

24 August 2021

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
 Draft Macquarie Park Place Strategy Submission  
 Locked Bag 5022,  
 Parramatta NSW 2124

Via NSW Planning Portal

### **Draft Macquarie Park Place Strategy**

Dear Macquarie Park Place Strategy Team,

The Urban Development Institute of Australia NSW (UDIA) is the leading industry body representing the interests of the urban development sector and has over 500 member companies in NSW. UDIA NSW advocates for the creation of liveable, affordable, and connected smart cities.

We welcome the opportunity to provide comment on the Draft Macquarie Park Place Strategy and are supportive of the aims of the strategy to transform Macquarie Park into a diverse innovation and collaboration district, increasing the areas attractiveness as a place to do business, study and invest in.

However, UDIA believes that the Draft Strategy as exhibited fails to grasp the opportunity that revitalising Macquarie Park presents to the region, Greater Metropolitan Sydney and to the whole state. Macquarie Park is a strategically important centre with growing employment opportunities, a world class University and teaching hospital, a regional shopping centre and in close proximity to the CBD and northern and north-western suburbs through the state's investment in the Northwest Metro.

The revitalisation of Macquarie Park is an opportunity to be ambitious, rebuke outdated concepts and plan for the future that Sydney wants and deserves as a globally competitive city. If the Draft Strategy as exhibited is implemented, it will be a significant lost opportunity for Macquarie Park and Sydney and will exacerbate the existing historic underutilisation of the area, before the metro.

UDIA implores Government to develop a strategy which matches the generational opportunity that revitalising Macquarie Park offers.

In this regard, while UDIA supports the concept of the Strategy there are significant areas where we believe the strategy itself and the planning process, could be greatly improved to ensure that the best possible outcome is delivered. To improve the Draft Strategy, UDIA recommends the following actions across three key areas:

#### **Mixed Use Development with Complementary Residential**

- 1. A much more ambitious target for mixed-use development, including residential, across all neighbourhoods is introduced which is complementary to the districts focus on innovation and collaboration.**
- 2. Allowing the re-zoning of offices with car parking, to mixed use developments with parking maximums.**

## Transportation and Infrastructure Funding

3. **Provide certainty that the infrastructure identified, estimated to cost \$6.5 billion to 2036, is committed to and that funding arrangements are finalised. Note that a much more ambitious target for mixed use development could provide local infrastructure contributions to fund much of the required infrastructure.**
4. **Fast track the infrastructure priority list to kickstart investment.**

## Implementation Pathways and Process

5. **Clarify that the Strategy is indicative only and establish a set of principles for future masterplans and developments to consider if adherence to the Strategy is not possible or desirable.**
6. **Provide timeframes for the finalisation of the neighbourhood master plans, infrastructure delivery schedule and rezonings to encourage investment in Macquarie Park.**
7. **Commit to a comprehensive implementation approach, which enables government and industry to lead redevelopment and where development controls are flexible enough to enable realisation of the full potential of sites.**

This submission has chosen to comment only on sections of the Draft Strategy or policy areas where the UDIA believes there are significant opportunities for improvement or significant concerns which warrant immediate attention.

## Mixed Use Development with Complementary Residential

Sydney has a huge undersupply of housing. Macquarie Park is ideally situated for jobs, public transport, open space, shopping, education, healthcare and more. If we want to deliver on the GSC promise of the thirty-minute city, this is exactly where housing should be built. Alas, this strategy is devoid of vision and aspiration.

The proposed maximum 7,650 new dwellings in the investigation area fails to support the ambition of making a vibrant innovation and collaboration district. This low number represents the continuation of the outdated concepts of land use conflict and land use separation.

The revitalisation of Macquarie Park is an opportunity to deliver a great place-based outcome, retain and bolster the employment focus and provide housing for local employees, families and students. Mechanisms exist within the NSW planning system to provide large increases in housing, whilst ensuring employment remains the focus of the area such as minimum requirements for commercial or office floor space.

The Draft Strategy identifies that the district lacks vibrancy and amenity and can even be unsafe at night and weekends, due to the lack of activity and passive surveillance. Increasing the percentage of residential across the entire district, supports a more vibrant and productive area. This is not contrary to the intent of Draft Strategy to retain the employment focus of Macquarie Park but rather complementary to this focus and will even strengthen these ambitions as the district becomes a place to work, live and play.

The Draft Strategy includes actions to reduce car dependency of workers and highlights the three Sydney Metro Northwest stations and 30 bus routes that already service the Macquarie Park district. The Draft Strategy should leverage this investment in infrastructure by encouraging a greater residential component. This will promote a sense of place and identity where people can work but

also live, being close walking distance to world class shopping and dining destinations and educational establishments.

An increased focus on mixed use neighbourhoods will drive investment and enable greater private contribution towards the delivery of infrastructure, resulting in a better place outcome. There is a real opportunity to turn Macquarie Park into a leading mixed-use district with a focus on innovation and collaboration. Global examples like the Zuidas in Amsterdam, which was a feature on the 2019 UDIA NSW International Study Tour. Zuidas is a master planned mixed business and residential city, with the residential population benefiting from some separation but also proximity to major employment opportunities. One of key elements underpinning Zuidas was the need for flexibility in the planning regime, essential for a strategic centre to stay relevant over extended periods and to capitalise on emerging trends. The Zuidas template provides the next generation mixed use city and growth that Macquarie Park can aspire to. UDIA strongly recommends that Government provide a more ambitious target for residential dwellings across all neighbourhoods within the district.

## **Transportation and Movement**

UDIA welcomes the work undertaken by DPIE and TfNSW to produce an integrated transport and land use plan. This approach has the potential to deliver improved outcomes across the state.

However, in much the same way that the land use strategy lacks ambition, so does the transport strategy. The problems that providing so much free parking in the area creates car dependency and this is recognised as a significant issue. However, where are the proposals to reverse this?

Allowing the re-zoning of offices with car parking, to mixed use developments with parking maximums would encourage the redevelopment of existing office space, creating modern state of the art office space, whilst reducing car dependency and encouraging a local workforce. In time, this will reduce the congestion around Macquarie Park and the need for infrastructure to support a much higher population and workforce in the area.

## **Infrastructure funding**

The Draft Strategy is clear that most infrastructure proposals are not funded or committed to and should be regarded as initiatives subject to further development, scoping, business case investigation and investment decisions. This provides little certainty for industry or the community, that the objectives of the Draft Strategy will ever be realised. Changes to the proposed infrastructure will have significant ramifications for the Draft Strategy and subsequent master plans. This draws into question the validity of the Draft Strategy itself and the decision to release a strategy which is likely to change significantly.

It is critical that future infrastructure is committed to and that funding arrangements are made public to provide confidence and certainty to industry and support future investment decisions. The Government must ensure that all agencies commit to delivering the required infrastructure and that funding arrangements, including the collection of contributions towards regional infrastructure, are sufficiently progressed to provide certainty to industry and the community. A much more ambitious plan for mixed use would in turn provide a lot more funding for infrastructure, whilst a significant shift away from car dependency would reduce the investment needed in road infrastructure.

Funding arrangements for regional infrastructure need to be improved as stated by the NSW Productivity Commission in March 2021.

UDIA further recommends that the infrastructure priority list be fast tracked to afford greater confidence to industry and support landowners to make investment decisions with a higher degree of certainty.

### **Implementation Pathways and Process**

The proposed two pathways for implementation of the Draft Strategy, being state and local government-led or industry-led, provide little confidence to the development industry that the ambitions for the district will be delivered in a consistent, timely or equitable manner. The Draft Strategy acknowledges that significant infrastructure investment is needed to support growth in Macquarie Park and that master planning of the neighbourhoods by the NSW Government and council will be staged.

While it is stated that staging will be determined prior to finalisation of the Place Strategy it is difficult to see how this will be realistically achieved without a firm commitment and schedule for infrastructure delivery. Prioritising neighbourhoods which are development ready and where there is the ability for the public and private sectors to provide infrastructure, is an acceptable approach. However, there is a risk with this approach that the redevelopment of these neighbourhoods will fail to achieve their full potential, as development controls will be based on the current status of infrastructure and not based on reduced traffic demands.

UDIA recommends that Government commit to a comprehensive implementation approach, which enables government and industry to lead redevelopment where appropriate, but where development controls are flexible to enable realisation of the full potential of site and desired place outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

The revitalisation of Macquarie Park represents an opportunity to deliver a great place to work, innovate and collaborate, but also to live, study and enjoy. It is paramount that this opportunity is not squandered, and that the final strategy establishes a more ambitious plan for the area, which includes a much greater residential component and provides increased certainty for infrastructure delivery and implementation.

If you have any further questions or comments in regard to this submission, please contact Michael Murrell, Planning Policy Manager at [mmurrell@udiansw.com.au](mailto:mmurrell@udiansw.com.au) or on 0413 221 195.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Mann  
**Chief Executive**  
**UDIA NSW**