

MM26/24 UPDATE ON PROPOSED REZONING OF MACQUARIE PARK INNOVATION DISTRICT - Mayor, Councillor Trenton Brown

File Number: MYR/07/10/20 - BP24/621

This Mayoral Minute provides information on the latest update provided by the Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) on 16 July 2024, regarding the NSW Government's proposed rezoning of the Macquarie Park Innovation District, (specifically Stage 2 of the Rezoning Proposal, also referred to by the Government as a 'Transport Orientated Development' (TOD)).

The Stage 2 Rezoning Proposal is on public exhibition from 9 July 2024 to 9 August 2024. As with DPHI's approach to the Stage 1 rezoning, there was a lack of time for staff to review the proposal and prepare a report for Council's consideration at tonight's Council meeting. There has also been no time for Council to undertake proper consultation with the community given the short public exhibition period provided, on something that could reshape the Macquarie Park Innovation District for generations to come.

The Macquarie Park Innovation District is Australia's original innovation district, and has the potential to be an innovation powerhouse - a place where people can live, work, rest, play, and **innovate**.

Already home to 63,000 highly skilled workers and 44,000 higher education students, MPID makes an annual economic contribution of **\$13.6 billion to the NSW economy**. It is also estimated that every year over \$700 million is invested into R&D in MPID, translating to **\$2.6 billion to the National economy**.

The City of Ryde is not a nimby Council. Council is happy to do its share in solving the current housing crisis – but not at the cost of local employment opportunities. There is a need to strike the right balance between housing and employment in a manner that doesn't sacrifice an innovation ecosystem that has taken over 60 years to establish.

The State Government's plans fail to provide a clear strategy for sustaining and enhancing employment opportunities within the community. The plans do not adequately address how employment will be supported or expanded, raising concerns about the future economic stability of the Macquarie Park Innovation District and thus the economic impact on the State's economy.

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Building on the concerns about employment, a major issue with the rezoning plan is the lack of sufficient infrastructure planning, especially open space, which appears completely dependent on developers enacting “incentive” clauses. The incentive is for the developer to obtain significant uplift or extra residential development in a trade-off for open space that the State Government should be funding. Not only has the State Government not come to the table to assist in the acquisition of TG Millner, it has now withdrawn any funding for open space at the former Peter Board High School site, as previously promised to the community.

Further, the development activity proposed by the State Government for Macquarie Park will require substantial upgrades to existing infrastructure, including transportation, utilities, and community services. Despite this, there is no clear commitment or detailed plan from the Government on how these essential needs will be met. Alongside a lack of infrastructure planning, is the troubling absence of guaranteed funding for this essential infrastructure. Without a firm financial commitment, the existing and future communities, risk being left with inadequate resources to support the significant increase in population and development activity resulting from the rezoning. This lack of assurance undermines the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed developments and risks undermining all the hard work that has made the Macquarie Park Innovation District a global success story.

Finally, there is considerable uncertainty surrounding the inclusion and impact of data centres within the innovation precinct. Data centres are crucial enablers for technological advancement and economic growth, but their placement and integration within the district must be carefully considered to ensure they complement, rather than hinder, the innovation ecosystem. Furthermore, a clear decision on data centres is needed to ensure better planning for the provision of power and water to new residential and commercial developments.

In light of these concerns, I urge the NSW Government to engage in thorough consultation with the City of Ryde and the broader Macquarie Park Innovation District community – residents, students, workers, and businesses. All groups must work collaboratively to ensure that the Macquarie Park Rezoning for Stage 1 and Stage 2 addresses these critical issues.

As part of its ongoing commitment to collaboration, Council will endeavour to work closely with the Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure (DPHI) to provide a detailed and balanced submission for the community.

By working together, a plan can be created that supports employment, guarantees infrastructure funding, provides for social and affordable housing, and fosters an innovation precinct that benefits all.

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I move that Council formally expresses these concerns to the NSW Government and requests an urgent review and consultation process to address these critical issues.

RECOMMENDATION:

- (a) That the CEO write to the Secretary for DPHI seeking an extension for Council's submission to the NSW Government's exhibition of the Macquarie Park Transport Orientated Development Rezoning Proposal until Friday, 30 August 2024.
- (b) That Council publicise the Macquarie Park Transport Oriented Development (Stage 2) Rezoning proposal to ensure that the community is well informed of the changes proposed for the Precinct.
- (c) That Council encourage public submissions for the proposed Stage 2 of the Macquarie Park Transport Oriented Development Rezoning Proposal.
- (d) That the Mayor write to the Premier of NSW, The Hon. Chris Minns MP, and the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, The Hon. Paul Scully MP, seeking a meeting and collaboration between the NSW State Government and Council to refine and finalise the rezoning for Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Macquarie Park Transport Oriented Development rezoning proposal to ensure the right balance of providing housing, employment opportunities and appropriate infrastructure provision at the right time.

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments for this report.

Report Prepared By:

Councillor Trenton Brown
Mayor