

Resolution of Council

18 May 2026

Item 13.1

Adaptive Reuse of the Newtown Tram Depot

The original motion was moved by Councillor Maxwell, seconded by Councillor Thompson.

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the Newtown Tram Depot is a heritage-listed transport asset of State significance, forming part of the electrification of the New South Wales tramway system which commenced from 1899;
- (ii) it is one of the oldest and rare surviving tramway depot buildings in New South Wales, retaining much of its original industrial form;
- (iii) following its closure in the 1960s, the site has been used for a range of purposes, including bus storage and rail uses, with part of the forecourt redeveloped and opened to the public in 2012 as an entrance to Newtown Station;
- (iv) in 2023, Alfalfa House was granted permission from Transport Asset Manager (TAM) to operate a community garden with a more than 20 dedicated volunteers managing over 20 raised beds, yet it is currently unclear as to whether this remains functional;
- (v) the main depot building has remained largely unused and is currently in poor condition, with significant deterioration to structural elements including roofing and steel framing;
- (vi) the site is owned by the TAM, a NSW Government agency, which has commenced stabilisation works on the building estimated at \$9 million, with site works forecast to be complete in the second half of 2027;
- (vii) TAM has advised that a decision on a strategy for the future use of the site, and associated funding, is planned to be in place prior to the completion of stabilisation works, creating an imminent window in which the City's position must be established;

- (viii) the site occupies a prominent location adjacent to Newtown Station within a dense inner-city area, with strong potential to support community, cultural and economic activity;
 - (ix) there is strong and growing community interest in the future of the site, including calls for it to be transformed into a community, cultural or creative hub;
 - (x) a range of public proposals have been put forward for the site, demonstrating both the opportunity and the need for a clear and coordinated approach by Transport NSW;
 - (xi) that Greens MP for Newtown, Jenny Leong, has supported adaptive reuse of the site as far back as 2015, working with local community groups, hosting a public forum and advocating within NSW Parliament for state government to better utilise the site in line with community sentiment;
 - (xii) the long-term conservation and activation of large heritage assets often requires a mix of uses, and in some cases limited, well-integrated development can play a role in supporting their viability and ongoing public access;
 - (xiii) existing planning controls across the site already permit various [Zone E1 - Local Centre](#) uses on the site such as residential, commercial, hotel, education and entertainment, subject to approval;
 - (xiv) it is important that the future of the site is shaped by a cohesive, community-informed vision; and
 - (xv) the City is well-placed to prepare a community-informed submission to TAM's consultation process, given that planning controls are already in place, the site is identified in Sustainable Sydney 2030 as a potential Newtown Activity Hub, and existing City strategies provide a strong foundation;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to prepare a submission to any future consultation process by Transport for NSW on the adaptive reuse of the Newtown Tram Depot that:
- (i) draws on existing City strategies, including the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Study, the Cultural Strategy and Sustainable Sydney 2030;
 - (ii) draws on TAM's structural and heritage investigations already underway; and
 - (iii) requests that they continue to engage the City of Sydney as the project progresses; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Minister for Transport, the Hon. John Graham, requesting:
- (i) a briefing on the status of stabilisation works and future planning for the Newtown Tram Depot site; and
 - (ii) early and meaningful consultation with the City of Sydney and the MP for Newtown, Jenny Leong, on the future use of the site, before any strategy decision is made.

The amended motion, as varied by consent, was carried unanimously.