

RYDE CIVIC PRECINCT FACT SHEET 15 February 2012

1. WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

- Council is committed to sustainable design. The development will be the first four green star rated residential building in suburban Sydney, together with five green star rated public and administration buildings.
- The proposal to replace the Civic Centre is not new and was first raised in 1995.
- The current building does not comply with Building Code standards, is expensive to maintain and costs an additional \$200,000 a year compared to a modern, comparable building. The building has a very poor environmental footprint (power loss, antiquated A/C, failing window seals etc). In summer, staff work in temperatures in excess of 30 degrees.
- The current civic building is inefficiently designed, with Council's staff spread across three locations, thus making our operations difficult and costly.
- Amending the planning controls will allow Council to consider the right option for the site. This will fund a new Civic Centre on the site to house the Council Chamber, community and performance space, and provide a new Council office building, perhaps on the site or within walking distance, in which to consolidate staff from three locations. All at minimum cost to ratepayers.
- The proposal is financially responsible and will provide funds to improve community facilities, at minimum cost to our ratepayers.
- The proposal will facilitate the future provision for key worker housing.

2. COSTS

- Civic Centre built in the 60's - is well past its use-by date.
- Expensive to run, it costs an additional \$200,000 a year compared to a modern building of the same size.
- Nearly \$700,000 has just been approved by Council to upgrade air conditioning and power supply (as a temporary measure only), money which could be put to better use for our community.
- A further \$12.5 million is required over the next five years just for maintenance.
- Upgrading the building to meet Council's requirements over the next 20 years is estimated to cost about \$58 million – this still wouldn't address some of our problems (e.g. co-locating our staff)

- **To knock the building down and replace it, will cost ratepayers more than \$78 million and will require an increase in rates of 16% to repay the debt over 20 years.**
- **This money would be better spent to address the backlog in the upgrade of our infrastructure/assets such as roads, drains, parks and community facilities.**
- **Council has spent \$2 million on the project to date, not \$7 million as alleged.**

3. CONSULTATION

- **This is a significant project and it is important people are aware of the proposal – Council has never tried to hide anything from the community.**
- **The Planning Proposal has been subject to an extensive consultation period.**
- **The initial proposal was placed on public exhibition for six weeks. After review by an independent planning expert, it was re-exhibited for another four weeks**
- **Consultation has included:**
 - **Advertisements in local media and extensive coverage in local papers**
 - **Planning documents on City of Ryde's website**
 - **Project displays and model at Council's Planning and Business Centre**
 - **A project flyer distributed to 38,000 households**
 - **Formal written notification to more than 2000 property owners**
 - **Briefings to neighbouring residents, Chambers of Commerce (from across the LGA) and key user and community groups**
 - **Community drop-in sessions at Ryde Planning and Business Centre (three) and a Community information day at Top Ryde City Shopping Centre - so the community could speak directly with members of the Project Team**
 - **Door knock of some 270 neighbouring residents**
 - **Regular updates in the Mayor's Column in the local newspapers.**

4. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- **Council acknowledges that any project that includes a major change such as this is bound to generate some anxiety.**
- **Council has nothing to gain by hiding any aspect of the proposal from the community and to suggest otherwise is misguided.**
- **Council wants public discussion on the issue to be informed and fair.**
- **To say 99 percent of people are opposed to this project is simply not correct**
- **The original proposal received a total of 195 submissions**

- Of these, 67 were supportive 138 were opposed. Five submissions were neutral
- In response to the second exhibition, Council received 59 individual submissions and 5 different proforma letters to a total of 1,983 copies. This represents less than 2% of the population
- Council has amended its original planning proposal and its development control plan as a result of issues raised from these consultations.
- The current exhibition of the draft Development Control Plan for the site provides for further community feedback.

5. TRAFFIC

- Managing traffic in Top Ryde has always been a key factor for Council, particularly when planning the redevelopment of Top Ryde shopping centre in 2005.
- About \$40 million has already been invested (by the developer of Top Ryde City shopping centre) in building the necessary transport infrastructure to accommodate future development for the Ryde Civic Precinct site.
- Traffic access tunnels for Top Ryde shopping centre already cater for underground access to the Ryde Civic Precinct site.
- A second phase of traffic management planning includes improving the intersection at Devlin and Parkes Street.
- A key principle of the traffic plan is to avoid extra traffic through residential streets.
- Council's new proposal reduces the traffic impact of the development by 90% from that previously approved.

6. PLANNING RATIONALE

- The current Proposal is about amending the planning controls to get a better design outcome.
- Best practice planning focuses medium density development in Town Centres, rather than in suburban areas that have single or two storey dwellings. Our Strategic Plan is designed to do just that.
- Residential growth in Ryde is estimated at 4% over the next 10 years. Accommodating this growth around town centres keeps the suburban look and feel of Ryde intact for the majority of our suburbs – that's what most of our residents want.
- The current controls allow for 100,000 m² of building on the site at the same height as the current building. This would lead to a large, bulky and unsightly development.

- **The new proposal would see the height limit increased on part of the site and decreased on other parts, but the overall amount of floor space reduced to 60,000sqm. The aim is to provide planning controls that encourage taller, more slender buildings with less overshadowing.**
- **Top Ryde is well connected by public transport to Sydney, Parramatta and Macquarie Park.**

7. PLANNING PROCESS

- **The NSW Government will review the Planning Proposal independently of Council and determine any changes to the planning controls.**
- **If the Department of Infrastructure and Planning gives the go ahead, any future development would be subject to a competitive design and tender process based on strict sustainability and design criteria, and assessed by an independent panel of experts**
- **The successful bidder would submit a Development Application which would then go on public exhibition.**
- **A final decision would then be made by the State Government's Joint Regional Planning Panel.**
- **The Development Control Plan which responds to community feedback is currently on public exhibition.**
- **Concerns about overshadowing raised by the community have been addressed by independent planners. The impacts of overshadowing on the residents west of Blaxland Road are virtually the same as the existing building and south of Blaxland Road are better than currently approved.**
- **The planning proposal was exhibited twice, originally for 6 weeks and secondly for 4 weeks.**

8. SAFE GUARDS

- **The Planning Proposal has already been subjected to rigorous analysis including a review by independent planning consultants along with an unprecedented level of community consultation.**
- **The initial proposal has since been amended to reduce the height of future development on parts of the site, in line with recommendations of the independent planner.**
- **The current concept is only a proposal and there are many more steps required before any decisions are made on any final design for the site.**

9. EOI PROCESS- NEXT STEPS

- **The decision to go to an Expression of Interest (EOI) was taken at Council's Extraordinary Council Meeting in October last year; the process seeks to identify appropriate development partners to work with Council.**
- **The EOI process finished in December last year. A panel of independent experts is reviewing submissions to determine a shortlist for tender.**
- **The process for tendering and choosing an appropriate development partner is designed in strict accordance with a probity plan and every step of the way is overseen by a probity auditor (O'Connor Marsden).**
- **The selection criteria includes:**
 - **Evaluation of the overall massing of the buildings and urban design.**
 - **Evaluation of design excellence and environmental sustainability,(four green star rating for the residential component and five green star rating for the public and administration buildings).**
 - **Appropriate options for community, Civic and administration facilities to be located in Top Ryde to support local business growth in that major centre**
 - **Demonstrated financial integrity and commercial offer to Council.**