



# Mt Barker & District Residents' Association Inc

PO Box 19 Mount Barker, South Australia 5251

*For the community*

15 March 2016

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## The Mount Barker Town Square

More than two years ago the Mount Barker and Districts Residents Association resolved to see if we could bring into being a Town Square for Mount Barker on part of the vacant land owned by Woolworths in the centre of the town. Our intention was to "Give Mt Barker a HEART".

We persisted as circumstances changed, in particular Woolworth's intentions for the land. Then late last year eminent South Australian architect Geof Nairn, who lives in Verdun, offered to produce a concept plan for the whole site, which Woolworths had decided to sell. He envisaged a large, paved public space surrounded by significant civic and private buildings, in the style of the great European squares.

The elevated piazza, complete with shade trees, garden area and indoor/outdoor restaurants, is built over two levels of car parking, and is surrounded by separate buildings for apartments, Council offices, an Art and Science Museum, a 1000 seat Performing Arts Theatre, new Law Courts and a boutique 70 to 100 room Hotel. Geof's perspective drawing of the concept is shown above/can be viewed on our website ([www.mtbarkeranddistrictresidents.org.au](http://www.mtbarkeranddistrictresidents.org.au))

Not only did his generous, unpaid effort expand our vision to new possibilities for our community, his lifetime of professional experience and knowledge gave us an economically feasible development proposal that is attracting a lot of interest. But first we need to acquire the land, and that currently is taking a lot of our attention.

We have been building our project following democratic principles which, we believe, entail more than just occasional elections. The initial concept from our Executive was endorsed by a quarterly General Meeting, and a plan of action adopted. We took our proposal to the streets, retail outlets and the shopping mall in Mt Barker, where more than a thousand signed up as supporters and many gave suggestions they would like to see included. We have addressed the Mount Barker Council twice. We have informed as many residents as possible through the media (like this), Facebook and radio, and continue to seek support and involvement.

Most changes in our local environment are not initiated by a group of citizens - residents without huge financial resources but just a desire to build a better community. Most building development is speculative, with the intention of personal or private gain. Civic benefits usually depend on government funding – from Local, State or Federal levels. Our challenge is to construct a scheme with contributions from all possible sources while keeping our eyes on the prize for the whole

community – a “Heart” for our expanding town and district, for a century or more to come – with a system of governance to maintain that ideal.