

Darling Walk

Landscape Statement

Landscape Report for Planning Application



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Landscape Statement

Context

Pre-settlement

The long bay of Darling Harbour is oriented in a north/south direction with its valley formed to the south. The northern edges which wrap around to the east and west would originally have had a more abrupt, low cliff edge to the water. The Darling Walk project sits on land that was formerly the edge of the valley floor which in pre-settlement times was mud flats, exposed to varying amounts by the tides.

The site within the city of Sydney

Darling Harbour is a key landscape feature in the western edge of the Sydney area. It forms a long public edge around a sheltered bay, surrounded by the dense activities of the CBD to the east, and Ultimo and Pyrmont areas to the west. The long water edge condition has allowed Darling Harbour to develop with a range of recreation and entertainment facilities that make it one of the most visited places in Australia. Its location between the residential areas of Ultimo/Pyrmont and the employment areas in the CBD mean that it is also frequented daily by pedestrians commuting to and from work. The existing layout of Darling Harbour was designed and built to commemorate the bicentenary in 1988.

Context within Darling Harbor

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The proposed public domain areas within the Darling Walk site have been designed with regard to the general design principles listed below.

Design Principles

- Improved pedestrian connections, specifically from the city into the site, from surrounding areas and within Darling Harbour
- Enhance the quality, quantity and usability of public space
- Provide a public domain that encourages use by people of all ages
- Respond to existing site conditions including the geometry of Tumbalong Park and create increased connections to Tumbalong Park
- Consider the public space beyond the site (particularly to north under the western distributor) to improve quality of spaces from the Imax through to the Chinese gardens
- Improve biodiversity and environmental protection through choice of plant and hard materials
- Improve connections to waterways and ability to engage with the foreshore
- Ensure that the public domain is designed with regard to crime prevention through its environmental design
- Provide public domain that has been designed for longevity through use of robust materials and spaces that can cater to a multiplicity of uses. This project should be an exemplar of leading practice landscape architecture.

Public Domain Areas

The public domain works include the following key areas:

- Pedestrian Boulevard and retail terrace,
- Active Play area consisting of a terrain, equipment, sand and water play areas,
- Terraced community green,
- Melaleuca Grove,
- Civic Connector,
- Streetscape upgrades.

Pedestrian Boulevard

The design for the public domain creates a variety of activity zones, which strengthen the North South connection through to Cockle Bay as well as the east/west link between the City and Darling Harbour / Tumbalong Park. The key orientation element on the western side of the site is the clearly defined pedestrian boulevard that is activated by cafes and retail areas at the ground level of the development. The materiality of the boulevard connects the site back to the CBD with an emphasis on high quality, simple, and robust elements such as pre-cast concrete seating and canopy trees. The retail terrace is elevated approximately 500mm above the pedestrian boulevard to provide an area of seating that overlooks the surrounding public domain. Designated circulation zones will be designed into the retail terrace which will be highlighted by using a contrasting paver. The edge of the retail terrace contains ramps and stairs to provide equitable access onto the podium and a series of informal seating opportunities. Planters wrap around the edge of the retail terrace to provide a vegetated and textured zone at the base of the building.

Paving, will remain equal to that of the existing Darling Harbour brick paving, with an allowance for some banding or patterns.

All Public Domain power and lighting will match the existing Darling Harbour fittings and will be fully integrated into the Darling Harbour lighting network.

Active Play Area

The Active Play area is a high impact play environment which utilises changes in the ground plane with significant dry and wet play elements.

The key design principles include

- Reduction in levels to improve sightlines from perimeter zones
- Level changes and forms within the space to create diversity
- Strong physical relationship with adjoining retail amenities
- Co-location of play facilities with the proposed Kids Theatre.

The play areas have been designed as a series of rooms that cater to the needs of varying age groups (specific areas are designed for babies and toddlers) and provide diverse play opportunities. The areas are described below.

Forest exploration, dynamic and sand play

The children's play ground is accessed by multiple east-west and north-south connections which reinforce existing, albeit currently cluttered through site connections. The redesigned children's play environment strengthens the legibility of the surrounding context and creates a vibrant, active and robust destination for families. Dry play areas utilizing dynamic terrain changes to create play rooms in which sand play, terrain and balancing elements, slides and climbing walls, swings and net structures are proposed.

Playground Area to include:

- Softfall to be sand, mulch or rubber materials in accordance with Australian Standard
- Shade structures extent and materials to be determined.
- Play equipment to be certified as compliant with Australian Standards 2555, 4422, 4486, 4685.
- To include all abilities play components

A kiosk and toilet facility has been proposed on the eastern side of the playground serviced with power, water, gas, sewer, stormwater and grease traps. The design of the kiosk building will be developed in the detailed design stage and may consider ways of powering the kiosk through a cogeneration plant.

Water Play

The water play is intended to be based on highly interactive water play elements involving a mixture of ephemeral water elements and hands on play features. The design development will investigate hands on play features that encourage interactive play.

The Water Play may include some or all of the following:

- Classic water mechanics such as manual pumps, locks and sluice gates
- Interactive bubblers, streams and jets.
- Shallow water pools with pontoons

The Water Play elements are to be developed incorporating the following essential requirements:

- Safety
- Durability
- Operation and Maintenance
- Sustainability
- To include all abilities play components
- Pump housing and associated control/filtration systems to be integrated into proposed structures such as kiosks or under timber decks.

Terraced Community Green

The community green has been designed to include two large terraced lawn areas bound on the west by existing large Melaleuca Grove and on the east by the pedestrian boulevard. The Community Green creates opportunities for unprogrammed passive recreation for families and workers on their lunch break and builds on the turf area of Tumbalong Park.

Melaleuca Grove

The successful existing Melaleuca Grove is incorporated into the proposed scheme. Clean ground planes of timber and decomposed granite respond to adjacent zones and provide both amenity and a legible edge. Proposed timber deck areas adjacent Tumbalong Park are to be multi-use areas for temporary stalls, structures and facilities to support events and Darling Harbour operations. These will be serviced with power and water.

Civic Connector

The space between the two buildings has been designed as an extension of Day Street for pedestrians. The forecourt will provide space for people to meet and gather, a clear address for the buildings and a strong civic threshold at the eastern end of the link through to Tumbalong Park and the greater Darling Harbour area. A “marker” pole marks the entry into Darling Harbour and provides a strong visual link from the CBD. The western portion of the space has been designed as a pedestrian street, with ample informal seating along the edges. The space will be activated by passing pedestrian traffic and will be encouraged to linger by the retail terraces on each side. The hard landscaped elements have been design to provide an informal seating edge to surrounds of the space to further promote activity. Large soft landscaped planters extend far into the space from the Village Green and act to soften the space whilst providing a symbolic link to Tumbalong Park.

Streetscape Upgrade

Upgrades to Harbour Street - pavement upgrade and avenue planting will provide an improved public domain along Harbour St, reinforce the entry axis and provide a legible and high quality address to Darling Walk. The streetscape upgrades have been designed with pedestrian amenity as a primary concern to provide a safe and attractive public domain. Pedestrian connections across Harbour St have been improved through provision of an 'at grade' pedestrian crossing at Day Street and upgraded bridge with lifts and stairs that provides access to the northern portion of the site and to the civic connector space.

Sustainable Design Principles

Generally the design, material selection and construction will incorporate the following sustainable design principles:

Environmental

- Water sensitive urban design – plants will generally be native and other species that require low irrigation
- Use of recycled site water for irrigation
- Use of mulch (recycled organic materials)
- Use of robust hard materials (consideration of material life cycle)
- Use of solar or cogeneration-powered lights

Social

- Well-designed spaces that will provide a variety of programmed and multi-use spaces to allow for changing recreation needs over time.
- Carefully designed public domain that creates safe, attractive and vibrant recreation and entertainment opportunities

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

The public domain areas have been designed with regard to the following principles which intend to minimize the opportunity for crime:

Surveillance

- The new building will overlook the public domain areas
- Retail activities at ground floor along the pedestrian boulevard will bring people to the site throughout the day and night
- The public domain has been designed with minimal visual blockages at the mid story level by utilizing planting that is up to 600mm high, combined with tall trees with branches occurring above 2m high.

Access Control

- The new public domain areas have been designed to attract users (of all ages)
- The only private domain areas are within the building, which is clearly delineated from the public domain (exterior)

Territorial reinforcement

- The terraced community green has been designed to provide space for the 4000 proposed workers in the new buildings to use for passive recreation and will most likely be highly used at lunch time.

Space management

- The public domain areas have been designed with regard to their ongoing maintenance and will utilize robust materials to enable an ongoing high quality level of presentation.