Resolution of Council

26 October 2026

Item 13.4

Meanwhile Use for Creative and Cultural Spaces

Moved by Councillor Maxwell, seconded by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

(i) in February 2025, Council unanimously resolved to support the meanwhile use of vacant properties to address urgent housing needs. That work contributed to the City supporting the Property Industry Foundation's (PIF) Meanwhile Use Platform

(ii) the Meanwhile Use Platform is operational and in its beta phase, with national rollout anticipated in early-to-mid 2027. It currently has a housing focus, but can connect owners of temporarily vacant properties of any type with organisations seeking space for a range of uses

(iii) the City's cultural strategy commits to retaining and creating affordable creative space. The City's Greater Sydney creative spaces affordability study, published September 2025, found that the median creative income of artists in Greater Sydney was only $5,000 a year, and that 57% of respondents were considering leaving Sydney in the next 12 months, driven by housing and creative workspace costs

(iv) meanwhile use of vacant industrial and commercial buildings is a low-cost, readily available way to provide creative space, as organisations such as The Nest have shown

(v) meanwhile occupants can be required to leave well before works begin, and the City does not currently collect data on how often this happens or for how long buildings then remain vacant

(B) Council further note:

(i) the National Alliance for Meanwhile Use, recently established by PIF and its partners, is working to remove systemic barriers to meanwhile use, including through standardised meanwhile use agreements. Its steering committee is currently made up of housing, homelessness and charitable organisations, with no cultural or creative sector representation yet

(ii) the NSW Government has taken welcome steps to support meanwhile use, including planning changes in December 2024 to speed up meanwhile use of vacant properties for crisis and temporary accommodation, and the Homes NSW Meanwhile Use Policy and standard meanwhile use lease, released in December 2025. However, these apply to housing only

(iii) the NSW Government's draft Vibrant Precincts State Environmental Planning Policy would allow temporary arts and cultural uses in vacant commercial buildings as exempt development, but only within Special Entertainment Precincts

(C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the relevant NSW Ministers, including the Ministers responsible for Planning, Housing and the Arts, welcoming the NSW Government's steps to support meanwhile use, inviting their participation in the workshop at (D)(i), and requesting that the NSW Government:

(i) extend the Homes NSW Meanwhile Use Policy and standard lease to non-residential properties and to cultural, creative, social enterprise and community uses

(ii) apply the proposed exemption for temporary arts and cultural uses in the draft Vibrant Precincts SEPP beyond Special Entertainment Precincts, including to vacant buildings awaiting redevelopment

(iii) ensure any incentives for meanwhile use, including land tax relief, apply to cultural and creative uses as well as housing

(D) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:

(i) convene a workshop bringing together representatives of the City, PIF, the NSW Government and the Australian Government, including Create NSW and Creative Australia, with property owners and the cultural and creative sector, to identify barriers to creative meanwhile use, including planning, building compliance, insurance, regulatory and funding barriers, as well as options to incentivise property owners and the changes needed at each level of government, building on the matters at (B) and (C)

(ii) informed by the workshop at (i), consider any proposal from PIF developed in consultation with creative sector organisations for a program to increase the use of the Meanwhile Use Platform for cultural and creative purposes, setting out what the program would deliver, including:

(a) mechanisms to identify vacant and underused industrial and commercial buildings suitable for creative meanwhile use, including sites with development approval where works have not yet commenced, and to engage their owners

(b) brokering and managing creative meanwhile use, including adapting standard agreements for creative uses and giving owners confidence about exit arrangements

(c) recording when meanwhile occupants are required to vacate before works commence, and how long buildings then remain vacant

together with the program's timeframe, cost, and any funding or City support required

(iii) investigate options to provide information about meanwhile use and the Meanwhile Use Platform, including for cultural and creative uses, through the development application process, including in communications with applicants and property owners

(iv) report back to Council on the outcomes of the workshop and any proposal received, including an assessment of likely costs, expenditure related to any City support required, and any further advocacy arising from the workshop, in time to inform the 2027/28 budget.

Carried unanimously.

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