The issue may be very polarised, complex or have significant trade-offs. Sometimes we may be at the point of the process when we need to decide between options. In these scenarios, a small group of community members who deliberate on an issue can help the City of Sydney arrive at the right decision.



Image 4. Citizens Jury on Sydney in 2050 Image credit: Brett Boardman / City of Sydney

### What is deliberation?

The ways we engage when trying to arrive at a decision are:

- debate: seek to persuade by arguing a position
- dialogue: seek to understand through respectful and constructive exchange
- deliberation: seek to find common ground and consensus.

A deliberative process will likely include both debate – for example experts presenting their position – and dialogue – for example participants discussing and exploring each other's views. A deliberative process aims to reach a consensus decision of the group.

Deliberation encourages constructive exchange and active listening. It also promotes critical thinking and challenges unconscious bias. It poses choices that the members of the group must collectively make.

Deliberation requires that participants become well informed about the topic and consider different perspectives in order to arrive at a public judgement (not opinion) about "what we can strongly agree on". The group is not just considering what its members want, but also what trade-offs they can accept.



## **Features of a deliberative engagement process**

### *Random selection*

A group of community members (usually between 12 and 50) is randomly selected. This group is selected to match the demographics of the population, effectively forming a mini-public. People are not selected to participate because they are vocal advocates or experts. These people may be involved in the process by presenting their position in a debate for the participants to consider.

### *Time*

The group is given the time to consider, research, learn, exchange ideas and arrive at agreed responses to the questions they are posed. This is unlike many engagement processes where time is limited. The City of Sydney has run deliberative engagement processes that extended over a couple of weeks through to citizens' juries that considered issues over several months.

### *Information*

The group is provided with extensive information on the issue and are encouraged to seek out their own sources of information. A citizens' jury should involve an opportunity for jurors to call their own expert witnesses.

### *Remit and authority*

The group is given a clear remit to deliberate on. The council has made it clear that they will act on the recommendations of the group.

## **Use of deliberative approaches to engagement**

Community members are generally willing to invest the time and effort required to participate in a deliberative process because they have trust in the process, care about the outcomes for their communities and can see that their effort will have impact.

A process like a citizens' jury also requires considerable investment from the organisation. It requires expert facilitation, councillors to not just listen but relinquish some of their authority and staff to resource the process with information and expertise.

The principles of a deliberative approach, such as random selection and time to consider issues in depth, can also be used in scaled down and more simple engagement projects. The City of Sydney has run a small number of large-scale deliberative processes as well as smaller deliberative workshops.

**"It was inspiring to see that a random group of citizens from diverse backgrounds, could collaborate with empathy and keen willingness to understand and support each other, and discover we had so much more in common." Citizens' juror**



## Digital engagement

Over the past 10 years, community engagement has undergone a digital transformation, moving from letters, workshops, town hall meetings and email submissions to a model of engagement where most feedback is collected using digital tools.

The Covid-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift to digital engagement. In response, we have strengthened our digital toolkit and tested alternative approaches, such as online workshops.

The smart city strategic framework describes how the City of Sydney will transform how we engage and support connected and empowered communities through smart, ethical and secure use of data and technology.

We will use developments in digital technology to increase inclusion and access to the City of Sydney's democratic process, provide ways for communities to connect with us and each other, deliver a more personalised experience, and improve the reporting of consultation outcomes.

Face-to-face activities will continue to be a crucial part of how we engage. However, developments in digital technology mean in-person engagement techniques can now be used in more targeted ways.

Digital engagement has also significantly enhanced the data we can share with the community members to ensure their input is informed and meaningful. The City of Sydney is increasingly using data maps and stories as an interactive visual mechanism to support engagement.

### Understanding who is participating

There are two ways to ensure we are reaching a diverse cross-section of the community.

1. Target communities: specific networks, forums and engagement activities along with targeted marketing and databases. Examples of how we reach different groups are outlined in the next chapter.

Digital marketing can also help increase exposure to particular audiences. For example, targeted social media marketing was used to increase the percentage of people under 30 who completed the Sydney 2050 survey.

2. Collecting demographic information about the people who participate in our engagement.

When we survey people, we ask basic demographic information. This information provides a picture of who we are speaking to and how views within communities change based on age, gender, place of residence among other things.



Image 5. Youth Summit for the Community Strategic Plan Image credit: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

### Next steps in digital engagement

We are developing our digital engagement experience through a range of tools and techniques, including quick polls, surveys, consensus tools and interactive mapping. This continues to strengthen our ability to hear from communities through digital channels, allow people to connect with the views of others in their community, and easily follow the issues they care about. A sign-in process is now available, asking some basic demographic information about the people participating. This helps us understand whether we are capturing the views and perspectives of a range of people. It also allows a more personalised experience where the user can see projects happening in their area and keep updated on progress.

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## Surveys

Surveys have become a fundamental tool in community engagement and have increased as more engagement takes place online. Most consultations include an online survey.

The City of Sydney also undertakes regular surveys of:

- wellbeing for all our area's residents (every 4 years)
- business needs survey (annually)
- community satisfaction survey (every 4 years)
- service users feedback (continuous).

These surveys provide essential data to understand community needs, measure progress on strategies and evaluate services.

There are three main types of survey techniques that the City of Sydney uses:

3. Online surveys that anyone can choose to do. These provide an effective way for us to collect information from lots of participants. We aim to get as large a sample as possible and we ask for demographic information to check that a range of people are participating. Social media marketing and other promotional activities can be used to encourage underrepresented groups to participate. The City of Sydney's surveys regularly attract over 1000 respondents.
4. Randomly selected phone or online surveys deliver views from a demographic sample. These surveys are usually conducted by a social research company. They provide robust, demographically matched data that allow us to understand the different perspectives between demographic groups. They also overcome any bias that may exist in self-selecting surveys we host on our website. They are an important checking mechanism particularly when there are polarised opinions on an issue. They are also useful when it is hard to achieve widespread community interest and we need to be confident that we are hearing a range of perspectives.
5. Intercept surveys are usually undertaken to capture the views of people who spend time in a particular place, use a service or are at an event. These provide a random sample of the people who value this place, event or service.

Our surveys provide quantitative data that we can test and explore through other engagement activities such as workshops and focus groups.

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## Coordinated community relations

Coordinated community relations provides a change management approach to support communities through major revitalisation and urban redevelopment projects. This approach has made an important contribution to the successful redevelopment of the Green Square area and the revitalisation of Haymarket and Chinatown.

In these neighbourhoods, affected communities face a series of decisions about upgrades to local streets, building new community infrastructure (including parks, recreational, community and cultural facilities) as well as planning changes and development applications. Among these ongoing decisions, communities also face impacts from construction on multiple projects. In an environment of change, small decisions during construction, such as temporary removal of parking or nightworks have a cumulative effect.

The City of Sydney supports these communities through a coordinated community relations approach, which includes dedicated webpages and development maps; regular updates and community forums; and construction liaison group meetings that cover multiple projects delivered by different parties (for example the City of Sydney, Department of Education and various developers).





Image 6. Have your say day at Green Square Image credit: City of Sydney

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## CityTalk events

CityTalks engage key federal, state and local strategic stakeholders, citizens, partners and visitors to the city on significant issues at a global, national and city level. They aim to inspire, inform, educate and engage the community in an international dialogue to realise Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision.

Our CityTalks are free events that typically draw an audience of 2,500 attendees. Hosted by the Lord Mayor of Sydney, they feature high profile international or national keynote speakers and a discussion panel of local and international experts.

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## Petitions

Community members can also petition the City of Sydney on issues of concern to them. Petitions can be tabled by a councillor at a council meeting or provided to the CEO and staff for a response. Petitions that are received about a project while it is open for consultation, will be considered as one submission item and included in the engagement outcomes report. The City of Sydney guidelines on petitions can be found in Appendix F.



# Advisory groups and partnerships

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## Advisory panels, committees and working groups

The City of Sydney has established community and sector advisory panels, committees and working groups to provide ongoing, specialist advice on complex issues affecting specific communities or areas of expertise. They do not have decision-making powers. These advisory panels are critical to implementing our long-term strategic vision and also addressing key challenges such as recovery from the pandemic.

These panels are appointed by us and have terms of reference to ensure clarity of purpose and process for appointment. Some are appointed through a public expression of interest while others are by invitation.

Within each panel, the City of Sydney aims to gather a diversity of expertise, experience and perspectives including young people, people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those from culturally diverse backgrounds.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel provides input to the policy, planning and advice to Council across all areas in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Established in 2008, the panel consists of community and industry professionals, including Elders, leaders, artists and young people, who live, work or study in our local area. The terms of reference specify that young people and Elders need to be represented on the panel.

Each member brings a wealth of knowledge and skills in providing advice on key issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Panel members contribute a diverse range of views to help build our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The panel also provides important advice about cultural protocols, Eora journey projects and our reconciliation action plan.

### **Inclusion (disability) Advisory Panel**

The City of Sydney's Inclusion (disability) Advisory Panel provides strategic, expert and impartial advice to us on our policies, strategies and plans to advance the inclusion of people with disability. As part of its role, the panel monitors and provides advice on the implementation of our Inclusion (disability) action plan 2025-2029.

Established in 2012, the panel reflects the diversity of the disability sector and members were chosen to represent a range of diverse disabilities and to provide expertise in areas such as inclusion and accessibility, government policy and strategy development, planning and design and disability-related legislation. They advise us on a wide range of issues relevant to people with disability, including access to mental health services, legislative reform, housing, transport, employment, advocacy, arts, culture and events, media and communication.

### **Multicultural Advisory Panel**

The Multicultural Advisory Panel advocates on behalf of culturally diverse communities to promote greater understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, equity and inclusion. Established in 2022 we consult this panel on issues, strategies, plans, policies, programs and events that nurture cultural diversity and capacity building, increase community connections and combat racism and discrimination. The panel provides expert advice on matters of importance to culturally and spiritually diverse communities including their needs and major strategies, such the community strategic plan. We get input from them on cultural events and programming; plus policies and projects which are likely to impact on multicultural communities and businesses.

With the aid of this panel, the City of Sydney will support and empower multicultural communities including employees, residents, visitors, international students, refugees, and asylum seekers, and furthermore preserve and celebrate the histories, heritage, and contributions of the City's multicultural communities so everyone feels safe, welcomed, and able to fully participate in what the city has to offer.

### **Housing for All Advisory Panel**

The Housing for All Working Group brings together industry leaders and experts to share knowledge and provide advice to the City of Sydney on the development of strategies and initiatives to increase the supply of affordable and diverse housing, including social housing.

Established in 2022, the group includes representatives from the Community Housing Provider sector, industry groups, research organisations plus housing peak bodies and state agencies. There are also community representatives who live in and/or access affordable and diverse housing.

The City of Sydney actively encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing groups or peak bodies to put forward nominees for membership of the working group.

### **Business and Economic Development Advisory Panel**

The Business and Economic Development Advisory Panel provides high-level independent expert advice to us on the implementation of the City of Sydney's Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035. The panel also provides guidance and advice on partnership opportunities to support the eight identified momentum building projects in the strategy.

The panel includes members who are highly recognised in relevant professional fields and who have demonstrated experience, seniority and knowledge of a range of economic areas such as trade and investment attraction, talent attraction, the innovation economy, green economy and sustainable finance, creative economy, community wealth building, the night time economy and the visitor economy.

### **Nightlife and Creative Industries Advisory Panel**

The Nightlife and Creative Industries Advisory Panel provides high-level independent expert advice to the City of Sydney on a strong, inclusive, culture-led nightlife and the implementation of special entertainment precincts and the Cultural Strategy 2025-2035.

The panel includes a broad range of members who are highly recognised in relevant professional fields and have demonstrated experience and knowledge in the arts, culture, creativity, live music and nightlife. In 2025 it replaced the Nightlife and Creative Sector Panel established in 2022.

### **Design Advisory Panel**

The Design Advisory Panel is an independent panel of experts that helps the City of Sydney continually improve the quality of private development and our own urban design and public projects. It advises us about urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, art and sustainability. Established in 2007, the panel provides advice to staff and decision-makers when determining the direction of major projects.

### **Public Art Advisory Panel**

The Public Art Advisory Panel comprises professional artists, curators and architects who provide advice to the City of Sydney on matters relating to public art. The advice informs the development, approval and implementation of public art projects and is provided to staff and decision-makers.

The panel was established in 2007.

### **Cycling Advisory Committee**

The Cycling Advisory Committee's role is to monitor progress and give advice on implementation of our cycling strategy and action plan. This committee provides a consultation and feedback forum for our area's key cycling stakeholders as part of the City of Sydney's ongoing commitment to cycling.

Established in 2007, the committee includes the Lord Mayor (or delegate), representatives of Bicycle NSW, Bike East, Bike Sydney, Better Streets, Transport for NSW, Place Management NSW, NSW Office of Sport and neighbouring councils.

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## **Sector partnerships**

### **Better Buildings Partnership**

In 2010 the City of Sydney formed the Better Buildings Partnership, a collaboration between leading property owners and industry influencers who are improving sustainability and rolling out green infrastructure in our area. These industry leaders control or manage over half the office floorspace across Sydney's city centre and have played an important role in improving the energy, water and waste efficiency of Sydney's existing buildings.

The members are Brookfield Office Properties Australia, Charter Hall, City of Sydney, DEXUS Property Group, Frasers Property, The GPT Group, Investa Property Group, Lendlease, Mirvac, Stockland, and the University of Technology Sydney.

### **Sustainable Destination Partnership**

The Sustainable Destination Partnership, launched in 2018, is a collaboration between leading hotel groups, hostels, serviced apartment owners, cultural institutions, entertainment venues and industry influencers working together to make Sydney a sustainable destination.

The partnership represents over half the hotel rooms in the city in addition to all major entertainment venues. These operations create almost half of Sydney's commercial waste, approximately 20% of its carbon emissions and consume significant amounts of the city's drinking water.

The members include hotel chains Hilton, Hyatt, Accor and TFE Hotels; Star Entertainment Group, Fox Studios, International Convention Centre and all the government-owned cultural institutions including Sydney Opera House.

### **Tech Central innovation precinct**

Innovation will power Sydney's economic recovery and growth. It is key to raising economic productivity. Innovation requires a healthy tech start-up ecosystem, a high intensity of creativity, a strong pipeline of current and future talent, active research and commercialisation, large-scale investment and a big volume of knowledge-based jobs.

An ideal environment for innovation to flourish is in a vibrant and connected precinct where collaboration is enabled through the co-location of education, industry, talent, infrastructure and investment.

In our local area, the Tech Central innovation precinct encompasses six neighbourhoods which have all the elements for a successful innovation precinct. They are Haymarket, Ultimo, Surry Hills, Camperdown, South Darling and Eveleigh (including North Eveleigh).

The City of Sydney is an active partner in the Tech Central precinct and is a member of the Tech Central Alliance. This group comprises anchor tenants across the private sector, academia, local and state governments to realise the vision for Tech Central to be recognised as Australia's innovation and technology capital. Membership of the group includes City of Sydney, Investment NSW, University of Technology Sydney, University of Sydney, Sydney Local Health District, Inner West Council, and representatives from the tech ecosystem operating within the precinct.

### **Resilient Sydney**

Resilient Sydney is a collaboration of all 33 local governments of Greater Sydney aiming to improve disaster preparedness and reduce disaster risk to the residents, economy and environment of Greater Sydney. The Resilient Sydney program began in 2015 as a city member of the international 100 Resilient Cities initiative, and Sydney remains a member of the global Resilient Cities Network.

The program and Resilient Sydney office are hosted by the City of Sydney. Funded by the metropolitan local governments, the program is governed by a metropolitan-level steering committee – engaging key senior executives from local and state government, business and community sectors.

The program operates as a hub of networks, engaging councils and partners to participate in the actions and directions of the Resilient Sydney strategy 2025-2030. Through engagement with residents, businesses and governments of metropolitan Sydney, the key resilience challenges were identified and noted in the strategy.



Image 7. Resilient Sydney Strategy Launch Image credit: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

# Engaging diverse communities

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## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

We are committed to being inclusive and innovative in our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be engaged through authentic and genuine connections, not just symbolism. This will be achieved through active participation in governance that is embedded, and most of all, respectful. The City of Sydney will listen to and elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our stretch reconciliation plan (RAP) seeks to:

- establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations
- engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the City of Sydney's projects and decision-making processes.

The Sydney 2050 First Nations Dialogue Forum held in 2019 asked the City of Sydney to recognise cultural authority and embed it in its governance structures and in decisions-making.

The City of Sydney will look at ways to further empower and centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices including through agreement-making. This also aligns with the Closing the Gap priority reforms, particularly number 1 which is 'Formal partnerships and shared decision-making'. We're committed to all 5 priority reforms that will accelerate progress towards equality and transform the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### Guiding principles

Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must be guided by principles of self-determination and shared decision-making, consistent with the City of Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols. It should:

- elevate and centre First Nations voices in our decisions
- Support, respect and adhere to First Nations cultural protocols and practices
- Embed and practice meaningful cultural safety
- understand the diversity of experiences, perspectives and expertise within First Nations communities
- nurture ongoing relationships - ensuring there is the time, flexibility and responsiveness in our approach to build trust.
- ensure the protection of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights
- Provide for data and information sharing with First Nations communities for community informed decision-making





Image 8. First Nations Dialogue Forum Image credit: Mark Metcalfe / City of Sydney

### Who we engage

Among groups and people that we engage with are:

- Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Elders, community leaders and residents in Redfern, Waterloo, Woolloomooloo and Glebe and other communities in the local area
- Cultural knowledge holders and Guardians
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, students and visitors
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, artists, writers, designers, performers and cultural practitioners
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, including community services, cultural organisations, religious groups, health and wellbeing organisations and sporting groups
- Indigenous media
- Indigenous businesses
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in government agencies and cultural institutions such as Aboriginal Affairs NSW, the government architect, curators, neighbouring councils
- community advocacy groups and campaigns
- service providers and interagency networks.

## **Delivering engagement**

The role of Aboriginal staff is critical to nurturing and navigating the City of Sydney's ongoing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We have a specialist business unit – First Nations Leadership – to guide this area of work. However, the whole organisation must carry responsibility and demonstrate a level of cultural capability supported through cultural training and appropriate engagement tools.

We also procure community engagement expertise from Indigenous consultancies, as well as project specific cultural experts, for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curators, artists, writers, architects and designers.

All the City of Sydney's engagement activities will be respectful and welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.

Our targeted engagement includes:

- regular meetings with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council
- seeking advice from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel
- meetings with Elders, Cultural knowledge holders and Guardians, as well as local organisations
- dialogue forums with invited community members
- pop-up stalls and surveys at community events such as Yabun Festival and NAIDOC Week, in collaboration with the event organisers
- workshops with school students and youth groups
- partnerships with cultural and community organisations on major projects such as the Eora Journey
- call outs via Indigenous media, such as Koori Radio
- interagency networks
- collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at the City of Sydney, in other councils, government agencies and education and cultural institutions

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## **Children and young people**

### **Commitment to authentic engagement**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines 54 central rights that all children should have around the world. Article 12 states: "Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account."

Our engagement upholds this right by empowering children and young people to express their views and ideas about the City of Sydney's strategies, projects and programs and to have those views and ideas considered alongside those of adults. We will apply the same guiding principles to engaging young people as we do everyone else. This includes conducting meaningful engagement with children and young people, analysing their responses, incorporating this into the relevant project, strategy or service and reporting the results to council.

This approach is consistent with the NSW Child Safe Standards which provide core components to ensure organisations provide a child safe environment. Standard 2 states: "Children participate in decisions that affect them and are taken seriously."

**“Kids today are tomorrow’s adults and if kids are listened to now it will make a big difference for the future.” Children’s Summit participant**

### **Creating empowering environments for children and young people**

It is critical that children and young people know they are welcome to contribute their ideas. To achieve this we will:

- create engagement spaces where children and young people feel respected and can express themselves
- go to where children and young people are through our relationships with schools and services and places like skateparks, libraries and community centres
- ensure that our engagement activities do not present age barriers and that children and young people are welcome at our community workshops.

It is also important to recognise that children and young people come from diverse backgrounds. The City of Sydney needs to ensure we engage in ways that are culturally safe, respectful and actively reach a diverse group of young people. We commit to ensuring the voices of First Nations and culturally diverse children and young people are heard in our decision-making processes.

We acknowledge the importance of the trusted relationships between staff, children, young people and families in our early learning centres, out-of-school-hours care and youth services.



Image 9. Children’s workshop at Cook + Phillip Park Image credit: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney



## **Types of engagement with children and young people**

### *Engaging on strategies and projects*

The City of Sydney has a long record of consulting children and young people on the design of playgrounds and parks, including skate and recreational facilities. We always inform local schools and children's services when upgrading parks and offer engagement activities for their students.

We also engage children and young people in strategy development. Some of the ways we do this include providing class discussion guides and data maps online, holding workshops with students' representative councils and inviting schools to send representatives to student forums and summits.

### *Reviewing and developing services and programs*

We seek feedback when we develop and review services and programs for children and young people. This feedback guides current and future offerings. The flexible self-direction and feedback built into our sessions also ensures that our approach responds to the interests, needs and ideas of children and young people. Involving children, young people and families in service design and operational policies.

The NSW Safe Child Standards states: "Families and communities are informed and involved". As part of the delivery of services and programs the City of Sydney will:

- engage families and communities on new services and programs, or changes to existing services and programs
- engage in open, two-way communication with families and communities about our child safety approach and make sure relevant information is accessible
- ensure families and communities have a say in our child safety policies and practices
- ensure families and communities are informed about our operations and governance including how to give feedback on services and raise issues of concern.

## **Engaging through school and child services**

Schools and child services provide important community connections in our local area. Holding consultations in classrooms ensures a diverse range of local children and young people can participate.

However, schools and early learning centres are busy places. To build ongoing relationships between the City of Sydney and schools, it is important we have a sustained, coordinated approach and work within their systems and programming.

When engaging within schools and early learning centres we will ensure our activities support the learning outcomes in the curriculum. Our approach aligns with the philosophy of civics and citizenship that underpins the Australian national curriculum. Engagement activities offer students authentic learning experiences and opportunities to build knowledge about how their community and government works.

As well as class-based workshops, the City of Sydney also provides consultation kits with discussion questions that students' representative councils (SRCs) and teachers can run themselves and return to us as part of the consultation.

During the Sydney 2050 engagement we heard that schools are looking for opportunities for the SRCs to participate in. This included both in-school activities and City of Sydney hosted summits and workshops that students can attend with students from other schools. This is a powerful approach when working on development of big-picture strategies.

**“I enjoyed meeting with other schools, talking with them and hearing what they have to say about the environment and the future of the city.” Children’s Summit participant**

### **Working with youth networks and interest groups**

The structure of our engagement activities should facilitate the sharing of ideas between children and young people and not just with the City of Sydney.

Students we engaged through the Sydney 2050 engagement spoke about how important it was to have the opportunity to exchange ideas and collaborate with peers from other schools on issues that matter to them.

We support the local youth services sector by leading and convening the City of Sydney Youth Interagency and actively participate in other interagency groups and networks, such as the Woolloomooloo Youth Working Group and the NSW Multicultural Youth Affairs Network. We also use programs such as Wear it Purple, Youth Week and our Youth Opportunities program and Emerging Civic Leaders program to promote youth engagement.

Our initiatives help connect and empower young people. Civic engagement programs involve young people as active citizens and amplify their voices in community decision-making. International students make up a large part of our population of young people.

The City of Sydney’s International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program builds the capacity of international students to co-design programs to address the needs of our culturally diverse communities.

Many services and organisations have youth advisory groups and representatives and these provide another avenue for engaging young people in the City of Sydney’s decision-making. Pathways such as YarnUp, provide important opportunities to engage diverse communities, including First Nations young people.

Young people are organising around issues that are important to them. We need to actively listen and engage with these self-organised groups, including climate activist groups. By working with networks of young people, we open the opportunity for engagement to be led by young people.

**“Young people care and they want to be involved, and we think this a great way to help them be active citizens in their local communities.” Emerging Civic Leaders participant**

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## **People with disability**

It is important that everyone has equitable opportunities to engage in community life and have a say on matters that affect them. We strive to make all our engagement activities inclusive and accessible. We also acknowledge it is important to have targeted conversations to properly understand how decisions impact diverse communities.

The City of Sydney’s Inclusion (disability) action plan commits to providing equitable access to mainstream services and encouraging people with disability to actively participate in our decision-making processes. The action plan commits to identifying and implementing ways to inform people with disability about how they can be involved in our decision-making. During the development of the plan, people with disability told us there needs to be more opportunities to have a say and co-



design principles need to be embedded into processes so that people with disability are involved in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluating.

The City of Sydney's Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel provides expert insights on experiences of people with disability and how we can increase access and inclusion. In addition to the importance of disability-led advocacy we also acknowledge the important role of families, carers, Disabled People's Organisations (DPO), advocacy groups and service providers and the insights that they can bring to our engagement.

Our staff guidelines for engaging people with disability outline minimum requirements for online and in-person consultation and give advice on inclusive and accessible community engagement.

We have an [Easy Read version](#) of this strategy available on our website.

### Accessible information

We use plain English in all engagement materials, avoiding jargon and clearly explaining processes.

People have told us information in alternative formats is important. It is required, for example when consulting on the inclusion (disability) action plan, and we provide a range of different formats: Easy Reads, Auslan, video explainers, live captioning and large print to help make our information as accessible as possible. Community members can also request braille, audio, large text or Easy Read versions of any information on our website.

We have guidelines to assist staff in creating accessible digital and print documents, to procure inclusive and accessible materials such as Easy Read versions of documents and to guide staff in communicating with people with disability.



Image 10. Image 10. Table-based workshop with 8 participants at the co-design roundtable for the inclusion (disability) action plan 2025-29. Photo: [Margaret Sevenjhazi](#) / City of Sydney

People have told us that they really value digital engagement. It enables the convenience of engaging at home and can make participating more accessible. People with disability have told us that they would like us to share information online, particularly through social media, our website and e-newsletters.

In 2019 the City of Sydney collaborated with Vision Australia to update our digital and print accessibility policy and procedures to comply with current standards for accessible digital and print information. Our websites and web applications must be compatible with assistive technologies (screen readers and magnification software) and comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2.

The updated policy also provides a guide to choosing alternative formats for documents based on the audience and the type of document being produced. Providing transcripts of audio content, captions for video content, and different channels for submissions and feedback (written or by phone) broadens access to online engagement.

### **Digital Divide**

Some people with disability have low internet usage or do not use it at all, highlighting the importance of keeping a range of ways for people to engage with the City of Sydney, including by phone or in person.

### **Inclusive and accessible events**

Our inclusive and accessible event guidelines for staff outline key access and inclusion considerations for planning and delivering a range of in-person and online events.

We provide accessible seating, hearing loops and a continuous accessible path of travel to support inclusive participation at face-to-face events. Simple adaptations to the design of workshops, for example smaller table groups, can make a significant difference to how inclusive these are.

To make events more accessible, we provide information to help people plan to attend, including accurate venue information and details of access features that will be available at the event. We also ask people during the booking process if they have any accessibility or communication requirements.

### **Opportunities for inclusive participation**

When planning inclusive engagement, it is important to ensure that communication is provided in an accessible format such as Auslan or Easy Read. It is also important to ensure that equitable opportunity for participation is provided throughout the engagement, for example, through inclusive facilitation or small group activities. Flexibility is key, as well as a welcoming and positive attitude and a willingness to adapt to provide for inclusive participation.

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## **Culturally and linguistically diverse communities**

The City of Sydney is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse parts of Australia. Almost 50% of our residents were born overseas and 36.7% of people speak a language other than English at home. Most commonly spoken languages include Mandarin, Cantonese, Thai, Spanish, Indonesian, and Vietnamese.



Image 11. Mandarin community session for the Community Strategic Plan Image credit: Katherine Griffiths

Culturally diverse communities have told us they value ongoing communication with City of Sydney, and that they get information through media and social media in their own-languages as well as through trusted groups like community and faith-based organisations. People need easily accessible information in plain English or in their first language, to understand what we are doing and how to participate.

We actively work with our culturally and linguistically diverse communities to identify communication gaps and barriers and develop strategies to ensure our information and services are accessible. We provide information in plain English and translations into community languages when needed. We acknowledge the importance of culturally welcoming and inclusive customer experiences. We leverage the knowledge and skills of our culturally diverse workforce and recognise the importance of building cultural competency of staff through training.

Channels that establish the relationship and ongoing engagement that we engage through include:

- our Multicultural Advisory Panel
- cultural groups that meet at our community centres
- International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program
- memorandums of understanding with universities
- library programs (bilingual storytime and other programs)
- Mandarin and Cantonese translators attending info days in Green Square
- translated materials and surveys to support major engagement projects such as a Vision for Haymarket
- wellbeing survey translated into community languages (traditional and simplified Chinese, Korean, Indonesian and Thai)
- longitudinal survey in Green Square, in partnership with University of New South Wales, available in simplified Chinese
- relationships with community leaders, organisations, service providers
- relationships with associate event providers for Lunar New Year.



## Priority Communities

We know there are groups within the community that are more likely to confront persistent barriers to accessing services and government systems. City of Sydney staff are committed to the value of respect. This means considering and valuing the views of everyone, showing empathy and treating all people equally and with dignity and respect.

It is important for us to recognise that people may need extra support to participate in our decision-making processes. We may need to tailor the engagement approach to make sure everyone impacted by the project is heard. Sometimes this includes overcoming barriers, such as a lack of access to digital channels or difficulty attending City of Sydney's standard face-to-face events.

Some of the ways we overcome these barriers include:

- going to where people feel safe, in the places and services they use every day
- creating an environment that is comfortable and welcoming, for example having a cup of tea at the community centre or facilitating conversations through trusted staff and service providers
- adapting consultation materials and online surveys so they are shorter or easier to complete and conducting them face-to-face as an interview
- taking the time to listen, not rushing people and expecting everything to be completed at once.

We reach out to impacted community members through existing forums, like resident groups, social housing neighbourhood advisory board meetings, community programs and services. We consult with trusted community representatives. The City of Sydney also organises regular local meetings such as the Lord Mayor's social housing forums.

The Covid-19 pandemic helped to strengthen a collaborative approach to engaging priority communities through the facilitation of the vaccine rollout. This required the City of Sydney, state government agencies and community organisations and services to work together and share resources and expertise. Regular communication through local services and networks, distributed via printed materials and community radio were very effective. The lessons learned and relationships built through this emergency response approach will inform our engagement into the future.

Some guiding principles to ensure priority communities can participate in our engagement processes include:

- always provide alternatives to digital communications
- meet in places that are familiar and local
- recognise some people are hesitant to engage with government staff due to their past experiences or lack of trust and take time to build a rapport and create meaningful engagement
- consider opportunities to engage in small groups or one-to-one
- maintain communication to continue show respect and retain trust by responding to people about the project through the same channels they used or prefer

Some of the community channels and places we use include:

- community centres
- libraries
- schools
- our services, including child and youth services, homelessness and safe city programs and Meals on Wheels
- social housing forums



- interagency networks with local services providers, not-for-profit organisations and government agencies
  - local services and advocacy groups.
- 

## Business sector

Sydney is recognised as a global city and the leading economic centre of Australia. In 2023 the economy that operates within the City of Sydney local area generated over \$142 billion in economic output, accounting for 6% of the total Australian Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The City of Sydney local area hosts over 520,000 jobs, with the biggest employers finance and financial services (125,000 jobs) and professional and business services (94,000 jobs). There are also significant clusters of jobs in the information, communication and technology sector (39,000 jobs), tourist, cultural and leisure sector (33,000 jobs), creative industries (32,000 jobs) and food and drink (32,000 jobs). Considering the size and diversity of the economic opportunities in the City of Sydney, maintaining a strong, inclusive, innovative and sustainable economy is critical for Greater Sydney, NSW and Australia.

The City of Sydney makes important and direct contributions to promote an environment that facilitates economic growth, playing an important role in land use and transport planning, public domain improvements, advocacy and connecting business networks, local chambers and peak bodies. We are guided by a community vision for a vibrant, future-focused and diverse economy.

The City of Sydney has a dedicated team that works closely with the business sector to ensure our initiatives, grants and education programs are developed appropriately. We use a variety of channels to engage with the business sector including:

- our Business and Economic Development Advisory panel
- engagement on the new Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035
- regular briefings on programs, projects and issues
- quarterly public reporting on the state of the City of Sydney economy
- listening sessions with business chambers, industry associations and business representatives
- customer service business concierge providing information to business owners on a one-on-one basis
- relationship management with grants recipients.

## Challenges

Overall, the City of Sydney economy has recovered strongly from the significant economic impacts that were triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic and the high inflation and cost of living pressures that followed, although economic headwinds for retail and hospitality. Changing patterns of work and the impact of more flexible work arrangements have led to a change in the way the city is used, with fewer commuters Monday to Friday, but a sharp increase in the number of visitors to the city, particularly on weekends. These changes present both challenges and opportunities.

In addition, the City of Sydney economy, like all economies is presented with several underlying vulnerabilities. These include the threat presented by climate change, the economic and social costs of rising inequality and the impact of slowing productivity growth and unrealised innovation potential. The City of Sydney is responding to these challenges through the new Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035 and is actively engaging with this sector to meet their needs.

## Creative sector

The City of Sydney is committed to supporting Sydney's cultural life. We recognise the intrinsic and instrumental value of creative activity as a cultural, economic and social force. Culture is an essential component of all aspects of life. It gives our city its character and creates a shared identity for our diverse and growing population. It is fundamental to an inclusive society, which helps our communities remain connected in times of change. For our city to succeed, we must value our unique, eclectic and diverse people by welcoming new ideas and forms of expression.

A city that aspires to a strong cultural life needs to value its artists, musicians, writers, filmmakers, designers and other creative practitioners. We need to harness the full potential of our creative practitioners and apply their thinking city-wide, integrating it into every aspect of the city and its long-term vision.

We provide a range of accessible opportunities for cultural organisations, artists, and the broader community to provide input into the City of Sydney's vision, priority issues and programs.



Image 12. Creative Sector workshop for the Community Strategic Plan Image credit: Jessica Lindsay

We actively engage with the creative sector during:

- policy and strategy development such as Sustainable Sydney 2030–2050 Continuing the Vision, Cultural Strategy 2025-2035, grants and policy reviews and development control plans
- public exhibition of policies, strategies or planning proposals that may impact the cultural life of the City of Sydney.

Channels used by us to engage with the creative sector include:

- our Nightlife and Creative Industries Advisory Panel
- direct in-person engagements
- public briefings and question and answer sessions where communities learn about our programs and are invited to speak with staff

- online webinars and forums
- attendance by invitation to forums, conferences and events organised and hosted by others in the sector
- liaising through our advisory panels

Challenges faced by the City of Sydney when engaging with the sector include reaching the right mix of cultural, creative and business operators as well as culturally diverse communities including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### *Cultural sector challenges*

The growth of the City of Sydney area and rising property prices have had unintended consequences for our cultural life, impacting the viability of venues for live music, small theatres, galleries, studios and rehearsal spaces. There are significantly fewer spaces available where creative professionals can work and live.

The city has now endorsed its new Cultural Strategy 2025-2035. This strategy outlines a roadmap for the next 10 years to address the issues facing the creative sector in Sydney.

Consultation was undertaken directly with the sector in the development of this strategy. Some of the key findings from the sector that have informed the Strategy include the following insights:

The investment in cultural needs to be expanded and so does our way of thinking about it

We need to challenge the notion that cultural subsidies are simply propping up not-for-profit operators whose costs of production outweigh commercial returns. Instead, we need to embrace our investment in creativity as resourcing innovation, inclusion, adaptation, social cohesion and wellbeing.

The sector is suffering from burnout – recovery will take time.

Burnout is a new normal in cultural organisations and it is openly discussed. We need to acknowledge it and work together to address it. There is no cash infusion or silver bullet that will fix this. We need a steady, measured approach, consistently working to firm up the foundations.

For the full insights see the [Cultural Strategy 2025-2035](#)

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# Community participation plan for land use planning

The City of Sydney is required to have a community participation plan which describes the public exhibition and notification processes for land use planning matters in terms of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021*.

Areas covered by this chapter include strategic planning and plan-making, planning agreements and development assessment. It should be read in conjunction with the following appendices:

- Appendix C – land use planning notification and submission requirements
- Appendix D – land use planning consultation matrix
- Appendix E – glossary of terms.

This chapter and appendices constitute the City's community participation plan.

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## Strategic planning

Strategic planning involves preparing long-term plans to guide the city's growth and change and setting planning controls to guide development.

The City of Sydney's strategic land use planning is informed by the NSW Government's regional and district plans and our Community Strategic Plan Delivering Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050.

These plans set the foundations for the Local Strategic Planning Statement: City Plan 2036 which sets the 20 year land use planning vision; planning controls in our Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan; and Contributions Plans which provide funding local infrastructure.

The City reviews and amends these plans in consultation with the community to ensure they contribute to agreed state and local planning objectives.

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## Development assessment

Development assessment, or statutory planning, involves assessing a proposal for development (development application) to use land or undertake building works against planning controls.

Development applications can be determined by delegated City of Sydney staff; by the Local Planning Panel; or by the Central Sydney Planning Committee, where the cost of works exceeds \$50 million.

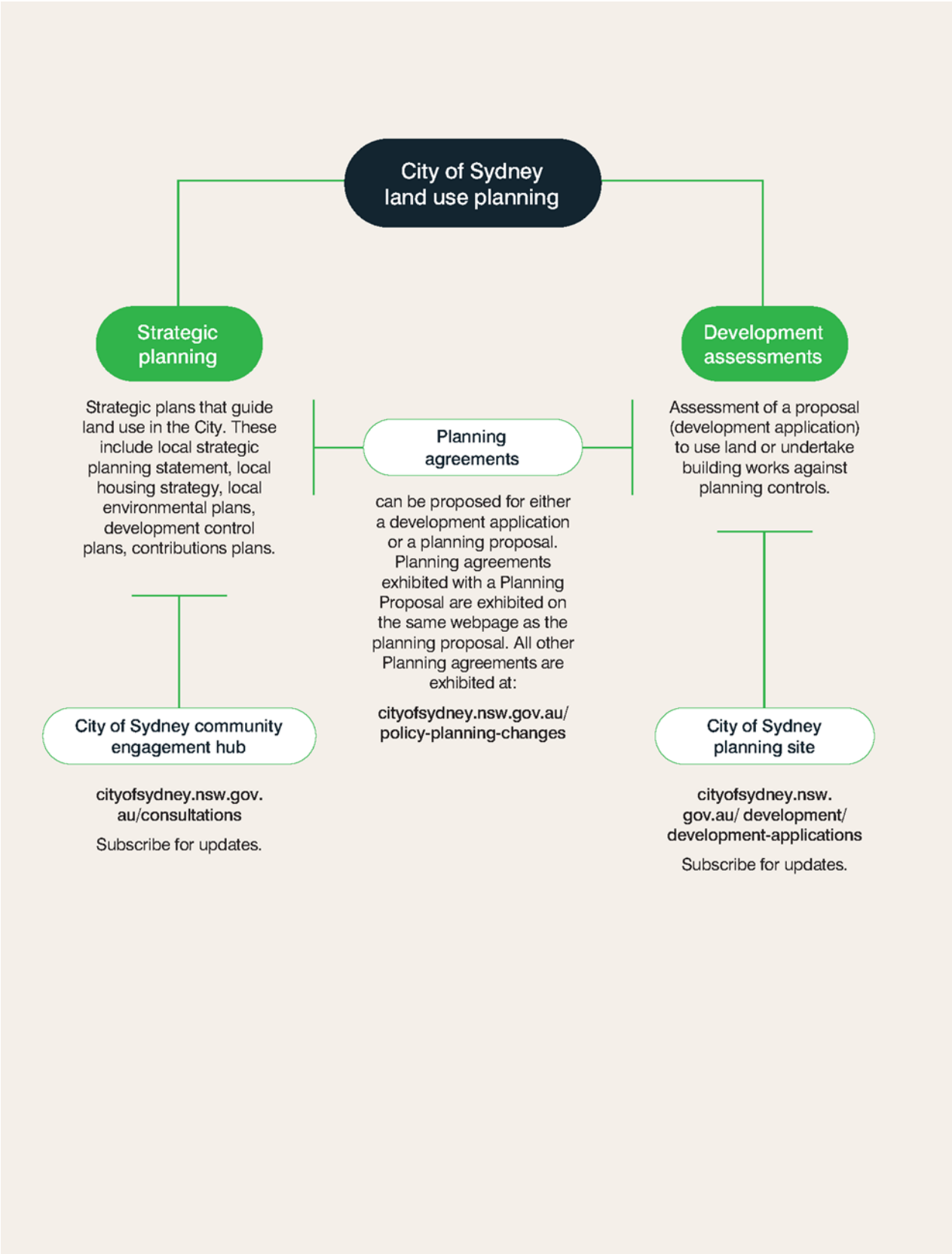
At the City of Sydney, the majority of development and footway applications are assessed against:

- the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012
- the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012
- relevant state environmental planning policies
- other relevant legislation, such as the *Local Government Act 1993*, the *Roads Act 1993* and the *City of Sydney Act 1988*.

There are some limited circumstances where historical local environmental plans and development control plans may apply.

Examples of the types of applications the City of Sydney receives and assesses include development applications, footway applications, section 4.55 and 4.56 modification applications, division 8.2 application reviews, Council-related applications, environmental impact statements, designated development, integrated development and state significant development. Definitions of each can be found in Appendix E.

Figure 3. How to engage on land use planning matters



Notification and submission requirements, maps, timeframes, engagement activities and glossary of planning terms are detailed in appendix C, D and E.

# Appendices

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## Appendix A: list of legislation

### Legislation or standards

Local Government Act 1993

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021

Crown Land Management Act 2016

Roads Act 1993

City of Sydney Act 1988

Multicultural NSW Act 2000

Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Children's Guardian Act 2019

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

Geographical Names Act 1966

Geographical Names Board policies and manuals

NSW Child Safe Standards

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## Appendix B: list of engagement activities

This list is not exhaustive. The City will assess each project in line with the principles of the Community Engagement Strategy to decide on the tools and activities used.

Activity
Website – <a href="https://sydneyyoursay.com.au">sydneyyoursay.com.au</a>
Surveys (online, intercept, randomly selected)
Online interactive maps
Online community ideas boards
Quick polls
Community discussion guides
School activities kits
Data stories
Advisory panels, committees and groups
Partnership and networks
Summits
CityTalks
Stakeholder briefings
Community workshops
Deliberative workshops
Citizens juries
Focus groups

Activity
Stakeholder meetings
In depth interviews
Social housing meetings
Creative writing workshops
Door knocking
On-site pop-ups
Walking tours
Site visits
Information stalls
Community letters
Social media
E-newsletters
Stakeholder emails
Signage in the public domain
Videos, animations, flythroughs
Artist impressions, images and designs

## Appendix C: land use planning notification and submission requirements (community participation plan)

The City will publicly exhibit development applications and draft plans (including development control plans, contributions plans, local strategic planning statements, community participation plans, and planning proposals) on the website for the dates and duration set out in the notice.

The notification process will:

- ✓ adhere to the community participation plan for land use planning
- ✓ be consistent in the notification of similar applications
- ✓ clearly identify circumstances where a notification is not required (see appendix D)
- ✓ facilitate the efficient processing of applications without compromising the opportunity for public participation
- ✓ identify exhibition period and letter notification area (see appendix C and D).
- ✓ exclude the period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) from the calculation of the public exhibition (should the timing of the application fall over the traditional holiday period of Christmas and New Years Day)
- ✓ extend the notification closure date to the next business day if a notification period finishes on a weekend or a public holiday

### Notifications for development applications

The information contained in notifications for development applications is required by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021. This information includes:

- the general nature and purpose of the development proposal;
- the address of the proposed development;
- the name of the applicant;
- the application reference number;
- where and when the DA can be inspected;
- the period during which submissions can be made;
- Council's contact details including address, telephone and email;
- a statement outlining the privacy rights of any person making a submission to Council;
- a statement outlining the requirement for a submitter to a development application to make a public disclosure of any donation to a Councillor and/or gift to a Councillor or Council employee in the previous two (2) years. Failure to disclose relevant information is an offence under the Act. It is also an offence to make a false disclosure statement. Further information, including a 'Political Donation and Gifts Disclosure Statement' form and a glossary of terms, is available online or in person at any of Council's office locations;
- the date of the notification letter, with the notification period commencing one day after the date of the notification letter.

### Site notices

Site notices as required by this plan will be placed on the main frontage(s) (not service lanes, except where significant development is proposed on that service lane) of the site(s) in a position where it will be able to be read from a public place.

### *Changes or exceptions to notification procedures*

The City has the discretion to alter the procedures in appendix D for a particular application if the nature of the development, its location or the history of site development warrants a different form of consultation. In such circumstances the notification period may be increased up to 40 days.

In exceptional circumstances, where it is determined the nature or circumstances of the development do not require or allow for notification in accordance with the procedures in appendix D, the Director of City Planning, Development and Transport may consider reduced notification.

The City may write to affected and adjoining landowners and occupants, depending on the nature, scale, potential environmental impact of the proposal and practicality of carrying out the notification. For example, the City may not issue written notifications where a citywide administrative amendment has no material impact on the community.

Where a development is not listed in appendix D, the City will determine the most appropriate notification procedure using appendix D as a guide.

An applicant may apply for an amendment to the development application at anytime prior to determination under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021*. The application may be re-notified matching the original exhibition period, or the City may reduce or remove the re-notification period if the amendment does not result in significant additional environmental impact.

An application for a review of a determination of an application, under Division 8.2 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, will be notified in the same manner as the original application. Anyone who made a submission to the original application will be notified.

For an application to modify an existing development consent, under sections 4.55(2) & 4.56(1) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, where the original development application was for designated development, State significant development, nominated integrated development or threatened species development, anyone who made a submission to the original application will be notified, or reasonable attempts will be made, by sending written notice to the last address known to the City of the submitter.

For an existing development consent that is modified or revoked, under section 4.57 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, as a consequence of a proposed Local Environmental Plan amendment, notice will be provided to those who are considered to be adversely affected by the revocation or modification of the consent.

Requirements outlined in appendices C and D do not apply to permits for works to trees. Schedule 8 of the Sydney DCP 2012 establishes procedures for notification of neighbours when a tree is to be removed.

### *Deficient development applications*

The Council may not notify a development application which is considered incomplete or inadequate.

### **Notifications for draft plans**

*The Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* requires the City, when consulting on draft Development Control Plans and draft Contributions Plans, to publicly exhibit a copy of the draft plan and a copy of any supporting documents on the dates and during the times set out in the notice. Draft Local Strategic Planning Statements, draft Community Participation Plans and Planning Proposals (LEP amendments) are exhibited and notified in the same way. Planning Proposals are also exhibited in accordance with requirements of a Gateway Determination.

For draft plans, the City may also write to affected and adjoining land owners and occupants, depending on the nature, scale, potential impact of the change and practicality of carrying out the notification. For example, the City may not issue written notifications where a citywide administrative amendment has no material impact on the community.

Draft plans are notified for at least the minimum period set out in the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The City exhibits all draft plans on its website. All written notices will:

- give a brief description of the draft plan or its objectives and intended outcomes
- indicate the land affected by the draft plan
- state where the draft plan can be viewed online
- provide contact details for the receipt of submissions
- indicate the last date for submissions, and
- in relation to Planning Proposals (LEP Amendments), confirm whether authorisation for making the plan has been issued to Council.

### **Notification of planning agreements**

A planning agreement cannot be entered into, amended or revoked unless public notice is given and the planning agreement is first made publicly available for inspection for a minimum period of 28 days.

If the planning agreement is in connection with a development application, the public notice will be given as soon as possible after a draft agreement has been prepared and agreed by the parties, in the same manner as any public notice of the relevant development application that is required under this plan and the Act.

If the planning agreement is in connection with a planning proposal, the public notice will be given, if practicable, as part of and concurrently with, and in the same manner as, any public notice of the relevant planning proposal that is required under this plan.

Where it is not practicable to give public notice at such times, the Regulation requires that it be given as soon as practicable as determined by Council.

Any material changes proposed to be made to a planning agreement after a public notice has been given should be subject to renotification if the changes would materially affect:

- how any of the matters specified in section 7.4 of the Act are dealt with by the planning agreement;
- other key terms and conditions of the planning agreement;
- the Council's interests or public interest under the planning agreement;
- whether a non-involved member of the community would have made a submission objecting to the change if it had been publicly notified.

### **Submissions**

In making, considering and responding to submissions for development applications and draft plans, the following procedures apply:

- anyone may make a submission regardless of whether they received a notification letter
- anonymous submissions will not be considered or acknowledged
- submissions are not confidential and are open to public access under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act)
- all submissions received within the notification period will be considered and summarised in assessment or engagement reports
- submissions received will be acknowledged as soon as practicable
- submissions must be made in writing, must include the development address or application number and must be delivered to the Council either personally, by post or electronic mail.



Planning staff may discuss applications over the phone, but these conversations do not constitute a submission.

- submissions must include contact details including a return address (postal or email address). This will allow acknowledgement letters to be sent.
- illegible submissions will not be acknowledged.
- where the submission comprises a petition, the acknowledgement and all future contact will be sent to the head petitioner or, where not nominated, the first petitioner supplying contact details.
- best endeavours will be made to contact people prior to the applicable meeting of the Council or the Central Sydney Planning Committee. However the onus remains on the person to seek information about meeting dates from the officer dealing with the application or the City website.
- for development applications, acknowledgement letters will include advice that if the person making the submission wishes to be notified of the Local Planning Panel or Central Sydney Planning Committee meeting where the development application is to be considered, they must provide daytime contact details.
- following the determination of a development application, anyone who made a submission will be notified in writing of the decision.

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## Notification distribution – development applications

In addition to placing applications on its website, the Council notifies an application by sending a letter to surrounding property owners and occupiers.

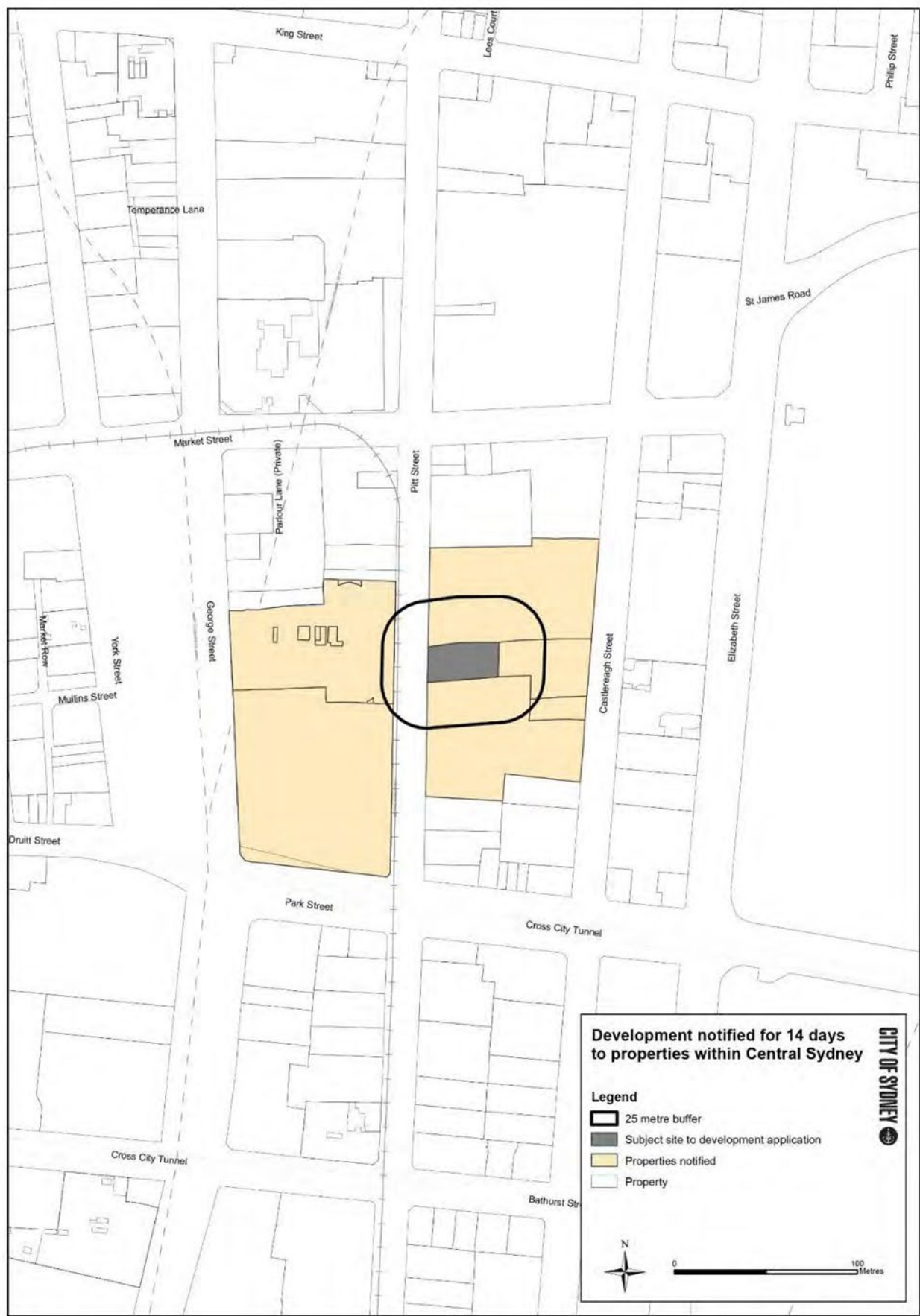
- ✓ 25m for development notified for 14 days;
- ✓ 50m for development notified for 21 days; and
- ✓ 75m for development notified for 28 days.

The notification area may be altered based on the nature and the likely impact of the development proposal, as explained in the subsection 'Changes or exceptions to notification procedures' in Appendix C. Council-related development applications may be notified for 28 days over a 25m radius in circumstances where the application is assessed as falling into the 'Low Risk' level of risk category pursuant to the Council-related Development Applications Policy.

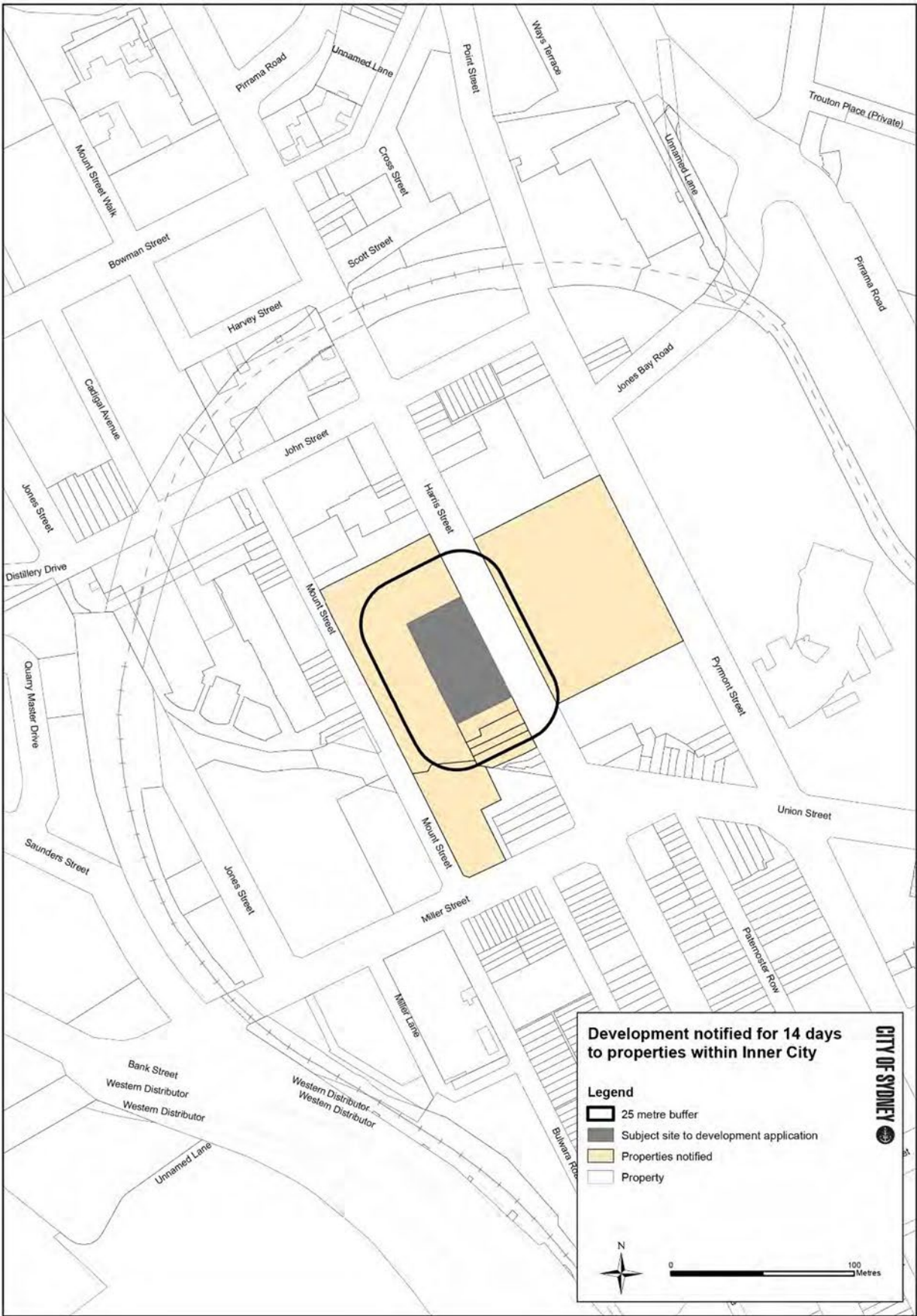
Properties in adjoining local government areas within the minimum radius detailed above will be notified in accordance with these provisions if the adjoining local government authority provides the City of Sydney with the relevant property details within 48 hours of making a request.

Where a surrounding property is in single ownership, including properties owned by a single company, the letter will be addressed to that owner. Where a surrounding property has multiple owners but is not under strata or community title (i.e. more than one individual owner or more than one company owner), letters will be addressed to all owners. Where a surrounding property is in strata or community title, letters will be addressed to the Owners Corporation and to individual owners of strata units.

Development notified for 14 days to properties within Central Sydney

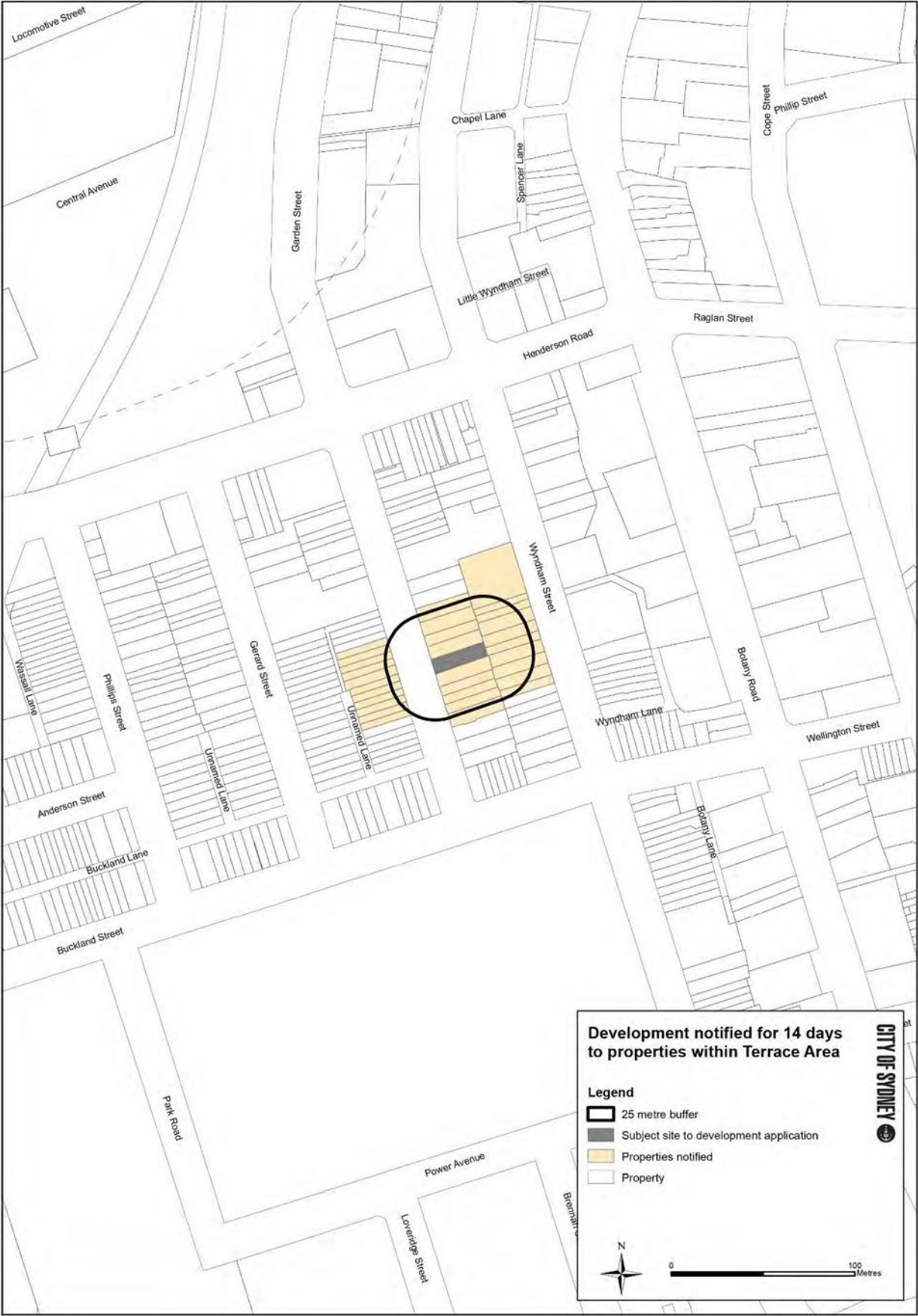


Development notified for 14 days to properties within Inner City



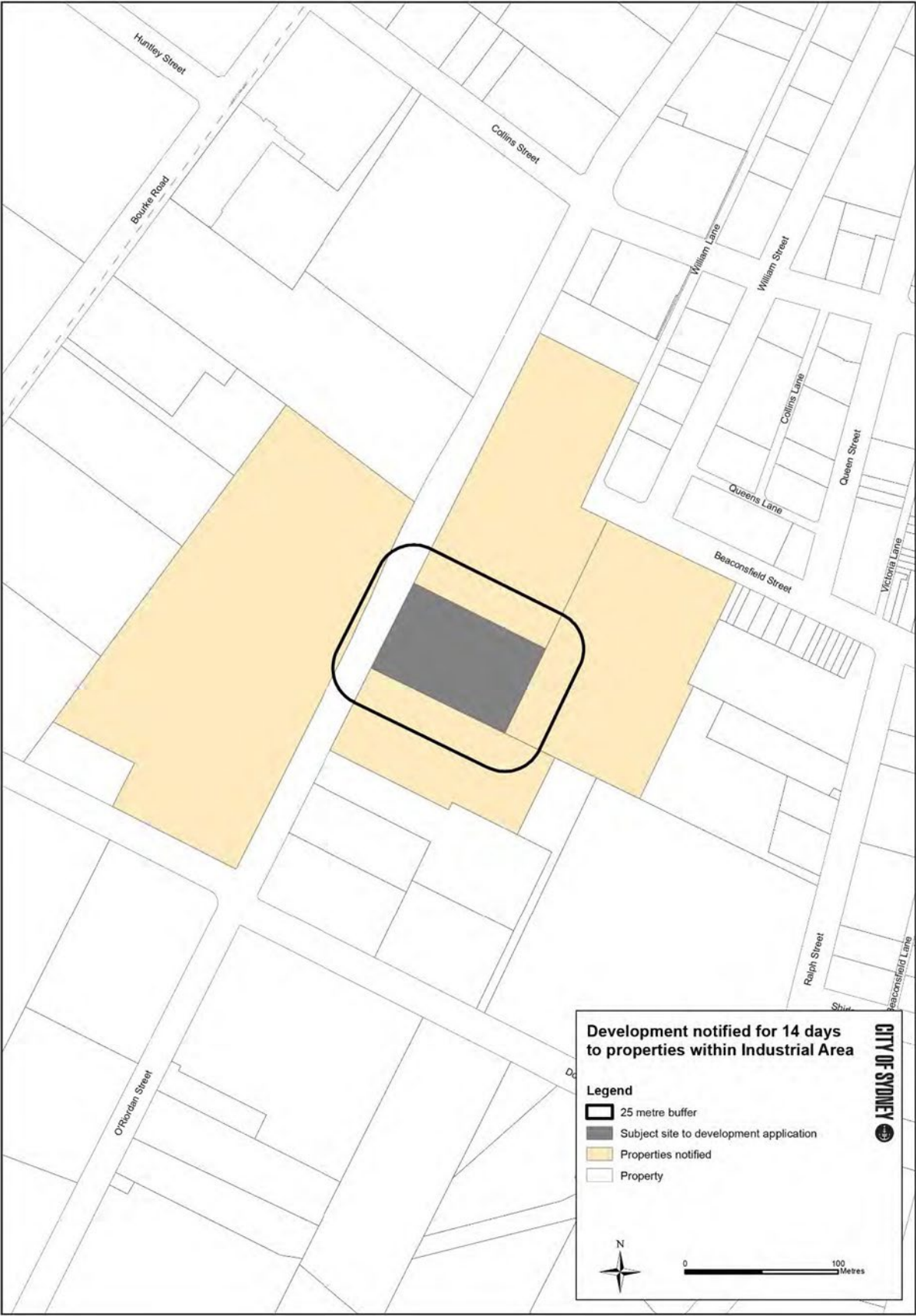


Development notified for 14 days to properties within Terrace Area

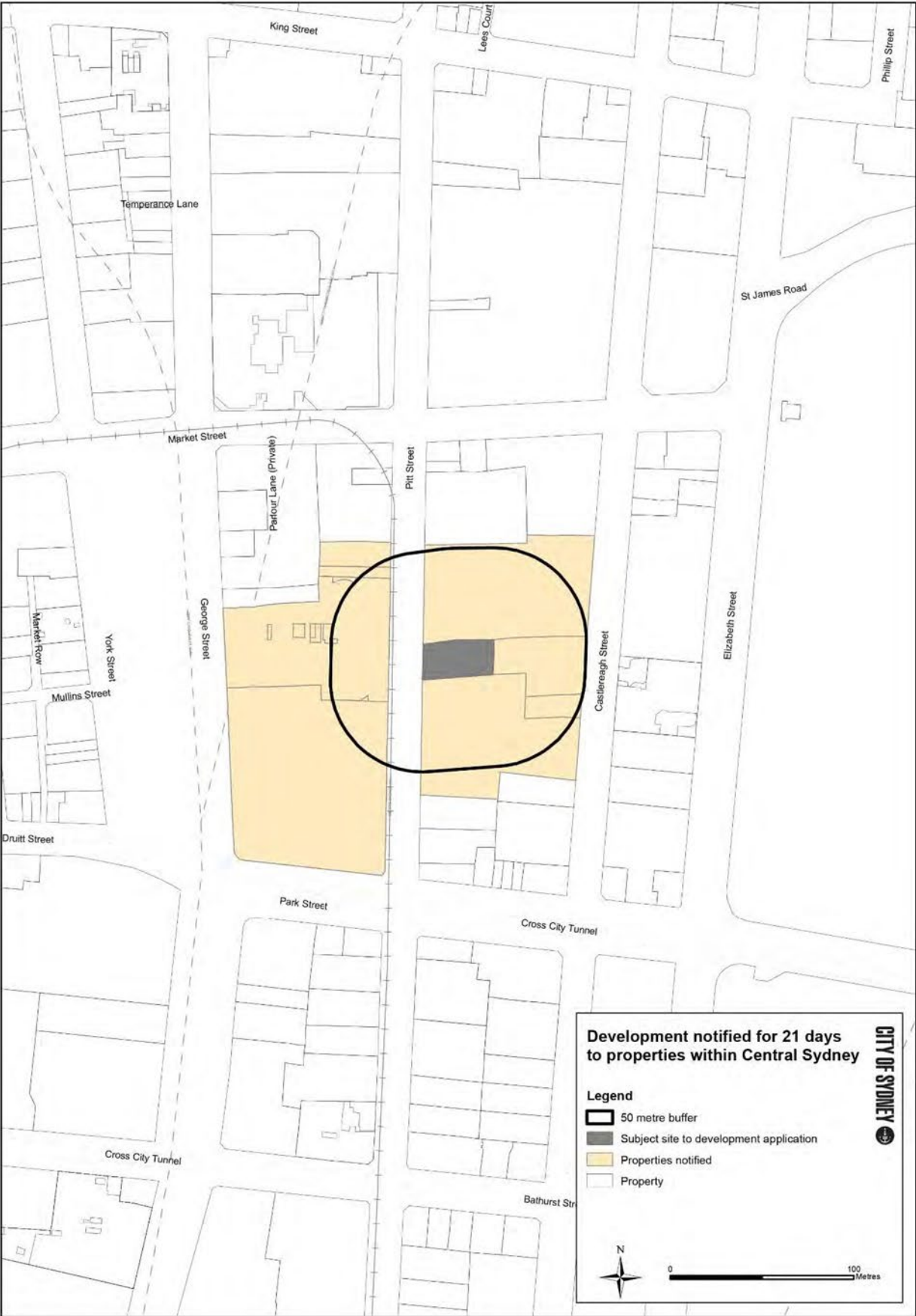




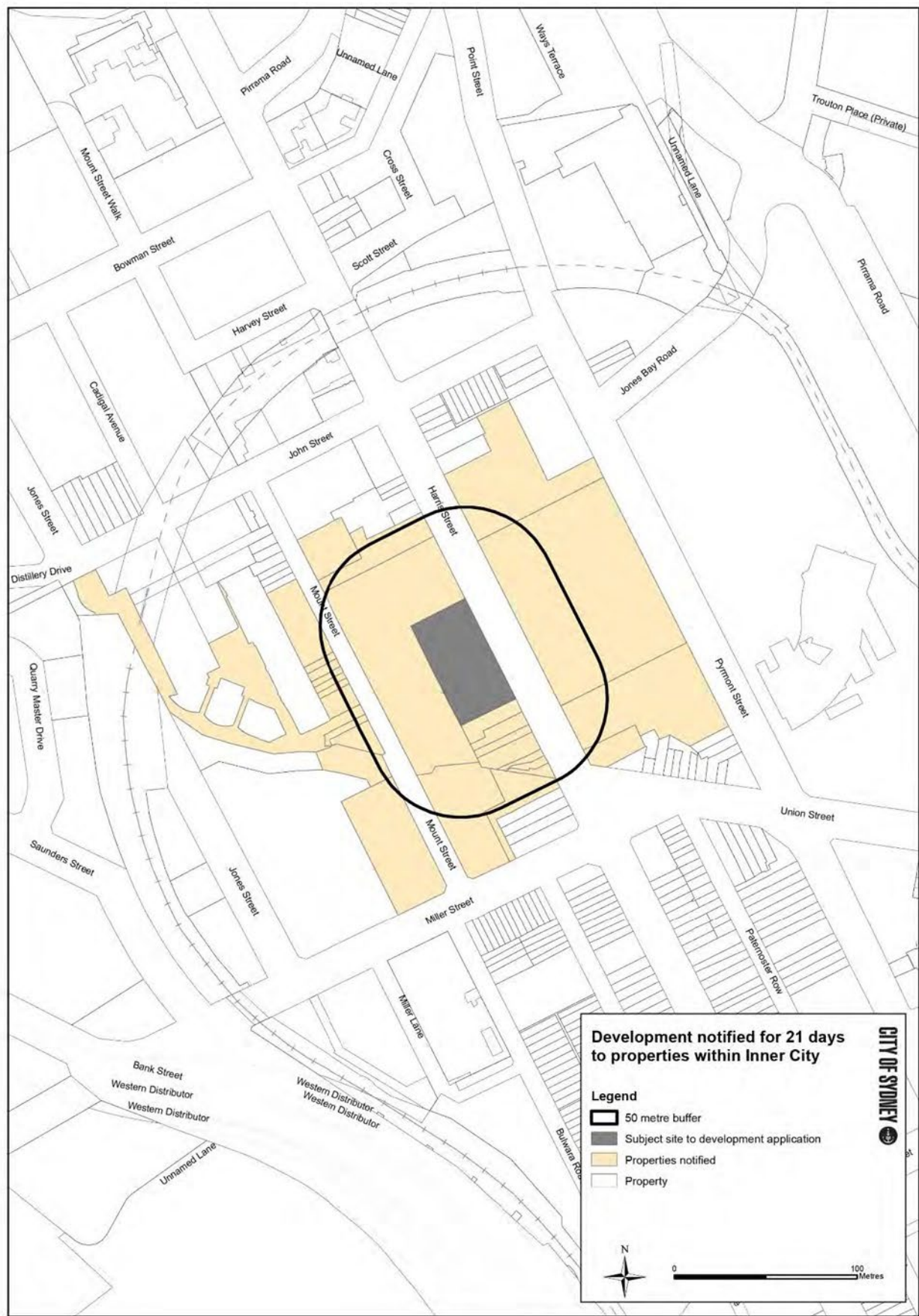
Development notified for 14 days to properties within Industrial Area



Development notified for 21 days to properties within Central Sydney



Development notified for 21 days to properties within Inner City



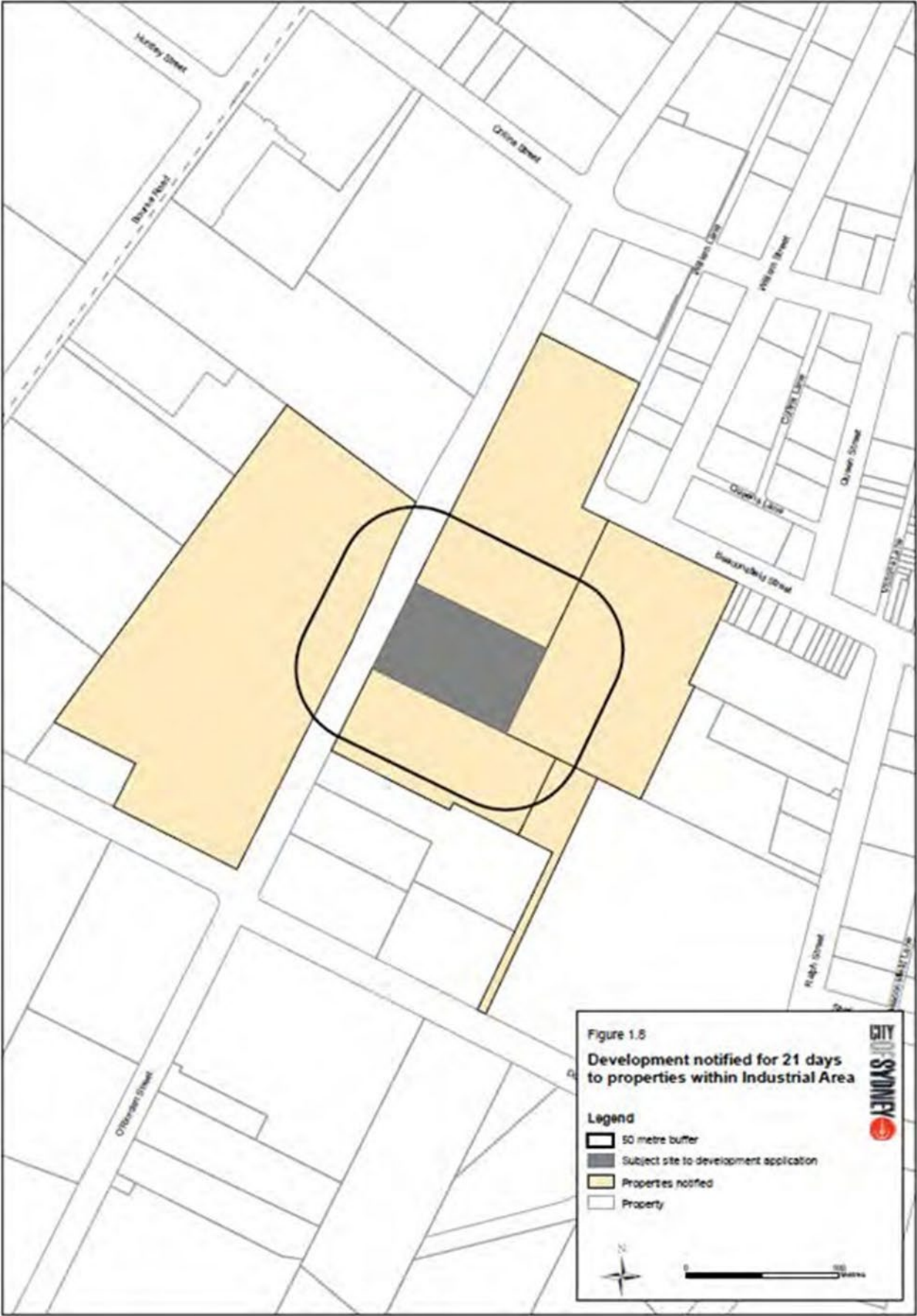


Development notified for 21 days to properties within Terrace Area

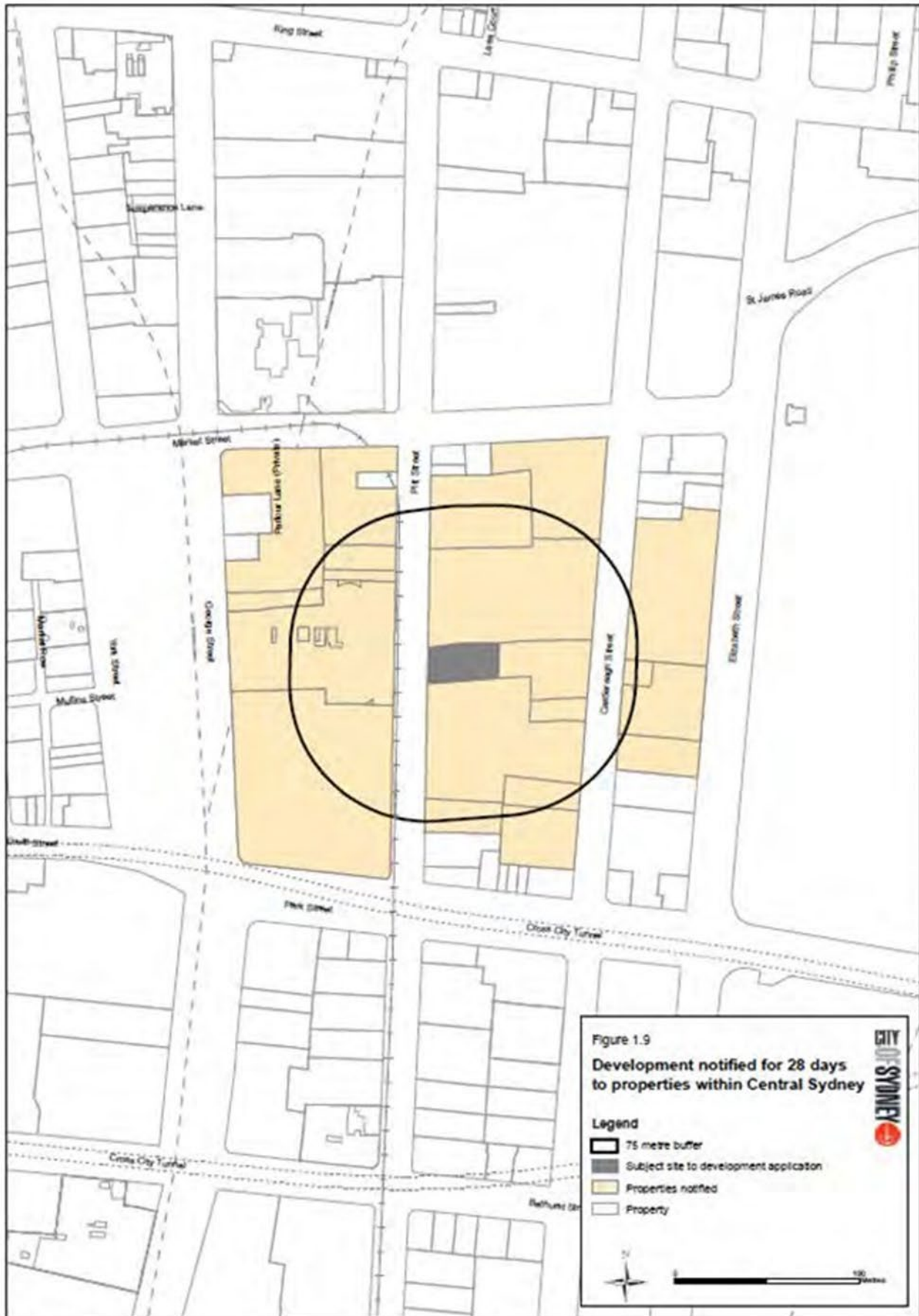




Development notified for 21 days to properties within Industrial Area

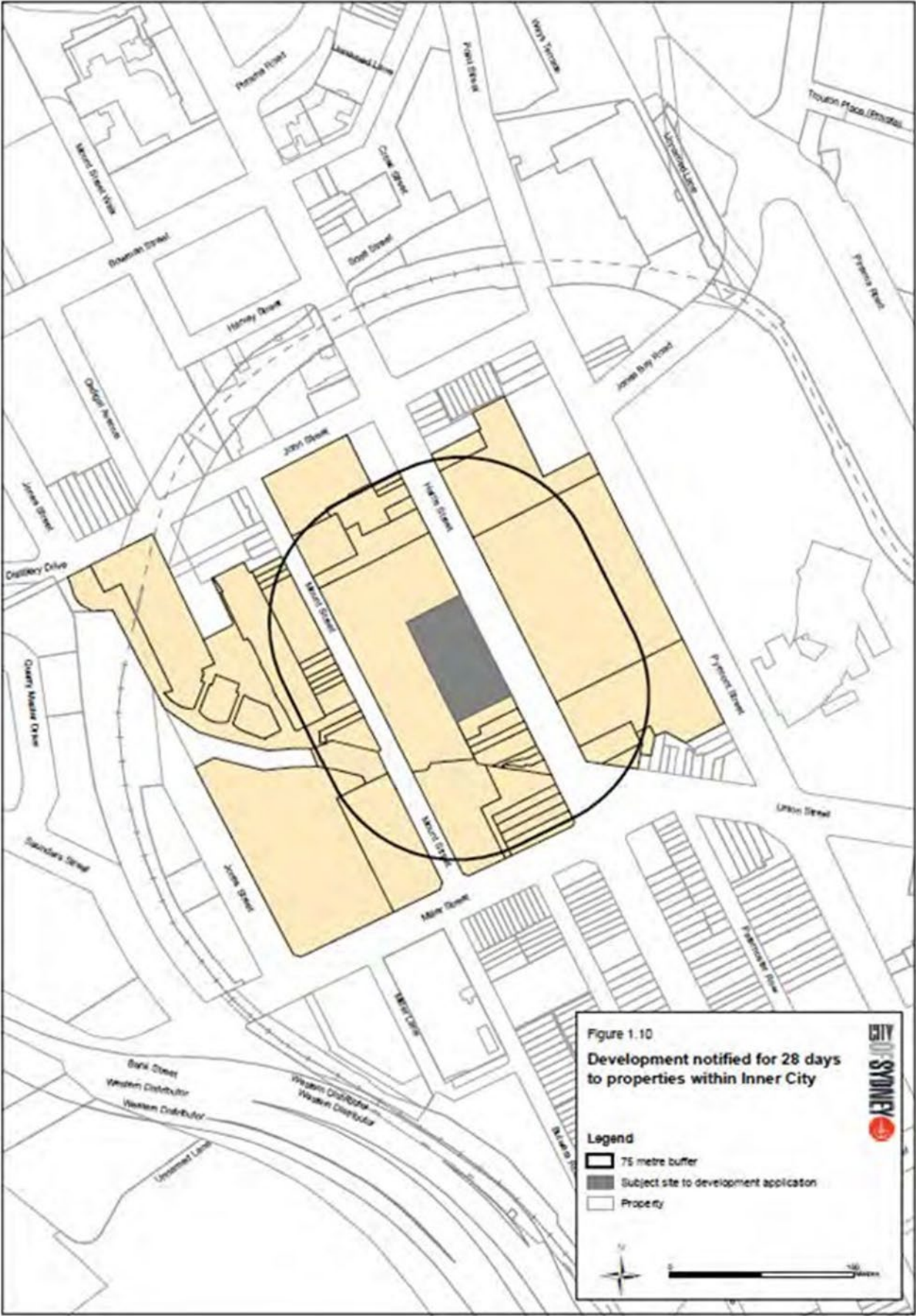


Development notified for 28 days to properties within Central Sydney





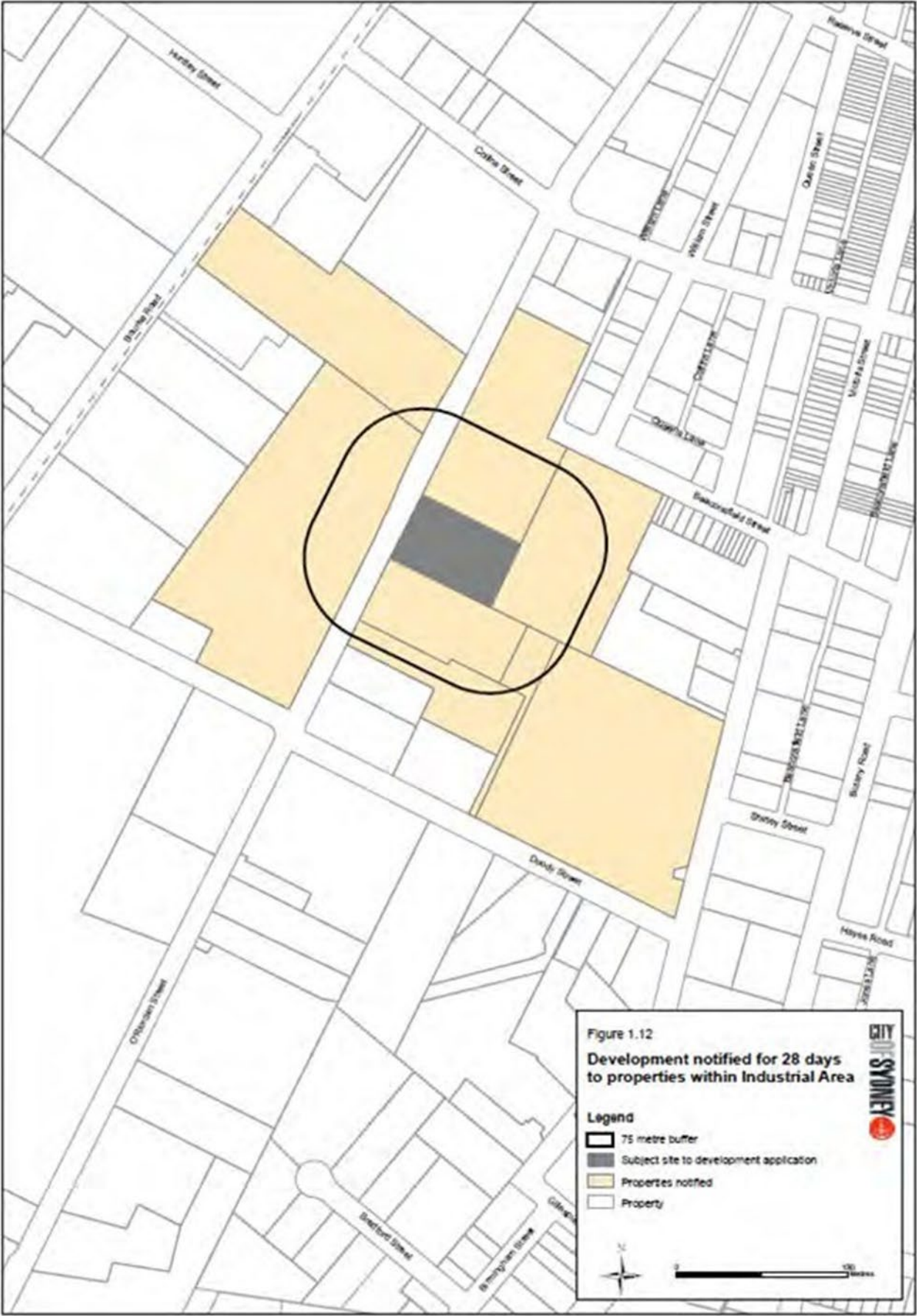
Development notified for 28 days to properties within Inner City







Development notified for 28 days to properties within Industrial Area



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## Appendix D: land use planning consultation matrix (community participation plan)

X = activity required under legislation

\* = may be required by State Government

Category	Type	DA category	DA category detail	30 days exhibition period	28 days exhibition period	21 days exhibition period	14 days exhibition period	No notification	Site notice	City of Sydney consultation hub	City of Sydney planning site	Letter notification	Distribution 75 metre buffer	Distribution 50 metre buffer	Distribution 25 metre buffer
Strategic planning	Local Strategic Planning Statement				X					X		*			
Strategic planning	Community Participation Plan				X					X		*			
Strategic planning	Local Environmental Plans and amendments (Planning Proposals) <sup>a</sup>				X					X		*			
Strategic planning	Development Control Plans				X					X		*			
Strategic planning	Contribution Plans				X					X		*			
Strategic planning	Application for retrospective award of Heritage Floor Space				X					X		X	X		
Development assessments	Designated development				X				X		X	X			
Development assessments	Integrated development <sup>b</sup>				X				X		X	X			
Development assessments	State significant development				X				X		X	X			
Development assessments	Environmental impact statement			X							X				
Planning agreements	Planning agreements				X						X	X			
Development assessments	Development applications	Accommodation for aged and disabled persons provided under the Seniors Living SEPP				X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Boarding houses (new)				X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Category 1 Remediation work under SEPP 55 [SEPP (Resilience and Hazards)]			X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Change of use	from a dwelling to another use			X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Change of use	to a non-residential use in a residential zone			X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Change of use	convenience stores; sex industry premises; places of public entertainment; pubs; night clubs; bars; amusement arcades and the like			X			X		X	X		X	

# Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan 2025-2029

Category	Type	DA category	DA category detail	30 days exhibition period	28 days exhibition period	21 days exhibition period	14 days exhibition period	No notification	Site notice	City of Sydney consultation hub	City of Sydney planning site	Letter notification	Distribution 75 metre buffer	Distribution 50 metre buffer	Distribution 25 metre buffer
Development assessments	Development applications	Change of use	of a whole multi-storey building			X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Child care centres				X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Commercial/retail and other non-residential buildings	new buildings & additions less than 3 storeys				X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Commercial/retail and other non-residential buildings	new buildings & additions 3 or more storeys			X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Community centres / facilities				X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Community events					X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Council-related development applications	low-risk <sup>c</sup>		X				X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Council-related development applications	medium or high risk <sup>c</sup>		X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Development where value of work exceeds \$50 million			X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Educational establishments (e.g. schools, higher education institutions)				X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Food and drink premises (e.g. cafes, restaurants)	not in residential zones				X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Food and drink premises (e.g. cafes, restaurants)	in residential zones			X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Heritage	applications for award of Heritage Floor Space		X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Heritage	minor external alterations or additions to a Heritage Item				X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Heritage	minor external alterations or additions to a building within a Heritage Conservation Area				X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Heritage	significant alterations or additions to a Heritage Item		X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Heritage	significant alterations or additions, or new buildings, or full demolition of a contributory building within a Heritage Conservation Area		X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Home industry					X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Industrial development	less than 500sqm new floor area				X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Industrial development	500sqm to 1000sqm new floor area			X			X		X	X		X	

# Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan 2025-2029

Category	Type	DA category	DA category detail	30 days exhibition period	28 days exhibition period	21 days exhibition period	14 days exhibition period	No notification	Site notice	City of Sydney consultation hub	City of Sydney planning site	Letter notification	Distribution 75 metre buffer	Distribution 50 metre buffer	Distribution 25 metre buffer
Development assessments	Development applications	Industrial development	over 1000sqm new floor area		X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Modifications to consent which will not impact upon surrounding land uses or increase impacts in comparison with the previous approval(s)						X			X				
Development assessments	Development applications	Place of Public Worship				X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Professional consulting rooms					X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Outdoor café seating and/or coffee carts on footways							X		X	X			
Development assessments	Development applications	Residential flat buildings	new buildings & additions less than 3 storeys				X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Residential flat buildings	new buildings & additions 3 or more storeys			X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Significant development or use of the public domain			X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Signs over 10sqm in area					X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Single dwellings, including ancillary structures, involving construction; demolition; additions and/or alterations					X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Subdivision – creation of new lots				X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Telecommunications facilities (non-low impact facilities)			X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Threatened species development <sup>d</sup>			X				X		X	X	X		
Development assessments	Development applications	Visitor and tourist accommodation (including bed & breakfast premises that are not complying development, backpacker accommodation, motels and hotels)				X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Trading hours	after 10 pm or 24 hour trading			X			X		X	X		X	
Development assessments	Development applications	Trading hours	extension of trial periods				X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Modification applications	Section 4.55(1) application (i.e. correction of minor error)					X							X



## Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan 2025-2029

Category	Type	DA category	DA category detail	30 days exhibition period	28 days exhibition period	21 days exhibition period	14 days exhibition period	No notification	Site notice	City of Sydney consultation hub	City of Sydney planning site	Letter notification	Distribution 75 metre buffer	Distribution 50 metre buffer	Distribution 25 metre buffer
Development assessments	Development applications	Modification applications	Section 4.55(1A) application (i.e. involving minimal environmental impacts)					X							X
Development assessments	Development applications	Modification applications	Section 4.56 application (i.e. in relation to consents granted by the Land and Environment Court)				X		X		X	X			X
Development assessments	Development applications	Modification applications	Section 4.55(2) application (i.e. other modifications)				X		X		X	X			X

*Note regarding Christmas, New Years, weekends and public holidays:*

Should the timing of the application fall over the traditional holiday period of Christmas and New Years Day, the period between 20 December and 10 January. If a notification period finishes on a weekend or a public holiday, it will be extended to the next business day.

- a. The exhibition periods and methods of notification for Planning Proposals can be extended, reduced, or amended by the Gateway determination of the Department of Planning.
- b. Re-notification of an application to modify a nominated integrated development application may not be required under section 108 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.
- c. As defined in the Council-related Development Applications Policy.
- d. Re-notification of an application to modify a threatened species development application may not be required under section 108 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.

## Appendix E: glossary of terms – land use planning (community participation plan)

Term	Description
<b>Local strategic planning statement</b>	A long term land use planning vision, priorities and actions for the council area. It links the NSW Government's strategic plans and the City's Community Strategic Plan Delivering Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 to the planning controls that guide development in the city.
<b>Community participation plan</b>	The plan that outlines consultation requirements for land use planning. It consists of chapters titled: Community participation plan for land use planning and appendices C, D and E.
<b>Contributions plans</b>	Prepared by councils to levy new development to fund additional or improved local, public infrastructure needed by the development and used by the whole community.
<b>Local environmental plans (planning proposals)</b>	The local planning laws prepared by councils but approved by the NSW Government. They set out what development can take place where, the maximum height and density of development, and what places need to be protected for their heritage value. They are amended by preparing a planning proposal.
<b>Development control plans</b>	Guidelines prepared by councils that describe the preferred way to undertake development that is enabled by a local environmental plan to get good planning and design outcomes and manage impacts.
<b>Development applications</b>	Development applications are required for development which is identified in an environmental planning instrument as development requiring consent, which is not identified that is not 'exempt' or 'complying' development. They can range from small scale proposals to renovate and extend a house, to new multi storey commercial towers.
<b>Planning agreements</b>	<p>Planning agreements are voluntary agreements entered into by the City and a person, usually a developer, to deliver public benefits.</p> <p>Public benefits may include the dedication of land to Council, monetary contributions, public infrastructure, community facilities, affordable housing, any other material public benefit or any combination of these. Planning agreements are prepared under the Act in relation to either a planning proposal or a development application.</p>
<b>Footway applications</b>	Outdoor dining within the local government area requires approval to use public land. Footway applications are assessed against various pieces of legislation, including but not limited to the Roads Act 1993 and Outdoor Dining Guidelines. Footway approvals set out how much of the public footpath outside a premises can be taken up by outdoor dining.
<b>Section 4.55 modification applications</b>	<p>Under Section 4.55 of the Act, development consents can be modified. Applications to modify a development consent are split into three categories, based on the extent of environmental impact:</p> <p>Section 4.55(1) – modifications involving minor error, misdescription or miscalculation;</p> <p>Section 4.55(1A) – modifications involving minimal environmental impact; and</p> <p>Section 4.55(2) – other modifications</p>

## Appendix F: Petitions guidelines

The City of Sydney welcomes petitions as one way in which people can let us know their concerns. We set out below how council will respond to petitions that are sent to us.

### What is a petition?

Council will treat as a petition for the purposes of these guidelines any communication that is either identified as being a petition, or which it seems to us is intended to be a petition.

Petitions can be sent directly to councillors or to:

City of Sydney Town Hall House  
456 Kent Street  
Sydney NSW 2001

### Who can submit a petition?

Anyone can sign or organise a petition.

### What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions on the following matters will be considered by City of Sydney in accordance with these guidelines:

- issues relating to council's responsibilities
- issues which affect the City of Sydney or communities in our area, as long as Council is in a position to exercise some degree of influence.

If your petition is about something over which council has no direct control (for example the local railway or school), we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The City of Sydney works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example, if what the petition calls for conflicts with council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to petitioners.

Where a petition relates to a matter over which council has no responsibility or influence, council will return the petition to the main petition contact with an explanation for that decision (and will wherever possible give petitioners any information that council has available as to where the petition should be redirected). If your petition is about something that a different council or other public authority is responsible for, we will ask the main petition contact whether they would like us to redirect the petition to the other authority.

Petitions submitted to council must include:

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject matter of the petition. It should state what action petitioners want the council to take
- the name and address and signature (or email address in the case of electronic petitions) of any person supporting the petition.

A petition should contain the name and address and contact details of the main petition contact. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. If the petition does not identify a main petition contact, we will assume the first signatory is the main petition contact. The address may be where the signatory to the petition lives, works or studies. City of Sydney has the discretion to verify the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition should we consider it necessary for any reason.

If you want your petition to be tabled at a meeting of council, you must send it to a councillor for them to consider tabling it.

State legislation may affect council's ability to respond to some petitions, including those related to development assessment, tendering or electoral laws. In the period immediately before an election, council may need to deal with your petition differently or in a different timeframe, and if this is the case council will contact the main petition contact to explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale that will apply.

Before submitting a petition, you may first wish to check with councillors or with City of Sydney to see if we are already acting on your concerns and to confirm that council is the most appropriate body to receive your petition, as sometimes your petition may be more appropriate for another public body.

### **Types of petition**

For the purposes of the council's petition guidelines all petitions that are received by council (that are considered to fall within the scope of these guidelines) will be treated as falling within one of the two different types of petitions, described below.

#### **Petitions for tabling**

These are petitions that have been sent to a councillor so that they can consider tabling it at a council meeting. If the councillor wishes council to debate the petition, they are required to submit it to the CEO (or their delegate) by 12 noon on the Tuesday in the week preceding council meeting. The motion that shall accompany tabled petitions whether notice has been given or not is: "That the petition be received and noted."

Where notice has not been given, a councillor may request that the petition be listed on the agenda for the next meeting to enable it to be debated.

#### **Petitions**

These are petitions that have been sent to the CEO or to city staff, either directly or via councillors or the Lord Mayor.

#### **What happens when a petition is received?**

Within 15 working days of receipt by the CEO or city staff, we will acknowledge receipt to the main petition contact and will advise the main petition contact:

- whether we consider that the petition falls within the scope of council's petition guidelines
- the identity of the person or body within City of Sydney to whom the petition will be reported for consideration
- where we consider that the petition does not fall within these guidelines, we will advise all petitioners of the reason for this decision

At the same time as responding to the main petition contact, we will notify the relevant City of Sydney director with responsibility for the matter to which the petition relates and all councillors of receipt of the petition.

In the event that the subject of a petition falls within the remit of more than one director, the petition will be reported to both directors, who will be asked to nominate one of them as the lead for the matter.

In some cases, we may be able to resolve the petitioner's request directly, by requesting the relevant council officer to take appropriate action. Where this is done, we will advise all signatories, where valid addresses have been provided, that we consider that the matter is resolved and explain how it has been resolved.



If any signatory is not satisfied with the outcome they may appeal to the CEO in accordance with the procedure set out below. In all other cases, within 3 months of receipt of a petition (or sooner where possible), we will provide a substantive response to the signatories giving information about what steps we have taken or propose to take in response to the petition and our reasons for doing so.

When we receive a petition, our response will depend on what a petition asks for and may include one or more of the following:

- giving effect to the request in the petition
- considering the petition at a meeting of council
- research or consultation
- giving a written response to all signatories setting out our views about the request in the petition.

In addition to these steps, City of Sydney will consider all of the specific actions that it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in the petition.

### **What will happen to a petition for tabling?**

If a councillor to whom the petition is sent submits it to the CEO in accordance with the procedure for notifying petitions, the petition will be debated by council at its next ordinary meeting. This means that the issue(s) raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting at which all councillors can attend.

Petitions will not be considered at extraordinary meetings of council unless it is convened to consider the subject matter of the petition.

The procedure to be followed during the petition debate is the same as for debate on any other motion and is set out in council's code of meeting practice.

Following consideration by council of a petition for tabling, council may make a decision on the subject matter of the petition if a notice of motion has been received, may request that it be listed on the agenda for the next council meeting to enable debate or may refer the petition to the CEO to respond as per petitions received directly.

### **What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?**

If any signatory is not satisfied with the outcome of council's consideration of their petition, they may appeal to the CEO setting out the reasons for their dissatisfaction. The CEO may choose to instigate an investigation, make recommendations to the executive, or arrange for the matter to be considered at a meeting of council. Once the appeal has been considered the CEO will provide the person who has appealed with written confirmation of the outcome.

### **Excluded petitions**

Council's petition scheme does not apply to the types of petition listed below. If council receives a petition that it considers to be an excluded petition, we will contact the main petition contact to advise them that we do not consider that their petition falls within the scope of council's petition guidelines and the reasons for this decision.

### **Petitions excluded by statutory consultation, review or appeal rights**

In order not to duplicate procedures where established processes already exist for people to voice their opinions, the following matters are excluded from the scope of council's petition guidelines:

- any matter relating to a planning decision that has already been made by council or city staff; or
- any matter relating to an individual or entity in respect of which that individual or entity has a right of recourse to a review or a right of appeal conferred by or under any enactment.

However, a petition that alleges a systematic failure to deliver services in the above areas is within the scope of council's petition guidelines. For example, while a petition on an individual planning application would be an excluded petition, a petition about council's failure to deliver an effective service for planning applications would be within the scope of these guidelines.

**Petitions that are vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate**

If, in the opinion of City of Sydney, a petition is vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate, we will acknowledge receipt of the petition to the main petition contact. We will explain to them the reason why we consider that the petition is vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and that we will not be taking any further action in respect of the petition. Please note that petitions which raise issues of possible councillor misconduct will be taken as complaints arising under council's code of conduct, rather than considered under these guidelines.

**Repeat petitions**

A petition will not normally be considered where it is received within 24 months of another petition being considered by council on the same matter. When a petition is received on a similar issue to a previous petition, petitioners will be notified of the outcome of the previous petition if City of Sydney considers that the issues raised have been addressed.

