Re: Draft Hospital Precinct Structure Plan (Frenchs Forest)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hospital Precinct Structure Plan (Frenchs Forest). As a general matter for consideration, Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) Health Promotion requests that the Hospital Precinct Structure Plan (Frenchs Forest) adopts a framework which will promote health and wellbeing. NSLHD Health Promotion recommends the NSW Health Healthy Urban Development Checklist when preparing and commenting on development policies, plans and proposals.¹ It is appreciated that this is a Structure Plan, providing a strategic framework for the long term development of the Northern Beaches Hospital Precinct. The comments herein may be relevant to this plan or the detailed planning documents that ensue.

GENERAL COMMENTS
NSLHD Health Promotion supports Northern Beaches Council’s aspiration to incorporate a mode shift to public transport in conjunction with Transit Orientated Development. Health Promotion also supports the decision to have a diversity of built form and density whilst ensuring the hospital precinct has identity, by incorporating effective place making initiatives.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS
Public Transport
NSLHD Health Promotion supports Northern Beaches Council’s view that the most appropriate form of public transport for Frenchs Forest residents and workers is a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system from Dee Why to Chatswood. In the absence of that, an increase in bus frequency along this route will help to reduce traffic congestion.

Recommendation
- That Northern Beaches Council and the NSW Government plan for a BRT (or similar mass public transport system), to enable residents and workers from Dee Why to Chatswood to have a viable and attractive public transport system that complies with the Greater Sydney Commission’s priority ie: residents being able to access jobs and centres within 30 minutes².
**Connectivity**

The Hospital Precinct Structure Plan’s proposal to include ‘complete streets’, so as to incorporate pedestrian and cycle movement as part of their character (p.28) will provide greater connectivity to, from and within the precinct. Also supported is the proposal to incorporate mid-block connections in Precinct 1 (Frenchs Forest Urban Core) and a pedestrian ‘green link’ to connect the town centre with residential areas. These will help to activate the pedestrianised town centre.

**Recommendations**

- Wherever possible, build separated cycleways to reduce pedestrian-cyclist conflict and increase safety.
- That paving be used to delineate the pedestrian prioritised sections of Frenchs Forest Urban Core.

**Social interaction, Active Living, Healthy Eating and Safety**

The proposed pedestrianised town centre will help create a pleasant, safer walking experience and a quieter, less polluted, convivial retail and alfresco dining culture. The proposal to mix civic, commercial, residential, retail and community infrastructure (including civic-scaled open space) is commended, as this will encourage the formation of a vibrant, community-orientated town centre. It is also commended that Northern Beaches Council envisages formal public open spaces in the Frenchs Forest Urban Core (B4).

**Recommendations**

- That a civic square and village green are included in the Frenchs Forest Urban Core (B4) as a focal point for people to meet and socialise.
- That a children’s playground is included in the town centre (B4) eg: The Corso, Manly.
- That Northern Beaches Council plan to attract night time trading to Precinct 1. This will invigorate the area after hours and has the potential to improve social interaction, build community, enhance perceptions of safety and reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviour, such as vandalism and graffiti. This can be aided by activating ground floors in the town centre and encouraging a mix of uses, including specialty shops, restaurants and theatres.
- That an area with ‘edible planting’ is included to encourage community interaction and provide contact with nature, which supports psychological health and wellbeing.
- That there is adequate seating to encourage people to stay, linger and interact with each other. Include seating with appropriate height and arms to accommodate seniors.
- That there is a plentiful supply of bike racks throughout the town centre in visible, accessible locations.
- That Northern Beaches Council adopts building designs that promote the use of stairs to encourage incidental physical activity. For example, design stairs to be accessible, user-friendly and positioned near (or visible from) entrances.
- That council ensures fresh fruit and vegetables are available for purchase in the town centre and within 400m of all residences. If possible, encourage fruit and vegetable outlets to have attractive shop frontage displays to encourage people to purchase.
- Consider provision of space for a small scale farmers’ market to take place in the (recommended) Civic Square.
- That drinking water fountains are provided in the ‘centrepiece’ civic space to encourage water consumption, as it is the best choice of any beverage.
- That Northern Beaches Council ensures that passive surveillance is optimised by appropriate lighting and use of shrubs which do not obstruct lines of sight, in accordance with NSW Police’s ‘Crime Prevention by Environmental Design’.
Affordable Housing
It is commendable that Northern Beaches Council is exploring options to incorporate affordable housing into the Hospital Precinct Structure Plan.

Recommendation
• That Northern Beaches Council ensures that a reasonable percentage of the increased density proposed in the Hospital Precinct Structure Plan is devoted to affordable housing.

Sustainability
Recommendation
• That the landscaping plan will use local natives that attract and support local wildlife.

NSLHD Health Promotion thanks Northern Beaches Council for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Hospital Precinct Structure Plan (Frenchs Forest). On the whole it is a positive, constructive plan to enhance the liveability of those living and working in the new hospital’s precinct. NSLHD Health Promotion welcomes further opportunities to assist Northern Beaches Council on projects and plans that will promote the health and wellbeing of the Northern Beaches community.

Yours sincerely,

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References
3. Healthy Built Environment Indicators, City Wellbeing Program, CRFC, Australia 2016