

NEWSLETTER **October 2017**

Mona Vale Residents Association Welcomes a Review of the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan via Genuine Community Participation.

Mona Vale Residents Association would welcome a review of the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan (Sept 2016) via genuine community participation in the urban design, place creation and planning process.

Northern Beaches Council resolved on Tuesday 22 Nov 2016 *"That the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan be withdrawn from public exhibition and plans be developed to facilitate further community engagement on the project."* As Council recently indicated, *"the consultation process generated significant community debate and a large volume of feedback was received."* Source: NBC Website Sept 2017.

Furthermore, Council advised, *"All submissions received while the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan was on public exhibition will be reviewed and addressed as part of the review of the plan and future stages of community engagement"*. Source: NBC Website Sept 2017.

Council's published draft feedback summary is indicative of community opposition to the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan and many of the issues raised. Community opinion is not supportive of the proposed urban form, uses and character of the Mona Vale Centre and industrial area as outlined in the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan (Sept 2016).

As the public exhibition of the Draft Plan was cut short, many community members were denied the opportunity to make a submission to Council.

The Mona Vale Residents Association (MVRA) examined the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan and considered many community concerns including those of shop owners. The Association does not support the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan (Sept 2016) in its current form.

The Association was equally critical of what was perceived as an overly micro-managed and Public Relations dominated "community engagement" process that had supposedly informed the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan. Both process and plan were considered flawed and not sufficiently representative of community wellbeing and aspirations.

The US inspired "Place Planning" template used to prepare the Draft Place Plan appears somewhat inconsistent with current Australian protocols relating to urban design, community participation and better planning.

Reference is made to **Creating Places for People: An Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities**, (*benchmark for best practice*) published by the Australian Government.

“Place identities” and place-making have become contested fields, according to Edgar Liu, City Futures Research Centre and Robert Freestone, Professor of Planning, Faculty of Built Environment, UNSW. “*Paradoxically, this global phenomenon can account for an uneasy new form of **placelessness** as **similar solutions are adapted in diverse settings***”. Source: Liu, E. and Freestone, R. UNSW. This may well be a problem with the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan.

Our research shows that “Strategic Placemaking” has been developed in Michigan, USA as an economic development tool to assist downtown “Rust-Belt” neighborhoods cope with the impacts of de-industrialization with mixed results.

It is noted that the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan (and related community engagement process) is remarkably similar to “Strategic Placemaking” as practiced in Michigan and as defined in the “Placemaking Assessment Tool” published by Michigan State University. There appears to be little or no hard evidence that “Strategic Placemaking”, as defined and practiced in Michigan, works effectively or could be applicable in Mona Vale NSW, as an economic development tool. The social, economic, cultural and environmental contexts are very different. Alternative economic development approaches should be developed locally and be specifically geared to both the Mona Vale Centre and Northern Beaches contexts.

More specifically,

- The Association does not support any changes to Pittwater LEP 2014 and the DCP. The Centre is already zoned for mixed-use with 4 storey buildings permitted. Mona Vale Centre is not identified as a “growth centre” in the Draft North District Plan, according to the Greater Sydney Commission, or in the “Shaping our Future” strategy published by SHOROC. Under the Draft North District Plan, the essential functions of Mona Vale as a “District Centre” are employment retention and generation, particularly in the Centre’s commercial/retail core. The core’s commercial, retail and services roles should be protected from complete dominance by new residential development, usage and floor space. This may be necessary to help achieve the employment targets for Mona Vale as a District Centre, specified in the Draft North District Plan. Employment generating floor space is essential.
- The Association does not support the proposed increase in building height to 6 (six) storeys.
- The Association does not support Council’s proposed re-development and/or modifications of the existing civic centre, pedestrian links, library, public hall, tree and vegetation cover, landscape treatments, the development of Village Park itself and alienation of public lands.

- The Association does not support any loss of car parking and accessibility to the centre. Any reduction of total parking availability including on-street parking could impact significantly on businesses.
- The Association does not support housing in the Industrial zone. As existing employment lands are scarce they need special protection from rezoning and the incursion of residential development. This position is consistent with Draft North District Plan, Greater Sydney Commission.
- The Association does not support Council's "Vision" that Mona Vale should be like Manly with 6 (six) storey building heights and night time economy.
- The Association does not support residential over-development of the commercial-retail core of Mona Vale, loss of commercial office function and adverse impacts on existing businesses. This position is consistent with Draft North District Plan, Greater Sydney Commission.
- The Association does not support the diverting of traffic from Pittwater Rd to Darley St. The proposal appears impractical because of increased traffic and congestion made worse by frequent truck and bus movements in Darley St. Increase in traffic and congestion would most likely impact adversely on the industrial area in general and businesses in particular.
- As the proposed B-Line Bus service is only an enhanced bus service, not a full Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), it cannot be used as a justification for increasing intensification of land use including increasing height of buildings at Mona Vale Centre. (It is also premature in any event since the proposed service is far from operational).
- The Association advocates Council prepare a **"Growth Infrastructure Compact"** to assess and plan for overall increased demand for additional urban infrastructure and human services arising from the implementation of the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan and the means of funding and delivering them in a timely manner.



The Association resolved to prepare a brief community plan to assist Council. It is called, **OUR MONA VALE COMMUNITY PLAN: Protecting & Creating Places for People.**

'The plan begins with how Mona Vale Centre works as a sociable and successful place for people with many place attributes that are valued by the community. Mona Vale's intricate urban ecosystem of people, activity, sociability, design, art, places, schools, jobs, culture, commerce, transport and history provides the CONTEXT that is crucial to appreciate as the basis for all "place based" planning'.

Kelvin Auld

The Association considers that the Draft Mona Vale Place Plan is likely to result in residential dominance of Mona Vale Centre (particularly the commercial/retail core and Bungan St.), inadequate infrastructure and services, loss of village character and sense of place. Mona Vale is already a successful, socially cohesive “place for people”.

The Mona Vale Residents Association calls for better planning and urban design, real community participation and the provision of adequate infrastructure and services.

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Mona Vale Residents Association

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