

**ITEM                    MAYORAL MINUTE: FORMER CONCORD RSL SITE**

**Department        Executive Services**

**Author Initials: AT**

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**REPORT**

In May 2019 my Mayoral Minute dealt with the issue of the closure of Concord RSL Club, the impact that the closure would have on our community, and the importance of the land being kept in our community's hands as a space for public recreation.

The General Manager and I have raised this issue with our local State Member for Drummoyne, John Sidoti MP, and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Rob Stokes, as well as RSL NSW.

Therefore, I believe it is time to provide an update and to address the opportunity that we have to advocate further for important public open space in our area.

The land on which the former RSL Club stood was sold by Concord Golf Club to Concord Council in 1955 under a covenant that stated the land was only to be used for "public recreation generally". In 1963 the land was then sold on to the Concord District RSL Sub-Branch under a covenant that stated the land was only to be used for an RSL Club or recreational uses.

The intent from the civic leaders of our past was clear – this land was always intended to be a place for locals to come together as a community.

Whilst the Concord RSL Club fit that purpose in the past, it is clear now that there is an opportunity for the land to be transferred to Council and become part of our vision for a City of green, open public recreation spaces.

The Canada Bay Open Space and Recreation Strategy identifies the need for new open space to support our growing population. By 2036, the City of Canada Bay will need 11 new sports fields, 5 cricket pitches, 10 netball courts, 7 tennis courts and 1 new baseball field.

Whilst increasing capacity of existing sports fields may address some of this need, the Concord RSL site provides a unique opportunity for new open space.

The site is surrounded by existing public open space, including Majors Bay Reserve, Ron Routley Oval, Sid Richards Park and Arthur Walker Reserve. These parks host a range of active sports including soccer, cricket and baseball. The land at 1 Nullawarra Avenue brings together these existing recreation areas as a district facility, facilitating an increase in capacity and the sharing of infrastructure with many fields, reserves and courts in the immediate vicinity.

In addition to organised sports, the site has the potential to address an identified need for additional active recreation facilities, such as multipurpose outdoor courts and fitness stations.

The precinct is an important part of the Green Grid that connects open spaces and recreation trails throughout the City of Canada Bay. The site is identified in the Eastern City District Plan to be a “secondary spine” in the Green Grid and would be a vital link to our foreshore open space corridor along Parramatta River. The use of the land for open space would be consistent with the key principles of the State Government’s Greener Places framework, by integrating and connecting a network of high quality open spaces that would be multifunctional and provide social, environmental and economic benefits.

In addition to the area having vital potential for public recreation, the Canada Bay Biodiversity Strategy identifies the area as a priority location for habitat connectivity. The site presents an opportunity to increase linkages for critical habitat for migratory and water birds, mangroves, and the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest near the foreshore to the golf course (south) and Bicentennial Park (west).

We are presented with a clear and unique opportunity to realise a vision for this area that will support our goals for a more active, open and green City.

This is a once in a generation opportunity and I believe that the time has come for Council to engage with government about securing the future of this land.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the Mayor write to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Rob Stokes, and the Member for Drummoyne, John Sidoti MP, to seek their assistance in securing this site as public open space.

