



FRIENDS OF ULTIMO  
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To:  
Project Leader  
Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy  
NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

*Ultimo, 12 September, 2020*

## **DRAFT PYRMONT PENINSULA PLACE STRATEGY SUBMISSION**

Friends of Ultimo is a community group founded eight years ago to address local Ultimo issues. We communicate with our 200 members through regular emails, personal connection and a Facebook page.

Before commenting on the Draft Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy, we want to express our concern that such a critical consultation should be carried out during the Covid-19 lockdown, when public meetings and discussion, an essential part of democratic public consultation, are prohibited.

Our initial overall comment on the "Place Strategy", is to express reservations about Ultimo being considered together with Wentworth Park and the future Fish Markets, both located in Glebe, and Pymont itself, under the name "Pymont Peninsula."

Ultimo has a very different demographic from Pymont, is less "gentrified" and more racially diverse.

Whereas Pymont's former historic buildings, symbolising its industrial past, were virtually obliterated to make way for an oversized casino and high rise apartment buildings, Ultimo has kept its own, well-defined, identity. It retains many elements of its industrial past including wool stores, rows of Victorian terraced houses and secluded small parks, such as Quarry Green, with its church and local pub.

Ultimo is further distinguished as the home of the time-honoured Powerhouse Museum since 1988 and, currently, the ABC, UTS and TAFE as well as many high-tech and creative start-ups.

Finally Ultimo and Pymont are located in different state electorates (Balmain and Sydney respectively).

Ultimo and Pymont are among the most densely populated suburbs in Australia. It is hard to understand why they have been earmarked by the Government to become an even denser extension of Sydney CBD.

Suburbs east of the CBD (Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay, Rushcutters Bay, etc...) and equally close to the City centre, have a much lower density and therefore a greater potential for expanding resident numbers than the "Pymont Peninsula".

### **A) POSITIVE POINTS**

On the plus side, the Strategy appears to make some sound recommendations to guide and improve development of the Pymont Peninsula over the next two decades, drawn mainly from public's reaction to the "10 directions" published earlier.

These guiding principles explore five “**BIG MOVES**” designed to help Pyrmont realise its perceived full potential, through the construction of

**-1- A “world- class” foreshore precinct** (completion of the Foreshore Walk)

Positive as long as it is designed as a genuine pedestrian walk, not a row of shops, cafes and restaurants. We note with concern, that the Foreshore Walk will pass through the new Fish Markets (a massive shopping centre in its final version) and that the only green space planned on its new section will be located under the Anzac Bridge approaches.

**-2- Venues for 24-hour entertainment**

Acceptable, but the sites would need to be carefully considered and community-approved. We fear this could be just a ‘carte blanche’ for more extensions of the Star Casino.

**-3- A new Metro station**

This is obviously welcome as long as its location is carefully chosen (the previous project proposed to obliterate Union Square!)

**-4- More green public spaces**

This is again welcome, especially the **return of Wentworth Park land** (greyhound tracks and temporary pop-up school, “once their terms expire”).

This direction also calls for

- “A tapestry of greener public spaces” (vague but pleasant)
- “Tree planting (25% canopy)” - 25% is grossly insufficient.
- “Green walkable streets” including Harris St and Wattle St (again welcome but too vague)

**-5- Better public transport and pedestrian links**

We welcome the “Goods Line extension north to Union St” and the “restoration of the historic Glebe Island Bridge”

“Strengthen(ed) active transport connections” suggests the right direction although, again, the wording is too vague.

Additionally, the Strategy advocates

- **Respect of the heritage conservation areas:** Pyrmont and Ultimo Villages and Harris St South (between the Powerhouse and the ABC).

and IMPORTANTLY

- **Full public consultation at all stages**
- **that future planning controls should revert to the City of Sydney**

## **B) NEGATIVE POINTS**

When digging deeper into the Strategy and reach the **Framework to Key Sites**, however problems become clearly visible

Many of the positive actions listed above are in fact only general theories and/or have no timeframe. Hence they mask specific, **ad hoc building densities and height relaxations**, which allow, for example,

- 2 high rise (51 and 16 storeys) towers at the Star Casino, previously rejected by the Independent Planning Commission

- a 170m/(56 storeys) building at the Harbourside Shopping Centre

(We note that Darling Harbour is now included in the “Peninsula Place” strategy!)

- Blackwattle Bay (current Fish Market site) - up to 156m (50 storeys) buildings
- A South Ultimo “Taller Building Cluster”, “consistent with City of Sydney’s approach to solar access in the draft Central Sydney Planning Strategy” (ie up to 110m tall - 30 storey buildings) including both the **Powerhouse Museum Harwood Building** and the **ABC headquarters!**

And also

- “Investment proposals including the new Sydney ICC and Sofitel Hotel” (p16). Does that refer to the proposed **Sofitel Helipad** which Friends of Ultimo opposes, since its proposed flight path would have helicopters hovering over our Village?

- Powerhouse Museum theatre and performance space” (p93)  
This apparently refers to the intended demolition of the Powerhouse Museum collection and curatorial facilities (ie Harwood Building) to make way for an American-style music-hall that Friends of Ultimo also strongly oppose.

Sceptics will remember the empty promises of the UrbanGrowth “Bays Precinct”:

- The luxury marinas of Rozelle Bay (now a WestConnex spaghetti junction)
- The transformation of White Bay Power Station into a high tech building (but it’s still in the same derelict state).
- The whole of White Bay to become a high tech industries hub (it’s now a construction materials unloading zone, a concrete batching plant and tunnel excavation material yard plus a highly-polluting Cruise ship terminal).

In conclusion, the draft Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy proposes a number of welcome goals and ways to achieve them, including optimal transparency and public consultation. We remain sceptical, however, and doubt that it will ever be implemented as it would require a complete policy reversal by a Government addicted to secrecy and duplicity.

Those welcome goals are generally described in very vague/non-committal terms and fail to mask the fact that **this “strategy” review was triggered by the rejection of the oversized Star Casino tower by the Independent Planning Commission** and that its main goal is the unacceptable **ad-hoc planning allowing high-rise buildings** at all 4 “key sites”

- The Star Casino
- The Harbourside Shopping Centre
- Blackwattle Bay
- The Powerhouse Museum



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