



Mt Barker & District Residents' Association Inc

PO Box 494 Mount Barker, South Australia 5251

For the Community

19 December 2010

SUBMISSION RE TOWN CENTRE REVIEW

1. What aspects of the Town Centre currently work well?

Members felt that several existing facilities served the town well. These included but were not limited to:

- Auchendarroch complex
- Keith Stephenson Park
- Library
- TAFE

Other comments included:

- The Gawler Street architecture and vegetation are beautiful. It was noted here the importance of retaining the trees. People can wander down a lovely street and window shop.
- Some local events which are focused in the Town Centre were identified as 'good things' including the Jazz Festival and Big Lounge as well as the Christmas Pageant.
- The Homemaker Centre works well as a large precinct for shopping and associated parking.
- The Linear Trail going through the Town Centre is beautiful and its use should be encouraged by linking it to shopping precincts in the centre. It should be used to get people to the shops and/or services.
- The Mann Street streetscape must be retained with the War Memorial, European trees, the Bowling Club and the Croquet Club.
- Dunn Park oval as open space and any other open space including triangle gardens near the CFS building. Please don't sell any more open spaces - e.g. Big Green to St Francis de Sales school.
- The Tourist Park has modern, nice cabins, lots of open space, is adjacent to pool and could become a great soccer oval. It is also adjacent to the Linear Trail and could be promoted further.

- The Steam Ranger is a great tourism facility and should remain in its current location. Several members thought it should be heritage listed along with its facility.
- The Town Hall/Institute should remain in its current location as it is a much cherished and iconic Mt Barker building. There are many stories to be told of what happened in the back row of the seats when movies were shown there. It should be restored (as necessary) and protected.
- The traffic roundabouts are a good thing as they help the traffic flow and make traffic safer. (Hopefully the Ministerial DPA will not proceed so there will be no need for more!)
- The former Primary School, now restored and developed, is an iconic town entrance building.
- Druids Avenue, with its oak trees, is a scenic street, again steeped in heritage. Why can't ETSA be convinced of this and get them to stop decimating them.
- The Skate Park is a valuable facility for the local youth.
- The Restorers Club and other clubs based in the town give some sense of community.
- All of the heritage buildings and precincts should be preserved, protected and promoted.

There is a reasonably consolidated shopping precinct with a good variety of shops. Citizens do not have to travel to the city any more for major purchases - furniture, bedding, bulky goods, electrical, computing etc.

Several noted that the Park 'n' Ride is a great concept but has failed in the execution i.e. that Council did not listen to the community feedback process where it was predicted that the facility would be full from day one. It cannot be expanded as it is land locked and there are no toilets. It would be much smarter, we believe, to move the bus station and petrol tanks to an outer area of Mt Barker and expand the existing Park 'n' Ride facility for commuters' cars. On weekends the facility could be used for markets or other outdoor activities. One member noted that all day parking at the pool location works well for commuters to take the bus from that area of the town centre.

2. What elements of the Town Centre do not work well, at present, and why?

During our discussions we noted that some of the above in Part 1 also had unsatisfactory aspects, e.g. Druids Ave and the Park 'n' Ride.

We believe that the existing planning policy which allows trees and shrubs to be removed on a whim, instead of thoughtfully relocated should be reviewed and redeveloped.

The traffic congestion at school times is very bad outside and adjacent to every school in the centre and needs to be addressed. Also, there are insufficient school crossings e.g. Flaxley Road at the High School is extremely dangerous for pedestrians, Hampden Road to St Mark's and the St Francis de Sales exit. All of these should, at the very least, have appropriate zebra crossings or flashing lights.

Other comments about things that do not work well included:

- Getting the car parked close to shops is extremely difficult at present due to overcrowding and too much traffic.
- Use of all day car parking by commuters at the swimming pool means that the swimming pool patrons cannot use it.
- Steam Ranger is not used enough, not promoted nor supported with sufficient funds. It could be a cornerstone of Mt Barker tourism and yet mostly sits idle. Railway not being used and should be an active station.
- The fake cottages next door to the iconic heritage primary school are unsightly. Who decided these were attractive for the town entrance?
- Traffic is increasing and the more we put into the town centre, the more it clogs up.
- Gawler street traffic does not flow well.
- Morphett and Hutchinson street intersection is very dangerous for both vehicles and pedestrians.
- Vacant shops look unsightly and do not help to attract people to an area.
- The Institute/Hall needs full restoration and should be turned into a proper Town Hall as part of the centre of the town.
- The former administration centre is not being utilized well. Because it is leased out the community cannot use it.
- The Park 'n' Ride is too small and has no accessible toilets (you have to wait until getting the Steam Ranger ride before you can go to the toilet). There is a requirement for at least another Park 'n' Ride.
- The top end of Druids Ave and Cameron Road is a difficult intersection to maneuver and it is hard to turn right from Druids into Cameron Road (particularly when there is school traffic).
- Adelaide Road traffic is too busy; it has few designated turnoff lanes particularly heading into Mt Barker from Littlehampton at the freeway on ramp and Hawthorn Road. With the DPA now approved the traffic issues on this main road will only increase.
- ETSA and buses are destroying the Druids Ave trees. These are placed under great stress from car fumes and ongoing traffic pressures.
- Buses turning from Hutchinson Street into Druids Avenue is a real problem because they cannot maneuver this intersection easily and often have to pass onto the other side of the road. Cars often have to reverse back along the street to allow the buses to turn safely.
- The bus stop in Hutchinson Street is in the wrong position and creates more congestion and traffic problems. There is no crossing from the bus stop to the shopping centre and creates a dangerous situation for pedestrians when alighting.

- The Post Office is in the wrong location – it does not work well there. It needs a more accessible location for rural and other people accessing boxes. There needs to be more parking and easier access to parking.
- Graffiti on the skate park is unsightly and detracts from the amenity of the area.
- Dunn Oval needs resurfacing and modern facilities.
- Insufficient trees, in particular shade trees, and very little protection for trees. Only bitumen which heats up.
- **There is NO HEART TO THE TOWN; NO CENTRAL POINT.**
- The empty land space up by TAFE is not being used. This could be a good place for a community activity.
- Signage does not work well and is not regulated well enough.
- Current bad planning - e.g. treatment of Mt Barker creek throughout the town; traffic; development behind Hampden Road.
- Allowing removal of exotic trees that created erosion and loss of amenity - e.g. adjacent to Park 'n' Ride. Infested with weeds and big open space; lost the shade; the vision and reality are vastly different. After all this planning and what has been done the result is an absolute disgrace.

3. Which of the key challenges identified in the information sheet (and listed below) do you consider to be the most important and why?

3.1 Council's vision of a vibrant and well functioning Town Centre recognises the need to address the following challenges

3.1.1 The use of public and private spaces to create a sense of place.

Very important because it's where people come home to; it gives a place soul; it makes people want to live there; has a focal point; it sets aside a particular place and makes it unique from other places; differentiates; trees are needed in these type of areas; Fasta Pasta, Mc Donalds *et al* all take away the sense of place.

3.1.2 Development of a focal point for the community

Most important – see above.

3.1.3 Car parking and access

Important. See above.

3.1.4 Better pedestrian environments and pedestrian and cycle links

Important because encourage physical exercise and not using motor vehicles; more sustainable lifestyle; less vehicles in the centre; less pollution;

3.1.5 Links across Adelaide Road and Mt Barker Creek

Link across Adelaide Road: the idea of an overpass between Auchendorrach and Gawler Street would be too high to encourage people to use it. Prefer pedestrian-activated lights across

Adelaide Road at Gawler Street.

Mt Barker Creek crossing seems to be a desire way. Therefore suitable crossings at appropriate points needed. Give Matilda her bridge!

3.1.6 Opportunities for the expansion of Town Centre

Better mix of business and residential is needed. Some high rise to expand up – to medium density; could have basement parking; adequate car parking for particular buildings; consideration of roof gardens.

Recreation Centre and Show grounds should be included in Town Centre. Some further main roads should be included in the Town Centre eg Wellington Road, Exhibition Road and Alexandrina Road.

3.1.7 Increased employment opportunities

Not just for Town Centre, but for the whole district.

Noisy industries and services should be located outside the amenity of the town centre.

3.1.8 Ability to revise building height limits

Agree - need to have medium to high density; revise current maximum height limits.

3.1.9 Building design that responds to local heritage and topography

Very important.

If 3.1.9 were true, why was that unpleasant looking building allowed to be built besides the heritage police station?!!

If possible erect medium density buildings using topography to minimise visual impact - e.g. - multi-storey is appropriate south of Gawler street behind Institute.

A lot of money is spent putting the power lines underground to make a nice amenity on the street so the design and look of shops/services have to be appropriate.

3.1.10 Role of former council administration site and other council and community assets

Very important. Keep the community assets for the people and use them for the community centre, concert hall, meeting room, drop-in centre for youth. Also create and retain open space (council owned).

4. Importance of draft goals for the Town Centre

(strongly agree; agree; neutral; disagree; strongly disagree)

4.1 Further enhance Mt Barker as a Regional Centre for the Adelaide Hills that provides retail, business, entertainment and community services

Disagree – because we disagree with the regional centre concept. Let's consider other options.

4.2 Build on the valued elements of historic township character as part of continued growth and renewal

Strongly agree. However, how can you make this oxymoron work? We question the concept of continued growth and what are you going to renew? The historic township character is long gone. It has all been destroyed it and you still want to destroy the old PO and other buildings.

4.3 Provide a range of employment options

No, it should be only a mix of service, cultural, social and retail; move the car tyre places and those semi-industrial type retail shops outside of town. The Town Centre does not have to provide the full range of employment options, but the town itself should. There is very limited useful office accommodation available in the Town Centre. What is available is usually in converted 1950s or 1960s homes. Further consideration of small business consulting or service needs is required.

4.4 Creating a stronger sense of place and visual identify

Strongly agree – as stated earlier.

4.5 Provide an integrated network that supports safe walking and cycling and efficient vehicle movements

Strongly agree – except if it doesn't go through Cornerstone College! Vandalism is more prevalent along the linear trail, particularly graffiti.

4.6 Public and private spaces that encourage social interaction

Strongly agree as discussed earlier. You need social interaction so that the graffiti stops.

4.7 Identify opportunities to develop a centre that provides a focus for civic, cultural and community activities.

Strongly agree – we need a new civic centre to focus community events around.

5. Ideas for achieving these goals

- Change policies; better planning; get an integrated design commissioner working with council staff, community and Councillors to make this happen.
- Participative community consultation; use the knowledge, skills and abilities of the community to assist with these developments, not just Business Mt Barker's ideas all the time.
- Raise grant money to fund special projects.
- Use the Gawler Street Conservation Management Plan (Sept 2003) which includes Gawler street and environs.
- Consider a 'whole of creek' strategy where glimpses of the creek are developed wherever possible and ensure preservation of the creek line; retaining and improving the creek line as a future tourist and wildlife attraction. This would include no further channelizing work.
- Preventing any further building development on the flood plains.

- Develop, encourage and improve heritage areas. Focus on heritage precincts, promote and advertise these.
- Buy the Druids-Stephen-Morphett-Hutchinson street block and develop into a community and public place that becomes the heart and soul of the town. It's a once only, excellent opportunity. No built form should be allowed but the goal is to retain the space that is necessary as so much has been lost. E.g.: toilet; mirrored jelly bean art work (Chicago); vegetable and community garden; green space; public park; trees for CO2 neutral; hedged off; other 'people encouraging' facilities. (See Tom Geimer to get this happening. He would be able to raise the cash!)
- Ban cars from the town centre is the ideal, however the reality would be difficult to achieve. Consider a system of one way streets perhaps?
- Build a multi story car park at the back of the Town Hall to Mann Street with elevators to Gawler Street to move pedestrians easily.
- Use mini buses; provide disabled parking.
- Adelaide Road/Gawler street – Get Gilberts to do something interesting and exciting with their strategic parcel of land.
- Protect and preserve the old cemetery in the CFS triangle.
- Use space adjacent to TAFE for a second Park 'n' Ride and relocate CFS emergency services to this area.
- Consider use of Town Hall – Mayor's office; staff – 80+ staff offices; community space to use for meetings; art gallery. Look at good examples e.g. Murray Bridge; Goodwood; Victor Harbor.
- Need more playgrounds on Dunn and Weld Parks and other places for children to play.
- Develop historic walks with interpretative signage to encourage tourists.
- Some have suggested Gawler Street become a mall. It needs to be redeveloped to

increase visitors after hours. (This was a 50/50 decision).

- The Town Centre needs a draw-card – need a Town Square Eg Kadina; Peterborough; Victor Harbor; Strathalbyn.
- Further develop the railway station site – possible visitor info centre with adjacent motel; improve the station and train carriages; regular and increased train trips to south coast.
- More tourist accommodation is required therefore encourage development of these facilities.
- More features like sculpture park, vintage museum, old machinery and restorer's museum, photographic museum.
- Interpretive features - story of the township, interpretive museums e.g.
 - Encounter Coast Interpretive centre at Victor Harbor;
 - Flinders Chase, Kangaroo Island,
 - Develop wetlands and Indigenous history; historic trails – Dunn Trail; Wheat trail; Howard sub-clover trail;
 - Mills trail; flower/wheat/mills; if our story isn't so quickly lost then our heritage wouldn't be so quickly lost,
 - Sisters of Mercy in the township; religious history because there are lots of churches and established religious activities.
- More street seating; drinking fountains; street art.
- Consider transport improvements and connections – people to places - Bike and Ride, buses on call, light rail around the centre and too and from the city.
- More good quality restaurants – not just pubs or fast foods.
- Lock-up bike parks with available helmets.
- More street trees and green spaces.

5. Associated information sheet highlights Council owned land and assets in the Town Centre. How do you think these can be used to achieve a vibrant and well functioning Town Centre?

- Keith Stevenson Park is a wonderful asset as it is. Retain it, add features to it and promote it.
- Mountain Pool: is now old and outdated. Move the Pool to the Show Grounds and improve it to a proper standard aquatic centre; retain the Mountain pool site and pool for a motel pool if you were to build a motel there. Put footy oval to the Glebe – flat, easy to develop.
- Town Hall: refurbish, extend as discussed.
- Anglican Church land use for multi-storey car parking as above; link to the old civic centre site.
- Dunn Park: improve to be a quality sporting precinct; create appropriate sporting facilities.
- Footpaths need great improvement and extension. Plan for increased gopher usage.
- Old Civic Centre: see previous discussion.

6. What other matters would you like to see addressed in the Town Centre Strategy?

- Jazz Festival and development of other events; Crush Food and Wine Festival; Big Lounge; appropriate venue and facilities to make these events work better and attract more people.
- Keep as many trees as possible; protect them.
- Must develop a Sport and Recreation plan because there are many sporting facilities with the Town centre and you cannot have a discussion about these without considering all of the other sporting areas outside the Town centre including The Glebe; Anembo Park; Show Grounds; Stephenson Land.
- Deciding whether key arterial roads can be used for commercial activities e.g. Wellington, Alexandrina, Hampden; this is happening already on Wellington Road.
- The development of a Tourism Strategy and Plan now that the Council has appointed a Tourism Development Manager. This should not just be focused in and around Hahndorf. Mt Barker should have a Visitor Information Centre also. The Tourism Plan should not be focused on events only, but on other tourism strategies and projects as well. The Town Centre icons, buildings and history could all be included in the plan.

- Better promotion of Mt Barker by way of a District (not Council) web site; promotional materials, banners, displays etc so that visitors and townspeople are aware of our wonderful assets. You can't even buy a postcard of Mt Barker in Mt Barker!

7. What three words would you use to describe the ideal future Town Centre.

Members suggested a variety of words and this is the summary of these:

Heart; soul; community; vibrant; integrated; social amenity; timeless; good design; carbon neutral; decentralized; historic; green; easy to get around; less focus; more integration.

8. Other town examples

8.1 [Donald, Victoria](#)

It's an average web site but they certainly bring together a lot of useful information on this site, both for the visitor and the community.

8.2 [Mt Barker, Western Australia](#)

An excellent web site promoting the activities, places and events in their town.

8.3 [Echuca, Victoria](#)

'Echuca's main commercial centre is situated along Hare Street and spills over into Pakenham Street and other side streets. It consists of a mix of contemporary shop fronts and historic buildings such as the former post office with its distinctive clock tower (built in 1870), several banks and churches.

A more tourist-based commercial precinct lies along High Street. South of Heygarth Street, this wide boulevard is lined with motels, churches, a cinema and supermarket. North of Heygarth Street, it features many historic buildings with a range of hotels, eateries and speciality shops'. (Echuca web site)

This is the sort of commentary that Mt Barker could have about its Town Centre.

Attachments 1 and 2:

Analysis of MBDRA Mt Barker Show public consultation on Trees and Traffic and Town Centre Review