

Project Scope - Ward Park Renewal, Surry Hills

File No: 2025/291778

Summary

This report outlines the proposed scope of works for the renewal of Ward Park, Surry Hills. Ward Park has been identified as a part of the parks and playgrounds improvement program.

The project brief is to refurbish the park to create a high-quality, inclusive, and accessible open space. Mature trees will be retained, and improved irrigation will support the establishment of new turf. The renewal will enhance the overall amenity of the park by consolidating the playgrounds, replacing ageing play equipment, and upgrading paths, retaining walls, park furniture, and lighting.

A draft Concept Plan was on public exhibition from 31 March to 12 May 2025. A letter was distributed in the local area and the proposal was exhibited on the City's website. The proposed works are supported by the community.

The proposal includes a new and improved playground, upgraded park furniture and signage, and enhanced pathways to improve accessibility. It aims to create an inclusive, open space using simple, durable materials that reflect the character of the local neighbourhood. The proposal also includes improved lighting throughout the park to enhance safety and support extended use.

This report recommends that Council endorse the proposed scope of works for the renewal of Ward Park, Surry Hills.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the project scope for the Ward Park, Surry Hills renewal, as described in the subject report and shown in the revised Concept Plan as shown at Attachment B to the subject report, for progression to relevant approvals, preparation of construction documentation tender and construction; and
- (B) note the estimated financial implications as outlined in Confidential Attachment D to the subject report.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Location Plan and Site Photos
- Attachment B.** Revised Concept Plan
- Attachment C.** Engagement Report
- Attachment D.** Financial Implications (Confidential)

Background

1. The City has an ongoing parks improvement program. This program is for parks which need upgrade, renewal or enhancement works, the replacement of end-of-life equipment, and to generally provide appropriate facilities for local residents.
2. Ward Park is a neighbourhood park located at 45 Marlborough Street, Surry Hills. It is bounded by NSW Homes residential properties (Northcott Towers) to the west, Devonshire Street with the Surry Hills Light Rail station to the north, Belvoir/Lansdowne Street to the south and Marlborough Street to the east (refer to Attachment A). The site is approximately 9,124sqm.
3. The land is owned by the City of Sydney.
4. Ward Park was identified for renewal due to the park's overall condition.
5. Ward Park is characterised as a neighbourhood park. It is currently used by children of all ages, residents and staff from local business. The Northcott Community Centre backs onto the park, and the Surry Hills Light Rail station borders its northern edge. Several of the park's major assets are at, or nearing, the end of their useful life. These include the playgrounds, irrigation system, retaining walls, and lighting infrastructures.

Concept Plan and Scope of Work

6. A draft concept design was developed for the works and community consultation undertaken from 31 March to 12 May 2025.
7. The draft Concept Design sets the overall layout. The key principles are:
 - (a) Rationalise park layout: rationalise turf areas, playground and path networks to balance the needs of park users, families and dog owners
 - (b) Improve accessibility and play spaces: consolidate play areas away and enhance accessibility
 - (c) Upgrade aging assets: replace outdated furniture and fixtures.
8. The proposal includes the following:
 - (a) new and improved playground
 - (b) improved park furniture and signage
 - (c) improved lighting throughout the park
 - (d) upgraded pathways for better accessibility
9. In response to community consultation the following will be further investigated during detailed design:
 - (a) additional fencing surrounding the playground and along key areas to help mitigate dogs running outside of the park
 - (b) additional tables and seating

- (c) equipment that could be utilised for both fitness and play
 - (d) additional garbage bins.
10. A Review of Environmental Factors (REF) will be lodged for the works in accordance with the Environmental Planning Assessment Act 1979 and the State Environment Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

11. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 3 - Public places for all - this project will enhance accessibility and inclusivity, upgrading the park will make it more accessible and inclusive, ensuring it serves as a welcoming space for all community members which meets the needs of a variety of users and provides opportunities for social interaction.
 - (b) Direction 4 - Design excellence and sustainable development - this project is part of a wider program of renewal of parks and reserves across the city. It will provide an improved quality of open space. Incorporating sustainable materials and practices in the park's renewal, promoting environmental responsibility and resilience to climate change.
 - (c) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - this project will provide public play and gathering spaces for all ages and abilities. Fostering community engagement and creating spaces within the park that encourage social interaction and community activities, ensuring everyone feels welcome and included.

Organisational Impact

12. Upgrading the park assets in Ward Park will improve the quality of these existing assets and represent a mitigation of risk to the City. The assets will require ongoing maintenance.

Risks

13. Risks of not implementing the scope of these works include potential further failure of the retaining walls, playground equipment, failed irrigation, paving surfaces, non-compliant lighting and risk to the community.
14. This approach is within the City's risk appetite, which states:
 - (a) We acknowledge our responsibility to protect and enhance the social and environmental wellbeing of our community. Our risk appetite emphasises the integration of sustainable practices into infrastructure asset management, considering environmental impacts, climate change resilience and community engagement.

Social / Cultural / Community

15. The site is an important open space within the Surry Hills area where many people have limited access to outdoor areas within their own homes. The site is also used by workers during the daytime especially at lunchtime. Improving the amenity offering within the park represents an investment in this community, providing opportunities for people of different ages and abilities to use the reserve alongside each other.

Environmental

16. Protection and enhancement of the existing planting and trees through this work is in line with the Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan.

Financial Implications

17. There are sufficient funds in the in the draft 2025/26 capital budget and forward estimates to complete the works included in this project. It is anticipated that the City's draft budget and future year forward estimates that form part of the Long Term Financial Plan will be approved by Council in the current reporting cycle.
18. Current project cost estimates and financial implications for the delivery of the Ward Park renewal are detailed in Confidential Attachment D. Construction cost estimates will be confirmed by a Quantity Surveyor prior to tender.

Relevant Legislation

19. Local Government Act 1993 - Section 10A provides that a council may close to the public so much of its meeting as comprises the discussion of information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
20. Attachment D contains confidential commercial information which, if disclosed, would:
 - (a) confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business; and
 - (b) prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it.

21. Discussion of the matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because it would compromise Council's ability to negotiate fairly and commercially to achieve the best outcome for its ratepayers.
22. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
23. State Environment Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021.
24. Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

25. Current Program Dates:

(a) Council consideration of Concept Design	June 2025
(b) Detailed Design	Mid 2025 - Mid 2026
(c) Tender	Mid - Late 2026
(d) Construction start	Early 2027
(e) Completion	Late 2027

Options

26. Proceed with the progression of the improvement works as outlined in this subject report including relevant approvals, preparation of construction documentation, tender for construction.
27. Project does not proceed - this option is not recommended as the current condition of the reserve has a number of associated risk and compliance issues.

Public Consultation

28. Community consultation was undertaken as a 2-part process: early engagement (pre-consultation) and public consultation / exhibition. For a detailed description of the consultation process and findings refer to Attachment C.
29. An early engagement notification letter/email was issued to residents. A total of 81 submissions were received during the period. The purpose of the early engagement was to seek input from the community about how they used the space and how the reserve could be improved.

30. The public consultation involved the following:
- (a) Letters advertising the online feedback portal were distributed to the Surry Hills area. 2,400 letters were distributed.
 - (b) A webpage on SydneyYourSay showing the plans from 31 March to 12 May 2025. The page included an electronic copy of the concept design, survey and other key information about the consultation.
 - (c) A pop-up consultation feedback session was held in the reserve on Tuesday 8 April, 2025, 4pm to 5:30pm. City staff were available to answer questions and obtain feedback about the proposed concept plan. Respondents were also encouraged to view the plans and provide feedback on the Sydney Your Say website. Approximately 20 people attended the session.
 - (d) City staff attended the Lord Mayor's Surry Hills Social Housing Forum at the Northcott Community Centre on Thursday 10 April 2025 from 11am to 12:30pm.
 - (e) City staff attended the Inner-City Network Meeting (community food and other support) at the Northcott Community Centre on Friday 11 April from 3pm.
 - (f) Specific reach out to the Boys and Girls Brigade who are regularly users of the park.
 - (g) An online feedback form.
 - (h) Four signs were placed in the park directing people online to leave their feedback.
31. There were 51 submissions received during the consultation period. The Sydney Your Say page was visited 712 times during the consultation period. This included 20 submissions via email and 31 submissions via the online feedback form.
32. The proposal was well supported by the community and the responses highlighted that renewal of this park would increase the current use of the park. A summary and response to the key comments and suggestions are:
- (a) There were 13 requests for the installation of exercise equipment and more activities for older children, such as handball, netball, or basketball courts. While there are several large sporting facilities located nearby, space within the park is constrained and access is limited. The project team will review the feasibility of incorporating exercise equipment and additional activities for older children into Ward Park.
 - (b) There were requests for more tables and seating. The proposal has been updated to include a variety of seating options and locations, connecting the plaza to the park and incorporating several bench seats around the turf area. Additional opportunities for seating will be further investigated during detailed design.

- (c) There were 9 requests to improve fencing, including suggestions for barriers such as dense planting or fencing between the park and Devonshire Street to prevent dogs and children from running out, and for fully fencing the playground to keep children in and dogs out. Additional fencing has been included in the concept design to help mitigate these concerns. The feasibility of further fencing improvements will be reviewed during detailed design.
- (d) There were 3 requests to enhance the skate bowl in the park. The existing skate bowl has been reviewed, and while it will not be upgraded as part of this project, the asset will be retained in its current condition. It is recommended that it be removed and replaced once it reaches the end of its useful life.

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