

Neutral Bay Alive Community Consultation Group
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday 25 July 2023
6.00pm start, Ros Crichton Pavilion

Neutral Bay Alive Community Consultation Group

In Attendance (in-person):

- Anna Summerhayes (AS)
- Candice Tabone (CT)
- Fiona Gracie (FG)
- John Lucas (JL)
- Meredith Trevallyn-Jones (MTJ)
- Rob McKay (RM)

In Attendance (online):

- Alison Bentley (AB)
- Peter Moor (PMo)

Apologies:

- Kristina Kazmer (KK)
- Peter Marshall (PM)

North Sydney Council (NSC) Staff

In Attendance (in-person):

- Marcelo Occhiuzzi (MO), Director Community, Planning and Environment,
- Neal McCarry (NMc), A/Manager Strategic Planning
- Jing Li (JLi), A/Team Leader Design
- Wendy Lam (WL), A/Senior Strategic Planner – Urban Design
- Solmaz Khabir (SK), Strategic Planner – Urban Design
- Sam Clark (SC), Community Engagement Specialist

Presiding: NMc (NSC)

The meeting started at 6.07pm

1. Acknowledgment of Country

NMc (NSC) opened the meeting by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which the meeting was held and welcoming all members of the Neutral Bay Alive Community Consultation Group ('the Group' or NBACCG) to the meeting.

2. Introduction

MO (NSC) introduced all Council staff in attendance.

Members of the Group introduced themselves, their affiliation and relevant expertise/background.

3. Project Update

NMc (NSC) provided an overview of the Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study ('NBTCPS' or 'Planning Study') project timeline via slides presented at the meeting.

- Completed phases between August 2022 to July 2023 – Project Review and Gap Analysis, Draft Planning Directions, Early Engagement, Draft Design Options Development, and the Preliminary Engagement Workshops.
- Currently, the project is at the Draft Planning Study stage.
 - Between June to July 2023, Council staff is conducting other community engagement, including meetings with key landowner groups and meeting with

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the Group. Council staff will refine the draft design options with draft inputs received from consultants and feedback from the community.

- Between July to October 2023, consultants are preparing and finalising detailed supporting studies to inform the Draft Planning Study. These include an Employment and Economics Analysis and Testing by Economics consultant, Detailed Public Domain Concept Design by Landscape consultant, and Traffic and Transport Study by Traffic consultant.
- Draft Planning Study intended to be ready for public exhibition by the end of this year. Following this, the team aims to have completed Final Planning Study during the initial portion of the upcoming year.

4. Administration

NMc (NSC) spoke to:

- i. The 'Neutral Bay Alive Terms of Reference' and Council's 'Code of Conduct – Volunteers and Community Representatives':
 - General responsibilities comprise of being courteous to other participants and Council staff.
 - Noted that Council will raise matters that are confidential and requested that all members are required to observe confidentiality of discussions undertaken during Group meetings.
- ii. Administration of meetings:
 - Format – While Council is open to the possibility of conducting online meetings, there is a strong preference for in-person meetings. The Group did not raise any concerns or issues regarding this.
 - Frequency – During the discussion, it was clarified that "bi-monthly meetings" referred to meetings occurring once every two months. The general sentiment within the Group was that this frequency was insufficient, and there was a collective desire for more frequent meetings to take place. NMc (NSC) emphasised that the productivity and substance of the meetings would depend on the progress of the project and the availability of adequate material to present and consult with the Group.
 - Schedule – it was brought to attention that Council's preference is to hold meetings on Tuesdays due to the availability of the Ros Crichton Pavilion and due to Council meetings taking place on Monday nights. Additionally, individual members of the Group shared their personal availabilities and preferences. After thorough discussion, the consensus among the Group was in favor of conducting meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday nights.
- iii. Communication:
 - Communication platform - NMc (NSC) presented various platform options for the Group's communication. These options included utilising the YourSay portal, email, or a shared document. After discussing the possibilities, the Group expressed a general consensus in favor of a combination of YourSay portal usage along with email notifications for updates. However, it was agreed that initial communications would take place via email.
 - Meeting agenda – NMc (NSC) reiterated that the Group can expect to receive the agenda and any relevant documents at least 5 days prior to the meeting date. It was emphasised that while the Group is not a decision-making body, the passion and thoughtful inputs from its members will play an important role in shaping the Planning Study.
 - Minutes of meeting – The minutes of the meeting will be documented by Council staff, reflecting the collective views of the Group rather than any individual

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perspective. The elected chairperson of the Group will review and confirm that the minutes accurately represent the Group's opinions. Once finalised, the minutes will be published and made accessible on Council's YourSay page.

ACTION: NSC to determine potential date(s) for the next meeting (or two) of the NBACCG. Subsequently, NSC will propose these dates to the Group.

5. Chairperson

NMc (NSC) outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Group's Chairperson:

- Provide effective leadership, guidance, and direction for the Group
- Facilitate smooth discussions and consideration for relevant matters during meetings. help the Group reach a level of consensus on relevant issues.
- Work with Council staff to confirm meeting minutes accurately reflect the position of the Group.
- Keep meetings on schedule and focused.
- Preside over meetings to ensure meetings are chaired fairly and impartially.

NMc (NSC) outlined the procedures to facilitate the chairperson election process and procedures. The participants were encouraged to actively engage in the nomination process.

- Chairperson:
 - MTJ brought up PM's self-nomination on his behalf as he was not present. None of the other Group members expressed interest in being the chairperson.
 - MTJ presented PM's candidate statement, qualifications, and spoke about his experience and commendable demeanour.
 - A significant majority of the Group conveyed their contentment with PM taking on the role of chairperson.
 - Consequently, PM was elected as the Chairperson.
- Alternate Chairperson:
 - MTJ expressed her interest in self-nominating as an alternate chairperson but disclosed that she belongs to the same Precinct Group as PM. However, the Group members expressed a preference for the alternate chairperson to be from a different Group to ensure fair representation. MTJ acknowledged and agreed with this preference.
 - AB expressed her willingness to take on the position. Following this, a few Group members nominated FG as a candidate, and FG confirmed her willingness to stand for the election.
 - The voting process for the alternate chairperson commenced, with 2 members voting in favour of AB and 5 members voting in favour of FG.
 - Consequently, FG was elected as the Alternate Chairperson.

6. Preliminary Engagement Outcomes

NMc (NSC) delivered an overview of the outcomes from the Preliminary Engagement and shared the material presented, along with the feedback received from the Targeted Stakeholder Workshops. The following feedback was highlighted and outlined:

- i. Survey key findings:
 - The primary reason for visiting the Neutral Bay Town Centre was shopping, while dining and coffee were additional or alternative reasons for half of the respondents. Approximately one-third of the visitors were there to access services or meet friends.
 - The majority of survey respondents appeared to walk to the Town Centre,

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although some likely drive on certain occasions and walk on others. A relatively small number travelled via bus, and an even smaller number use a bicycle.

- More trees and landscaping were considered crucial, with 168 respondents ranking them as very important or important,
- Better access within the town center was deemed important by 125 respondents, with only 21 considering it not important.
- Greater comfort for pedestrians was ranked highly with 156 respondents considering it to be important.
- The need for additional public spaces was ranked with a level of importance with 149 respondents considering this to be important.

ii. Stakeholder workshops feedback:

- Grosvenor Lane Plaza:
Included three options – Options A, B and C.
 - Option A proposed no change to the existing car park and received little support from the workshop participants.
 - Option B featured a linear plaza and received notable amount of support for maintaining access through Grosvenor Lane.
 - Option C showed a fully pedestrianised plaza and received the highest level of support among the workshop participants.
- Rangers Road Plaza:
Included two options – the Woolworths Planning Proposal and an Alternate Scheme.
 - The Alternate Scheme received greater support from the workshop participants due to its higher visual connection, larger plaza and through-site link to Yeo Street.
 - A few members of the Group suggested the possibility of an overpass or pedestrian bridge, similar to the one in Bondi Junction, to facilitate a connection between Grosvenor Lane Plaza and Rangers Road Plaza. This approach would help to avoid the need for pedestrians to cross directly through Military Road.
- Community Centre:
The options consisted of two locations – North (Option A) and South (Option B).
 - Workshop participants showed considerable support for the North location (Option A), mainly due to its accessibility to car parking and proximity to shops.
- Building Heights:
Comprised of four options – Options A, B, C and D.
 - Option A represented the existing LEP height, which is a maximum 16m or equivalent to 5-storeys. This option generally received a high level of support from workshop participants.
 - Option B depicted up to 6-storeys and received a qualified level of support from participants.
 - Option C showed up to 8-storeys and received a qualified level of support from participants.
 - Option D demonstrated up to 10-storeys and received a low level of support from workshop participants.
- Other Topics:
Various issues, as raised by workshop participants. These topics encompassed the following:
 - Traffic and Parking: Concerns were expressed about potential additional

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- traffic congestion and parking demands resulting from increased density.
- Village Atmosphere/Retail Vitality: The importance of preserving the unique character of the centre and supporting small businesses to maintain a vibrant village atmosphere.
- Pedestrian Movement: There was a need to address pedestrian safety and the division caused by the busy Military Road.
- Access: Issues related to disability access and the provision of waiting areas for buses and pedestrians.

The Group expressed their interest in reviewing the Consultation Outcomes Report, which has been prepared and finalised by the community engagement consultant, PlanCom.

ACTION: NSC to share PlanCom's Consultation Outcomes Report with the Group, as well as the presentation delivered at this meeting.

7. Landowner Meetings

NMc (NSC) provided an update on Council's recent meetings with Coles and Arkadia. The following updates were shared:

1. Coles Meeting:
 - Coles presented an update on their Pre-DA scheme, which involves developing the plaza area and relocating parking underground.
 - They plan to submit the proposal in the next month or so.
 - It was clarified that Coles intends to challenge the LEP heights via a DA, with the proposal to ultimately be determined by the Sydney North Planning Panel.
2. Arkadia Meeting:
 - Arkadia presented a concept proposal and discussed their longer-term aspirations, with a primary focus on managing their servicing needs in the near term.
3. The Group expressed a strong opinion that Coles and Arkadia should collaborate closely to ensure a better outcome. MO (NSC) noted that Council has made efforts to facilitate communication between Coles and Arkadia.

NMc (NSC) proceeded with updates on other key development proposals:

- 41-53 Grosvenor Street, Neutral Bay (Coles site): Proposal anticipated in the next month.
- 1-7 Rangers Road and 50 Yeo Street, Neutral Bay (Woolworths site): Re-zoning review.
- 183-185 Military Road, Neutral Bay: Seeking 12-storeys and currently under assessment. The timing is unknown.
- 165-173 Military Road, Neutral Bay: Under assessment, with a Land and Environment Court appeal.

MTJ raised that 12-14 Waters Road was another key development proposal, and it was discussed that the proposal will go to a full hearing (within the Land and Environment Court).

8. Next Meeting

NMc (NSC) suggested an agenda item for the next meeting, which involves sharing an update on the planning study and gathering feedback from the Group. NMc (NSC) enquired about specific topics the Group wishes to address in upcoming meetings. The following topics were suggested by the Group:

1. Objectives of the NBTCPs.
2. Update on Young Street Plaza.

Additionally, members of the Group expressed their request for further information on the following:

1. Economic data supporting the proposal.
2. Demographics of the Neutral Bay area.
3. Examples of best practices from around the world to draw inspiration and broaden ideas for the Study.

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NMc (NSC) responded that the key outputs from the Economics consultant can be shared with the Group and mentioned that Council utilises ID Profile for demographic information.

The Group sought clarification on the Traffic and Transport Report, specifically whether the analysis considers existing conditions. NMc (NSC) clarified that the traffic analysis is based on existing counts and parking, as well as broader network challenges. Any transport interventions would aim to manage the proposed uplift/growth.

Furthermore, NMc (NSC) proposed a future meeting exercise, conducting a workshop with the Group to review and discuss the plaza design to be lodged with the Coles DA. The Group agreed to this suggestion.

ACTION: NSC to share outputs from HillPDA's Economics & Financial Feasibility Report with the Group.

AS left the meeting at 7.30pm.

NMc (NSC) and MO (NSC) thanked the Neutral Bay Alive Group members for their attendance.

Meeting closed at 7.45pm.