

A year of strategy and sustainability

COUNCIL NAME

City of Canada Bay

WEB ADDRESS

www.canadabay.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

20 square kilometres

POPULATION

84,906

Overview

The City of Canada Bay built on existing environmental strategies, action plans and programs to set the direction and expand their environmental program for the next 4 years. Council's new Environment Strategy links to the community strategic plan, introduces 17 environmental targets and assigns actions across Council.

Background

Council identified that an over-arching Environmental Strategy was needed to bring together all of Council's 52 environmental policies, plans and programs. Additionally, it was identified that having Council-adopted environmental targets would further strengthen the reasoning and need of the sustainability projects and encourage other departments to commit to projects which assist in meeting the target. The Environment Strategy is a subset of the community strategic plan *Futures Plan 20* (FP20) framework, and is a 4 year plan. To strengthen the standing of the Strategy, each of the targets, indicators and actions were aligned to the four themes in the community strategic plan FP20.

Implementation

Community engagement and internal priorities were considered in order to determine what programs and strategies were required to strengthen existing programs. A gap analysis of Council's environmental strategies, plans and policies was undertaken to identify what was missing. As a result the following objectives were determined:

- Produce an environmental strategy that compiles all of Council's plans, policies and programs under one strategy, linked to the Community Strategic Plan, including measurable environmental targets that are both council and community focused.
- Produce an action plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions which builds on existing Energy Management and Climate Change plans.
- Produce a strategy and actions that address sustainable food in Canada Bay, relating to the feedback from the community.
- Complete a new Fauna and Flora Report that provides recommendations to manage key threats and protect local indigenous fauna, improve existing habitat and create new habitat that increases local and regional connectivity.
- Produce a Nature Strip Policy that addresses the Sustainable City Committee's request for nature strip gardening.

The program objectives were targeted at both internal staff and the entire community. To target internal staff, responsibility was assigned to each identified action. Twelve different council teams were engaged as part of the research into the development of the each document. Staff were asked for input and ideas when developing the targets and the actions which not only ensured the objectives were well informed, but also ensured buy-in for the program and guaranteed that all staff members who will be affected by the targets and actions were comfortable and supportive of the documents. This was done through one-on-one interviews,

group discussions and a working group that addressed concerns and issues foreseen by staff members.

Further to internal staff and departments, partnerships with the community were formed to strengthen and widen the reach of the program including;

- External partnership formed with a local community member to pilot the Nature Strip Policy.
- The community Sustainable City Committee was partnered with, to review the Nature Strip Policy and provide input in its development.
- The Sustainable Food Strategy targets existing community partnerships and programs such as the Senior Citizens groups, local food businesses, the Concord Community Garden and the Concord Farmers Markets to engage the community.
- The engagement and participation of the local community was actively sought throughout the study for the Flora and Fauna Report and 14 community members and 7 schools participated in conducting field surveys.

The total approximate cost of the project was \$93,610. This included 434 hours of staff time equivalent to \$24,500.

Outcomes

The Environmental Strategy plus the Nature Strip Policy, Sustainable Food Strategy, Greenhouse Action Plan and the Flora and Fauna Report have been developed to be relevant to staff across Council departments, and to determine actions that set a clear direction for achieving environmental protection into the future.

To ensure the documents have long term benefits, their implementation will be monitored and measured. Quarterly reporting on environmental data is now provided to the Executive Committee and incorporated into Council's integrated reporting framework *Futures Plan 20*. This evaluation has formed the basis for environmental reporting into the future and allows Council to accurately track progress and evaluate on how Council is achieving its new targets.

An unexpected outcome was the extent to which existing relationships were strengthened, and new partnerships were created within Council. Through the process of engagement and consultation, the Strategy has been widely recognised by staff outside the Sustainability team.

The strategies have been adopted by Council and implementation has commenced including:

- Environmental Strategy – regular reports are submitted to the executive committee on energy and water consumption including tracking towards targets. This is used as an example in New Staff Induction Days as to how 'sustainability' is a core objective of Council and how it relates to all staff.
- Nature Strip Policy - engaged a local resident to build a pilot nature strip garden to create a case study for the wider community and to test the policy.
- Sustainable Food - a themed festival has been planned for October, workshops designed to up-skill residents have been held along with Food Harvest and growers market tours, local tour of resident food gardens, and held an open day for the community garden.
- Greenhouse Action Plan - installed a 9.36 kW solar system on a community centre, upgraded the lighting at Cabarita Pool and Concord Senior Citizens Centre, working with the property team to introduce Green Leases, conducted a solar feasibility study, commenced a student project targeting energy efficiency in Concord Oval.

REFERENCES

www.canadabay.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-strategies-page.html

Key Learnings

Working on projects that affect other departments can be one of the biggest challenges for sustainability professionals, and processes of inclusion have been greatly beneficial to the ability of the strategies and policy to be adopted and accepted widely. A key learning from this process was the value of having ample lead time and engaging staff from the onset, providing more time for quality consultation and engagement. Staff will always have competing priorities which is vital to consider and possible to overcome by working to reasonable and agreed upon actions with low, medium and long term goals.

Overall, by working with other Council teams in the development of the documents and asking for staff input and knowledge from the onset, new relationships were formed and trust created along with a feeling of common goals. This was an excellent process to go through and lessons in engagement were learnt, and an understanding of other Council department's challenges in implementation developed. For example, team discussions with the property team on developing actions for emission reduction led to a better understanding of issues such as upkeep of maintenance, and difficulty managing lessees, related to energy consumption. This led to actions relevant to these issues and was a win-win for both the sustainability and property teams.

Next steps are to continue implementation in order to achieve the targets outlined in the Environmental Strategy, and to report on progress through the integrated reporting framework *Futures Plan 20*.

Contact

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