



10 September 2020

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Via email: sydneyparksvision@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re: A 50-Year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands: A Discussion Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide a submission on the A 50-Year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands: A Discussion Paper.

Please find attached a submission from Inner West Council.

Should you require further information please contact Aaron Callaghan, Parks and Recreation Planning Manager on (02) 9392 5634 or email aaron.callaghan@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'ER', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Elizabeth Richardson
Chief Operating Officer, Director Development and Recreation



Attachment

A 50-Year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands: A Discussion Paper: Inner West Council submission

Inner West Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission relating to the '50-Year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands: A Discussion Paper' exhibited by The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. Council has sought feedback from teams with relevant expertise and makes the following observations, comments, and recommendations relating to the discussion paper.

Definition of open space

IWC recommends further clarification of the definition of open space provided, particularly relating to the inclusion of bushland reserves. Bushland areas and riparian vegetation is an integral part of healthy open space. The diversity of vegetation provides habitat, maintains ecological balance, improves soil health, filters the air and provides a pollutant buffer to waterways. The importance of diversity of native vegetation and inclusion of bushland reserves should be made explicit in the open space definition.

An agency dedicated to open space

Council officers advocate that the NSW Government implement a community partnership model relating to the planning and management of open space and parklands. This should include the establishment of a Park Advisory Board for each of the parklands managed by the Greater Sydney Parklands Agency which, as a core responsibility, would provide local community representation and advice to the Department on future management and key priorities. Any future Park Advisory Board should add value to the future protection, management and enhancement of these parklands and expertise should therefore be focused on skill sets which include heritage expertise, indigenous representation, legal expertise, local Council representation and recreation and health expertise.

Recently Council has advocated through formal Council resolution for local community representation on any future management agency of Callan Park. The Callan Park Special Provisions Act 2002 includes the need for a Community Consultation committee within Part 8 of the Act. Specially, the regulations may establish and provide for the functions and procedures of a community consultation committee for Callan Park.

Strategic direction 1: Growing a city of parks for people

Caring for Country Principles: In addition to ensuring Caring for Country principles and practice, it is vital to embed shared decision-making and co-design practices and opportunities relating to the design, delivery and management of open space and parklands for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will lead to greater outcomes economic prosperity, health and wellbeing and increased access to open spaces and parklands for indigenous communities.

'Increase open space and parklands in areas where people live and work': While this opportunity is supported and clearly extremely important, strategies and opportunities must also recognise the importance of other methods of providing access to open space for the community, particularly in areas such as the Inner West where increasing the amount of open space can be challenging due to land values, among many other things. Inner West Council recommends inclusion of an opportunity to this section that reflects the value of upgrading and improving existing open space in ways that increase capacity in order to meet increased community demands (such as through improved lighting, better access, the creation of multi-purpose spaces and recreation facilities etc).

Given the high cost of land in the Inner West, coupled with the critical shortage of playing fields, funds from local infrastructure contributions and local planning agreements alone, will never be able to address this existing and future infrastructure need. This is particularly so with NSW government initiated standard caps on contributions which do not respond to varying land prices in local government areas. Nonetheless, all governments should seek to ensure the provision of open space keeps pace with population increases in Sydney, as an important infrastructure initiative.

Apart from exploring potential shared open space and recreation initiatives with NSW Education; and private public partnerships; substantial innovative support from the NSW and Federal Governments will be required to satisfactorily address this important infrastructure requirement in the Inner West. In this regard, Council is open to further discussions with other governments; government departments and private enterprise, to achieve appropriate open space funding within the Inner West LGA. It is noted too that the discussion of increased open space provision should consider the need for biodiverse natural places and the mental health and ecosystem service benefits that these passive recreation/ natural spaces, bring to communities.

'Provide inclusive and equitable access to open space that reflects local community needs': Universality of inclusion and access must be embedded in all processes throughout the design and delivery of parklands for this endeavour to be truly successful. Full universal design must go beyond a baseline compliance approach and ensure access is integral to all design: wayfinding, pathways, connecting approaches (parking and transport), facilities and amenities including street furniture shade etc.

Strategic direction 2: Connecting neighbourhoods to parks

'Improve the quality of open space areas in Western Sydney': IWC recommends the expansion of this opportunity to include the improvement of open space areas throughout all of Sydney, including the Inner West. This would recognise the importance of high-quality open space in urban areas of Sydney, such as the Inner West, where open space is limited and highly utilised by the community.

'Use surplus public lands for open space and parklands and activate underutilised spaces': IWC welcomes the announcement of funding for Callan Park, and plans to further activate this important open space in our area.

A further detailed submission has been made regarding the Landscape Structure Plan recently exhibited. IWC further recommends that key Government agencies such as Sydney Water and RMS are required to identify land within its holdings which could be licensed and unlocked to NSW Councils for open space embellishment and community recreation.

'Identify new ways to provide public open space in high density environments': This opportunity is strongly supported and relevant to the Inner West. The Inner West Council Recreation Needs Study has identified opportunities to provide public open space through innovative strategies such as providing open space on rooftops, carparks, street upgrades, laneways, and green walls as well as through traditional methods such as land acquisition.

'Identify opportunities and connections for pedestrians, cyclists and people using public transport to enjoy open spaces, including using local streets as activation places for people': IWC advocates for separation of pedestrian paths from cycle paths within parklands. There is too much conflict and danger involved where the two are delivered as a shared option. All of our research and consultation has confirmed that older people, people with mobility and sensory disability (particularly sight and hearing) and vulnerable pedestrians are inhibited from safe use of shared pathways and will avoid them leading to restricted use of the area by those in these demographics.

This approach is supported by Inner West Council, as shown by the delivery of the GreenWay active transport corridor and linear parkland. IWC has further explored activating local streets through piloting 'Play Streets' whereby local residents are empowered to enact temporary road closures to allow for recreation and socialisation on local streets. IWC further recommends the revisioning of Sydney neighbourhood laneways as new green corridors connecting neighbourhoods and providing opportunities for play, socialisation and neighbourhood connection.

Strategic direction 3: Keeping Sydney Green and Captivating

IWC welcomes the opportunities identified in this section, and notes the ongoing work of Council to complete the GreenWay active transport corridor and linear open space, as identified in the Greater Sydney Green Grid.

Strategic direction 4: Being Smart and Resilient

'Protect biodiversity on private lands through private land conservation agreements or other innovative arrangements': While this opportunity is supported, the document must also explicitly highlight the fact that biodiversity must be protected on public land too – this is extremely important for climate change resilience.

'Increase tree canopy cover across Greater Sydney to 40 per cent': In addition to increasing tree canopy cover across Sydney (which implies tree planting), it is vital that existing tree canopy is protected. There is a need for stronger state government leadership to protect existing trees and the existing canopy. A newly planted tree won't provide good canopy cover for over a decade, and as a result protection of existing trees and canopy is essential.

Further comments and recommendations

Council recommends:

- The development of a combined Regional Golf Infrastructure study which examines the provision, role and importance of golf courses across the metropolitan area of Sydney and how these can be better utilised to provide for improved recreational outcomes for the wider community.
- The development of an Alexandra Canal Master Plan that will improve recreational, heritage and economic development along this important and heritage listed canal, which could become a regional recreational trail extending from Alexandria through to Tempe Reserve.
- Greater promotion and sponsoring of Green Flag Awards (for parklands and open space) and Blue Flag (for beaches, but should also be extended to Aquatic Centres) as a State-wide initiative to encourage investment and increased use and enjoyment of parks and open spaces.

Finally, Inner West Council notes the vision presented is largely high-level and does not contain actions or initiatives that will increase open space provision for Greater Sydney's growing population. Following the finalisation and adoption of the 50 year vision, IWC recommends the development of a 'Greater Sydney Open Space Strategy' or similar, which lists key projects and deliverable milestones for the Greater Sydney Open Space Network and includes, critically, the identification of potential and required shared funding arrangements, across all levels of government and private enterprise, where appropriate, for the identified projects.