

10.19.Support requested - Community Improvement District bid

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ATTACHMENTS	Nil
CSP LINK	2. Our Built Infrastructure 2.2 Vibrant public domains and villages 3. Our Innovative City 3.1 Our commercial centres are prosperous and vibrant

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's support towards a proposal to establish a 'Community Improvement District' for the North Sydney CBD by way of a letter of support for an application for funding in the NSW Government Pilot Program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- In October 2023, the NSW Government announced a new \$2.75M initiative called the 'Community Improvement District (CID) Pilot Program', with grants of between \$150K and \$450K being available.
- CIDs are business-led, place-based partnerships, created to support local economies and to deliver services to local businesses and improve local spaces that are additional to those provided by councils or government agencies.
- The North Sydney CBD provides a unique opportunity for the NSW Government pilot program. It is a district of significant strategic, economic and community value and importance for Sydney and New South Wales. A true Micro City, its location, scale, compactness, sector/usage mix, and transport connectivity are already advantageous attributes.
- A collective of landholders and businesses in the North Sydney CBD have come together to place a bid for funding under the program, creating the 'North Sydney CBD Partnership Community Improvement District'.
- With the Metro schedule to commence operation in 2024, and new retail offerings expected to further activate the CBD for workers, community and visitors, the timing for participation in a program to strengthen collaboration for improved placemaking is advantageous.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council provide a letter of support towards the North Sydney CBD Partnership Community Improvement District application to participate in the NSW Government Pilot CID program.

Background

It is reported that there are more than 2,000 Business Improvement Districts (BID's) operating successfully across the world, often transforming under-achieving districts into economic powerhouses attracting businesses, residents, tourists, artists, and events both day and night.

BIDs are business-led, place-based partnerships, created to support local economies and to deliver services to local businesses and improve local spaces that are additional to those provided by councils or government agencies.

By unlocking private capital and bringing stakeholders together to work together towards shared place-based goals, it is expected that outcomes for the community will be significantly enhanced, as compared to each operating in isolation.

In October 2023, the NSW Government announced a new initiative called the 'Community Improvement District (CID) Pilot Program'. This program is a \$2.75 million grant program designed to deliver trial CIDs across NSW that test the viability of diverse governance models that strengthen local place economy.

The program follows a September 2022 white paper 'Enabling Local Business Improvement Districts which explored why NSW does not currently have Improvement Districts like other parts of the world and what can be done to make it easier for Improvement Districts to contribute to neighbourhood placemaking in NSW. In February 2023, a policy paper titled 'Next steps for Business Improvement Districts: What we've heard and principles for future policy' was released.

The following links provide further detailed background information.

[*Business Improvement Districts Discussion Paper \(nsw.gov.au\)*](#)

[*Business Improvement Districts - Policy Paper February 2023 \(nsw.gov.au\)*](#)

[*CID Pilot Program Guidelines \(nsw.gov.au\)*](#)

The program objectives for the Pilot Program are as follows:

- drive collaboration and partnerships between local government, property owners, and businesses to support and strengthen place economy;
- stimulate day and night activity in local centres and increase visitation and dwell time through place activation, place marketing, and branding activities;
- advance recognition, operation, and regulation of CID entities in NSW;
- trial innovative and creative placemaking interventions and encourage well-managed and maintained public spaces supported by strategic CID planning and community engagement; and
- support CID policy development for NSW through the evaluation of CID project insights and data.

A collective of landholders and businesses in the North Sydney CBD have come together to place a bid for funding under the program, creating the 'North Sydney CBD Partnership Community Improvement District' to participate in the pilot program.

The timing of this program presents a great opportunity with the Metro and associated developments coming onboard in 2024.

Report

CBDs are the hive of commerce, progress, and innovation, and contribute significantly to the country's economic activity.

The North Sydney CBD provides a unique opportunity for the NSW Government pilot program. It is a district of significant strategic, economic and community value and importance for Sydney and New South Wales. A true Micro City, its location, scale, compactness, sector/usage mix and transport connectivity are already advantageous attributes.

Over the short to medium term, the North Sydney CBD has an opportunity to evolve its activity and attraction beyond the nine to five, into the evenings and across the weekend. The imminent opening of the Victoria Cross station on the North West Metro line, together with a large volume of new investment and infrastructure and plans for further pedestrianisation of the public domain, offer this moment in time opportunity. Effective, broad, and structured collaboration will assist this potential to be realised.

This transformation will require both physical and non-physical interventions, much of which is already in progress. Over recent years, North Sydney Council in collaboration with landholders and the community has been working to create a more engaging and pedestrianised focused CBD that offers a greater range of activities and unique public spaces for workers, residents, students, and visitors. The Public Domain Strategy includes a number of key projects including Miller Place, a new 7,450m² public plaza to reinforce Miller Street as the main, civic spine of North Sydney. Also included are central laneways, turning a number of connecting streets within the CBD into pedestrian areas or shared zones.

In recent months, an informal collaboration of Council's executive team and several North Sydney businesses has been working on a significant body of place-based planning ahead of the 2024 Metro launch. This collaboration has demonstrated the benefits working together towards shared goals, including initial indication of support towards a shared story, campaign, and exploration of joint activations. The opportunity for business to formalise this collaboration through a pilot CID is timely and will allow this work to be built upon.

While Council would not be a member of the CID, we would be a key stakeholder and potential collaboration partner for joint initiatives. Local Government has a key role in place making, and in the North Sydney CBD this includes strategic planning, urban design, infrastructure and place activation and branding. The Pilot CID program provides an opportunity to explore the way Council engages with landholders and businesses to optimise

our contribution towards transforming North Sydney CBD, as well as some of our broader strategic economic, social, and environmental goals.

Initial pilot partners will include approximately 10 to 15 landholders and businesses within the North Sydney CBD. As part of the bid for grant funding, the landholders and businesses will be committing matching funding towards initiatives.

Initiatives include (but aren't limited to) strategic district branding and activation, shared data, and analytics, undertaking an audit of ESG programs, targeted events and activation, advocacy for Miller Place, joint hoardings strategy, and exploring laneways for place-making and activation.

Applications to participate in the pilot close Tuesday 28 November 2023.

Consultation requirements

There are no consultation requirements resulting from the recommendation in this report.

Financial/Resource Implications

There are no financial implications in relation to the recommendation within the report.