



Moreland City Council

BRUNSWICK MAJOR ACTIVITY CENTRE

CONSULTATION BACKGROUND AND ISSUES PAPER

May 2007



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1. Background

This report provides a summary of the feedback from the first stage of the public consultation process on the Structure Plan for the Brunswick Activity Centre. Stage one of the project involves background research, identification of issues and development of a vision.

The consultation process offered the opportunity for community and stakeholder feedback on what they like and dislike about Brunswick, and what their hopes and aspirations are for the area, targeted areas for comment include open space, transport, buildings, heritage and shopping.

The challenge for this phase of consultation was to communicate a large and complex project in an accessible format. The range of information and the long-term strategic nature of the project added to the complexity of designing a consultation program and engaging the community.

2. Summary of Issues

A range of issues were identified by the community through the consultation process. The most prevalent concerns and issues include:

- There is a need for more, and different types of open space and public spaces, and to better balance passive and active recreation needs.
- Traffic congestion needs to be reduced, particularly on Sydney Road and Lygon Street. While north south public transport is good, east west public transport needs improving.
- The condition of footpaths and crossing points need improving, there are many hazards for prams, wheelchairs etc.
- More direct, pleasant pedestrian and cycle paths are needed. Upfield bike path needs widening
- Current changes in demographics, including increase in single person households is impacting on the character of Brunswick and services in the area – e.g. the number and diversity of schools declining. More needs to be done to attract and keep families in the area.
- Unchecked high density and high rise development needs to be controlled and/or directed to appropriate locations.
- Need to increase and diversify employment opportunities, including replacement of industrial jobs.
- Provide greater support and protection to the arts and music industries
- There is a need for more public and affordable housing

3. Approach

A range of tools were developed to assist in raising awareness of the project and to engage the community.

The range of consultation activities included:

- A newsletter/flyer delivered to all households and businesses in Brunswick, including a feedback form.
- Community forums at the Brunswick Town Hall and Clarrie Wohlers Senior Citizens Centre
- Displays and information sessions at Barkly Square Shopping Centre, the Brunswick Market and Sparta Place.
- Focus groups with a variety of hard to reach groups
- Direct consultation with a number of community groups and organisation, service providers etc
- An information stall at the Sydney Road Street Party.

Newsletter/flyer

A double sided, A3 flyer plus tear off A4 survey was developed and distributed in September 2006. This flyer was to be delivered to every household in Brunswick, Brunswick West and Brunswick East. Problems were experienced with the delivery of the flyer and not all households may have received the flyer. Copies of the flyer were also provided to the Brunswick Town Hall/Civic centre, Brunswick library and Coburg Citizens Service Centre.

The flyer provided information on the structure plan process, including what a structure plan is, what an activity centre is, and the reasons for preparing a structure plan. The flyer also included a map of the study area. The writing style aimed to engender a sense of interest and excitement about the project. A tear off feedback sheet was included on the back page to enable readers to provide feedback on what they like and dislike about Brunswick and their hopes and aspirations for Brunswick.

A copy of the newsletter can be found at Attachment 1.

Community meetings

Three facilitated community forums were organised at the launch of the project held at Brunswick Town Hall and the Clarrie Wohlers Senior Citizens Centre. Two sessions were held in the evening and one on a Saturday morning. A facilitator was engaged to lead discussions and Council officers and Councillors were available.

Public display & Information Sessions

Six information sessions were held over a six week period providing a display of background information and feedback on the progress of stage one of the project – issues identification. The sessions were held at a range of venues and times, including the Brunswick Town Hall, Barkly Square Shopping Centre, the Brunswick Market and Sparta Place. Council Officers, Councillor's and members of the

Steering Committee were available to discuss the project and get feedback from the community.

Display panels were developed for the consultation, with eight A1 boards providing information on the history and evolution of Brunswick and existing conditions developed for the initial community forums. A further eight boards were produced for the public display and information sessions which outlined the process being undertaken and an overview of the emerging themes from the initial consultation undertaken (community forums and survey forms).

Large scale (A1) aerial photos were also available for residents to draw on to identify places they valued or disliked and issues of concern.

Feedback forms were available at the display for viewers of the display to provide their comments to Council.

Focus groups

Council's Community Development Unit facilitated a number of focus group meetings to engage with members of the community who do not traditionally respond to or engage in community consultation activities. .

The focus groups were held with the following groups:

- New Parents – Lygon Street Maternal and Child Health Centre
- Brunswick East Primary School – student leadership group (grades 2-6)
- Moreland Primary School – student leadership group (grades 2-6)
- Brunswick Special Development School
- Sydney Road Community School
- Milparinka Disability Service Provider
- Stewart Lodge – Supported residential service

Approximately 80 people took part in the focus groups.

Service Provider and Community Group Survey

Approximately 200 community groups and service providers in the Brunswick Major Activity Centre Study Area (Brunswick & Brunswick East) were sent a questionnaire asking questions about the services provided by the organisation and service related issues of concern to respondents to assist Council to identify relevant social, economic and environmental issues. Survey participants were identified through Council's Community Database for the postcode areas 3056 and 3057 (Brunswick and Brunswick East) and included the following broad categories: aged care facilities, arts & culture venues and groups, business development, child care centres and kindergartens, health services (GPs, community health, maternal & child health), multicultural communities, police, religious/faith groups, schools (primary and secondary), sports clubs and welfare support services.

Moreland City Council website

Information has been included on Council's website, providing an overview of the project, an outline of the process to be followed, answers to frequently asked questions, information on consultation events, an on line feedback survey form and information on other means of providing feedback to Council.

Direct Consultation with Stakeholders and Infrastructure Service Providers

Direct contact was made with a number of stakeholders, including VicTrack, Yarra Trams, City Link, major Supermarket operators.

Elders and community groups from the local Indigenous community were also consulted directly.

Presentations were given to a number of groups, including the Sydney Road, Brunswick Association, Greening Moreland forum, and Transporting Moreland Forum to provide an overview of the project, seek feedback and encourage participation.

Sydney Road Street Party

An information stall was held at the Sydney Road Street Party in March 2007. Information was on display on the history and evolution of Brunswick and an overview of the emerging themes from the initial consultation undertaken.

Interactive activities were held to engage with the community. A large scale aerial photo printed on fabric was on display and people were encouraged to draw on their most travelled/regular routes showing how people get around Brunswick to get to work/school; for carrying out regular errands (shopping, banking etc) and for leisure.

People were also invited to vote, using stickers on the display boards, on what they considered to be the three most significant emerging themes.

Council Officers and members of the steering committee were available to discuss the structure plan process and work done to date.

Other activities

A range of other activities were also undertaken to publicise the Draft Structure Plan including information on the information screen at the Coburg Civic Centre, presentations to Council Community Committees and Council's City News items in the Moreland Leader.

4. Summary of Feedback

Feedback Forms

A feedback form was developed by Council's Communications and Research Branch. It was designed to be adapted for a range of tools and enable collation and analysis. The feedback forms were provided in the newsletter, at all community meetings and forums, at Council Offices and the Brunswick Library and on the Moreland City Council website.

272 completed surveys were returned to Council. In summary the feedback forms revealed:

Highly valued characteristics of Brunswick included: diversity 63% (mostly cultural and ethnic diversity, but also other forms of diversity); location 40% (mostly proximity to the city and centrality); shops/restaurants/cafes etc 31% (the variety of shopping and its accessibility); and transport systems 31% (mostly public transport).

Characteristics of Brunswick respondents most wished to change were: traffic management 27% (most relating to cars and congestion); streetscape 26% (often with reference to roads and footpaths); development controls 24% (mostly in relation to unwanted high rise or high density development); transport 22% (mostly about improvements to public transport and provision for cycling or walking); environmental management 20% (especially cleanliness).

Preferred characteristics of a future Brunswick included: features relating to urban character 26% (generally similar to present urban character, but slightly up-market in some cases); diversity 25% (retained or enhanced); environmental amenity 21% (relating to cleanliness mostly, but also noise and pollution); social character 17% (often relating to progressive social values); and trees/greenery 17%. Cosmopolitan and multi-culturalism, opposition to unchecked high rise/high density development, socially progressive values and environmental themes figured prominently in people's comments.

The Interim report can be found at Appendix 2.

Feedback from Community Forums

Three facilitated forums were held on October 5th and 7th 2006. The majority of the issues that came out at these forums were consistent with the results of the feedback forms.

Things that are most valued about Brunswick included: eclectic, welcoming, sense of community; Sydney Road; shopping – variety, can get everything you want close by; heritage, older houses; intangible feel, lots of energy; diversity of people and cultural mix; access to public transport; proximity to the city; support for the arts; parks and open space; and that the area is a living and working community.

Aspects disliked about Brunswick include: the Brickworks development; streets hot and dry; not enough trees; lack of shade; the condition of footpaths, including width and barriers for prams/wheelchairs/bicycles etc; overhead powerlines; lack of understanding of aboriginal culture; domination of cars; council rates – equity issues;

poor streetscapes; rubbish and unkempt buildings; and high density development in inappropriate places.

Opportunities for the future were considered to include: re use of old factories; more public housing; employment opportunities, e.g. niche markets such as the bridal industry; sustainability/technology hubs, building on strengths; to provide for direction for location of high rise/high density development; and the replacement of industrial jobs with new jobs.

A number of issues were also identified that need resolving including: aging infrastructure; risk of losing families – increase in single person households; the number and diversity of schools is in decline; east – west transport needs improving; access to technology needs improving (no high speed internet); native vs exotic vegetation in streets, parks etc; need to better balance passive and active recreation needs; declining quality of open space; Upfield bike path needs widening and improving; and lack of straight, pleasant walking paths between places.

Service Provider and Community Group Survey

As previously outlined, a survey was sent to approximately 200 community groups and service providers in the BMAC study area, with questions regarding services provided and service related issues of concern to respondents to assist Council to identify relevant social, economic and environmental issues.

Twenty six surveys were returned to Council from a range of organisations including, aged care facilities; arts & culture venues and groups; business development; child care centres and kindergartens; health services; multicultural communities; religious/faith groups; schools; sports clubs; and welfare support services.

From the information provided the following conclusions and issues have been identified:

- Seventy two percent of respondents have been in the area for more than ten years, indicating a strong local connection.
- The majority of clients/members of the respondent organisations live locally, either in Brunswick or Moreland. Approximately 20% of clients/members live outside Moreland, which indicates that a significant proportion of the organisations are regional or State services.
- Location issues of highest importance to organisations/clubs and their members and clients include being close to public transport, safety, parking availability and rental affordability.
- A number of “gaps” or shortcomings of the area were identified and include: the need for more alcohol and drug services; banking facilities including ATM’s; child care, particularly long-day; need for more locally available crisis accommodation; English classes for new residents, particularly older persons;
- medical services, both GP’s and specialists; home care services; more affordable housing options; mental health services; networking between community organisations and businesses; performance space and opportunities; and playgrounds and garden space for children’s playgroups.
- A range of issues were raised for consideration in the Structure plan, including: provision of safe play space close to apartment developments; traffic safety and management needs to be enhanced; more support for the developing music industry in the area; high density housing should be limited; provision of affordable and/or public housing; increased demand for child care; and increasing demands for parking.

Focus Groups

As previously outlined, a number of focus groups were held with a range of community members who would not traditionally respond to or engage in community consultation activities.

Summary of comments

Open Space

- A need for more and different types of open space, particularly between Sydney Road and Lygon Street
- More public space required
- Parks and grounds that are better maintained, so they “feel nice” to go to
- Have a variety of places, i.e.: Sports grounds with football goals etc, but also places to just sit and relax with family and friends
- Places need to feel safe, so good lighting at night
- Parkland with BBQ and toilet within walking distance
- Merri Creek parklands needs drinking fountains
- More parkland along the Creek
- Would like more community gardens (e.g. Harding Street, Coburg)

Traffic management

- Sydney Rd is great with the tram, but the cars make it too slow
- More accessible parking spots, in the right places (ask permit holders and services)
- Maintenance of traffic signs
- One way traffic in narrow streets
- Parking on one side of the street only
- More parking where townhouses are built
- Unsafe pedestrian lights on Lygon Street, outside Quarry Hotel and near Stewart Street
- The roundabout in Weston Street, near Barkly Square is dangerous for pedestrians with cars driving too fast.
- Roads are too narrow
- Make John Street a bicycle link through to Park Street
- Traffic congestion on Lygon Street
- 40 or 50 km speed limits on Lygon Street

Transport

- Trams, and Trains are good, train stations need to look nicer and be clean
- Need low floor trams on Lygon Street and low floor buses.
- Better east west public transport is needed
- Drinking water should be available at Train Stations, and the toilets open
- Maybe use art to give stations a “Brunswick Feel”
- Buses do not run often, it’s hard to get out of Brunswick towards Northcote
- Accessibility on all forms of Transport

Pedestrians

- Separate paths for bikes and pedestrians, rather than shared path, e.g. along Merri Creek
- Promote that people on bikes ring their bells e.g. signage on the bike path
- Old bluestone kerbs are difficult to cross with prams
- The pedestrian refuges in the middle of roads do not provide enough space for a pram and a person

Roads and Things

- Footpaths and road crossings need to be safe and accessible for everyone, hazards cause problems for many people not just someone who uses a wheelchair

Commercial/Shopping

- The mix of small, individual shops and Barkly Square is a good thing
- Keep shops and stores that are Multicultural, this is a good thing and feels like Brunswick
- Use the empty shops. Try to get new businesses in them
- IGA in Sydney Road has parking problems, people from a nearby church and tram users park there, and delivery trucks can't see pedestrian on Stewart Street
- Love Sydney Road, the grunginess and eclectic feel
- Do not change too much and allow "chain stores"
- Need more local fruit and veggie shops, e.g. south end of Lygon Street

Stuff to do

- More free stuff for young people to do, sports competition, waterslides at pools, cheaper entry for young people, students etc
- Keep the big events; they are a good thing for everyone. More information on what is happening in Brunswick and other suburbs

Jobs

- Creation of more jobs for people with a disability
- Also work experience and ways to get qualified for work

Arts and Culture

- More festivals in the parks, including Aboriginal celebrations
- Aboriginal poles as art work
- Art spots on the ground
- Memorial garden for Aboriginals

Facilities

- Gyms could be better maintained; swimming pools could have fun things for young people (slides)
- Access for people with a Disability

Buildings

- Keep some heritage
- Some developments do not look good or match with the area
- High rise development should not be allowed in the residential side streets
- New developments should not be so high to block out the sun
- High rise development could provide childcare facilities
- Low rise townhouses only with off street parking

- New development should be close to public transport and provide enough parking.

Other

- ACCESS, ACCESS, ACCESS, in all areas housing, shops, transport.
- Bins and rubbish on Lygon Street make it unsafe for pedestrians
- Hard rubbish has not been collected
- Dog droppings are often on the footpath and it is unsafe
- Childcare centres are needed in East Brunswick, both long day care and occasional care
- Playgroup space is needed in East Brunswick

Indigenous Community and ANTaR (reconciliation) members

- The Moreland Post Contact Study should be consulted to ascertain if a site is significant to the Indigenous community.
- When any significant area, or its surrounds, is being developed the sensitivities of the site should be considered and appropriate action taken. (Council is developing guidelines for appropriate approaches to take in relation to the Moreland Post Contact Study).
- 'Concrete' recognition of the traditional owners of the land should be considered – opportunities for this should be seized, there is no easy 'right' and 'wrong' way for what could happen – consultation and collaboration with Elders and the Indigenous community is essential. But it could be signage, plaques, artwork, murals, street/place names, heritage trails.....
- The Aboriginal flag flying on Brunswick Town Hall is great - but the community needs to feel/sense that this land is Aboriginal land – that there is an Aboriginal presence in Brunswick.
- ACES on the Merri Creek is very important – its tranquil, peaceful, 'spiritual' bushland setting should not be compromised in any way – it should be honoured, protected and enhanced.
- Other areas on the Merri Creek are important (with or without official heritage status) they also should be acknowledged, protected and enhanced.

Sydney Road Street Party

Voting on the emerging themes ranked the themes in the following order:

Theme	No. of votes
Sustainability (reduce the community's ecological footprint)	101
Accessibility (improve access and links for the whole community)	87
Community (the people create the place)	64
Arts and Culture (direct creativity into new jobs & opportunities)	53
Places to gather (looking after the community's living spaces)	45
Managing Change (guiding future use and re-development)	45

Housing (appropriate housing to meet future needs)	45
Economy (build on a vibrant and diverse business sector)	37
Softening the Edges (managing the interface between private and public realm)	34
Heritage (make the past part of the community's living space)	18

The drawing of most travelled routes within the suburb reaffirmed the analysis to date on level of accessibility and permeability throughout the suburb and the importance of good quality public transport services in peoples lives.