

Bays West draft Place Strategy

April 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Bays West draft Place Strategy. We welcome the renewed interest from the NSW Government in this precinct. Following consultation with our members drawn from a cross-section of professional sectors, we provide the following comments.

A bold vision – but a risk that delivery does not meet this vision.

This strategy covers all considerations you would hope a plan for this area would. It contains imagination about the use of a constrained site, balancing competing needs in smart ways.

We see the main risks as pertaining to implementation. Without more clarity around prioritisation, funding, and implementation pathways, there is a risk that when difficult compromises are required, some of the most important ideas will be watered down or lost.

Some of the most essential elements of this plan will be expensive. Rather than reduce the scope or ambition of this strategy, we encourage conversations start now about the investment that will be required to achieve the vision. It may not be possible to achieve the critical infrastructure and place making moves while relying on private investment alone.

A bold vision worth protecting.

Within the report, there are a number of excellent proposals that we would highlight as being especially important for the success of the effort.

Specifically:

1. The proposed Sydney Harbour Strategy. Thinking about how this precinct, and others surrounding it, contribute to our city's greatest intergenerational asset is important, and due. We would encourage the development of this strategy take consideration of the 2019 Committee for Sydney report [Sydney Harbour: Our greatest asset](#).
2. The '6 big moves'. These bold ideas will help build excitement in the community about the potential of this precinct.
3. Creating 10 sub-precincts, each with a different role contributing to the overall precinct.
4. Starting with the park. Building public open space first is the right way to build community support, while also signalling the change to come.
5. The Bays West Sustainability Discussion Paper. Sydney Harbour has over 3,000 different species living in it. This is an incredibly rich ecosystem, including 600 different species of fish – more than the number of different species in the entirety of the Mediterranean Sea. Yet, at the same time, the bed of the Harbour is one of the most contaminated in the world. Retaining a focus on biodiversity is essential.
6. The commitment to affordable housing. Too often affordable housing is the first 'nice to have' to be lost in the push to improve financial viability of a project. This cannot occur at Bays West.
7. The commitment to the Port and Working Harbour. The strategic value of the Port and a working harbour is felt by the whole city, and there are likely few, if any, alternative sites for many of the uses in the Bays West precinct.
8. Retaining the White Bay Power Station as a heritage building. It will give a unique identity to the entire precinct.

Risks requiring more consideration.

We also foresee some challenges for the Bays West precinct that need to be grappled with. Specifically:

1. How the bold ideas articulated in the place strategy are retained in the process of delivery. There is a risk that the key public realm and infrastructure elements are removed or watered down to lower costs. This would be a mistake.
 - Proposal: follow the Place Strategy with an implementation plan and a funding plan, working toward clarity about what elements can be delivered through private development and what elements will require public funding.

2. The catalytic role of a great tenant in the White Bay Power Station. No site will build public excitement and private sector interest for the precinct more than securing a world-class use for the power station.
 - Proposal: consider the role of the power station akin to other major government infrastructure investments – delivering enormous social and economic benefit, but requiring major capital investment and possible ongoing operational costs to government.

3. Responsibility for delivery. While Sydney Metro has proven adept at delivering stations and the development immediately surrounding the station, this precinct will require sophisticated coordination between many stakeholders. Without someone responsible for this, there is a risk that decisions for individual components of the precinct are made in isolation.
 - Proposal: Establish a delivery agency (akin to the Barangaroo Delivery Authority) responsible for the overall delivery of the precinct.

Conclusion

The Committee for Sydney is excited by the prospect of Bays West to be a landmark precinct, contributing to the fabric of Sydney. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.