

SOS

SAVE
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SUBURBS

INC



Do you have problems with bad development?

Whenever we talk about what we think is the worst horror story about how a neighbourhood is being destroyed by unbelievably bad development or inappropriate buildings, our stories inevitably get capped. We wish they were all written down. Such great stories are often wasted when they are only talked about, and worse, when they are not given appropriate publicity, developers are emboldened to perpetuate such abuses on other unfortunate people —like you. And our politicians think that all is well because they hear no protest!

Shout your story from the treetops by using SOS to publicise your predicament and hopefully obtain good results. Take photos and send them and your story to us (and the newspapers), preferably in e-mail form, but if not, type written or even in hand writing to:

Ray Smith, SOS Newsletter Coordinator, E-mail: <rsmith@labyrinth.net.au>, or by letter to: 13 Toronto Avenue, Doncaster 3108 Note that SOS reserves the right to check for veracity and accuracy and to change or omit anything that may be offensive.

SOS Forum a Huge Success *by Cheryl May*

Despite searing temperatures our forum titled 'Melbourne 2030 Planning for Sustainable Growth – Will it deliver? How sustainable is it?' held last November, proved very successful both in terms of content and a large attendance. As those of you who were able to attend would agree, the day was extremely interesting and informative, and provided a great opportunity to express ideas, debate issues and network with each other.

Our keynote speaker Professor Ian Lowe (from Griffiths University in Queensland) provided an absorbing whilst sobering introduction which focused attention on the current environmental state of the world, challenges ahead and possible future scenarios, some more desirable than others. Ian's humour, intellect and depth of knowledge set the scene for a great day.

SOS President Nigel Kirby then summarised the aims of the forum including exploration of community and other stakeholder concerns about the government's 30 year plan for Melbourne. We were fortunate to have the Planning Minister Mary Delahunty and Shadow Minister Ted Baillieu as speakers. Mary gave a detailed account of her government's objectives with Melbourne 2030 and a very broad outline of how this might happen. Ted followed up with what he perceives are the problems with the government's approach and why objectives will consequently not be met.

Subsequent reaction was that we need much more information from the minister about implementation, how targets and promises will be met and how the community will be incorporated into the decision making process. We must also glean from the shadow minister more details about what a Liberal government would do and how that plan would be implemented.

The rest of the day comprised of three panel sessions that looked in detail at the following key topics within Melbourne 2030.

- The process to date and governance issues.
- Urban consolidation/activity centres/urban growth boundaries.
- Transport and environmental aspects of Melbourne 2030.

Each panel consisted of five experts within each topic and a range of perspectives were

expressed providing a great deal of food for thought for all. Question time at the end of each panel's presentations was spirited and diverse with many interesting points being raised and discussed. Because of his strong background knowledge of planning issues, Terry Laidler who chaired the day, brilliantly managed all proceedings.

Morning tea and lunch were delicious and provided a chance to reflect on what had been said in preceding sessions and to mingle with the speakers, other stakeholders and attendees. The day would not have been possible without the generous support of the day's other sponsors, RMIT, Melbourne University, the Victorian Local Governance Association and the Planning Institute of Australia. RMIT in particular must be thanked for donating the venue and technical support. Professor Lowe was inspirational and we appreciate him taking the time to speak despite a hectic schedule.

We believe our forum made a valuable contribution to the possibility of a sustainable plan for Melbourne's future. However we recognise that much work, debate and detail is essential. A commitment to improving public transport and clear guidelines for activity centre development with community input are critical.

SOS wants to see a collaborative planning system, based on a genuine partnership between State government, local government and the community. We want a livable, environmentally sustainable, socially just city. We call on the state government to re-commit to genuine dialogue and power-sharing with local government and the community. The government must give effect to its stated commitment of protecting and enhancing residential amenity by prescribing mandatory controls and empowering councils to reject non-compliant applications.

President's Address

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2004.

Thank you to those of you who attended our forum last November.

For those unable to attend, we have reprinted our forum statement, delivered at the close by our MC for the day, Terry Laidler.

One of the main outcomes of the forum was a call for more certainty in the system, through prescribed controls in the planning scheme.

Controls to say what should be built and where and just as importantly establishing specific limits.

We want Councils to be able to reject non-compliant applications.

We want Councils to be able to develop responses to Melbourne 2030 not have solutions imposed.

Feedback from our forum sponsors and participants suggested that we are making headway. Networks are being formed, people are listening. It just takes time.

This year we will continue to work for the fundamental reforms that our planning system needs.



Nigel Kirby

From an article 'Blueprint for a future City', by Royce Millar, Martin Boulton

The State Government delighted environmentalists but troubled developers when it drew its final boundary around Melbourne to slow urban sprawl

The Urban Growth Boundary puts a hard edge around much of metropolitan Melbourne, protecting the city's green belt from residential and industrial expansion. The Government says the growth corridors would guarantee 15 years' land supply for housing.

Green Wedge Coalition spokeswoman Rosemary West was elated, but Urban Development Institute of Australia executive director Geoff Underwood said that it is not enough — neither logically nor commercially,

The trend to humongous homes

If we don't promote good housing solutions, bad housing will happen. by Ray Smith

The premise for the need for higher density housing is that our old fifth-acre blocks squander precious land and make the provision of services very expensive. There is sound argument for this.

Then the Government gave its solution by decreeing that developers could build two houses on that block and Councils must find ways of providing services and amenities to cater for the doubling of houses — more water, electricity, sewerage and garbage collection. It seems the Government does not think that higher density residential buildings are its problem. It is irresponsible to ask for a rational use of land, then ignore the consequences.

But with our wealthy consumer society, Mr Jones is persuaded that he needs to buy a bigger and

newer palace than his neighbour Mr Brown, with three bathrooms, five bedrooms a kiddy's retreat and sauna — ignore the real costs to the family and community and ignore national debt or sustainability, and the resources that are artificially-directed into consumerism rather than the means for sustainable growth and real wealth.

When actual needs are articulated, then real solutions can be found. Simply present better solutions than the present big kitsch palaces in an enticing way and the consumer/homeowner will rush out to buy such desirable compact, clever, easy-to-clean and maintain, lighter, less costly, with better views and services homes. Then people would have housing that we all would embrace and be proud to live in.

Coalition to fight for public land

(From an article by Paul Heindrichs, Muriel Reddy, published in the Sunday Age 28/12/03)

Up to 1000 hectares of Victoria's public open space, including parks, is under threat, and a coalition of community groups is gearing up to fight it. The land ranges from broad swathes on the fringes of Melbourne — at Devilbend, on the Mornington Peninsula, and Point Cook — to the Kew Cottages site and areas of the Olympic Park sporting precinct.

These areas face changed uses that locals believe are inappropriate. The *Protectors of Public Lands Coalition* has been formed to fight for the principle that, regardless of other issues, public land should be protected, conserved and managed rather than sold or developed.

The new group is a significant development. Victoria has powerful groups protecting national parks and flora and fauna, but apart from places such as Wilsons Promontory and Point Nepean, there has been no coordinated umbrella group fighting to

save urban public space.

The new coalition has emerged from the protracted battle for the 20-hectare Royal Park psychiatric hospital site, which the State Government has handed to a developer to create the Commonwealth Games village. Up to 1000 trees have been cut down, it is claimed.

The group will fight to have established in legislation overriding principles favouring the retention of public land.

It would embrace a concept of land as heritage held in trust for the public, and which would not belong to the government of the day to do with as it pleases.

Ms Bell signalled that as well as opposing major developments, the group should also tackle the creeping concreting of parks by local councils wanting to improve access and amenities.

According to prominent Melbourne City Council maverick Kevin Chamberlin, the new Victorian coalition is rapidly finding support and getting "a head of steam".

How developers can build eight units on a small block of land without a Planning Permit

by Ray Smith

For a long time developers have been prevented from building as many units as they like because of ResCode, the need for a Planning Permit, the requirement to respect local Neighbourhood Character and the need to comply with Council's housing strategies and all those tiresome details.

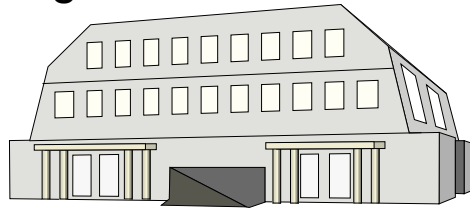
Now developers can build eight, twelve, or even more units if they choose, on a tiny block of land and they don't even need to go through any Council's Planning Department.

Here's how they do it!

They simply draw the ResCode template of the prescribed largest building possible, then they fit as many units into it as possible. It will look something like the picture above. With semi-attic rooms, they can easily fit in three storeys and they can go down for as many basements as can be afforded for garages.

Pretty ugly, aren't they? But get used to the barn-like look because soon all new houses will be this shape, and from one fence to another too.

Oh, one more thing developers mustn't forget — to call it a single dwelling. Then find a private building surveyor and tell him that this is a single dwelling and that it is planned to respect our multi-cultural community's needs for people who are used to living in this kind of building with up to 'five generations and 50 people' because VCAT has ruled that it is OK to have such a 'single dwelling'. But for goodness sake don't call them units until



they have been finished.

Next step. Get the final OK to have it lived in, then seal those easily sealable doorways. After a year of renting the units to prospective buyers to avoid paying too much capital gains tax, tell local Council that you have run into financial difficulties or the grandkids refuse to live in the same house as grandma or some other excuse and ask for a 'conversion' from a single dwelling to units.

But don't worry if Councils remain steadfastly against a legal conversion, for \$170, VCAT is worth a try, and if that doesn't work, any hack lawyer is able to draw up a legally binding kind of conversion so that the renters can own their own unit despite the regulations.

If all developers would do this, it would create a developer's boom, create a new class of architects who could design a different facade for each house — traditional, Tudor, renaissance, Tuscan, antebellum, Greek etc, and create a city rivalling other architecturally beautiful cities like Knotts Berry Farm. It would make planning less complicated because of the one-plan system and make us the most talked about planning capital of the world.

Municipal Representatives

Ballarat	Greg Henderson	5331 3537
Banyule	Jane Crone Kirsten Burke Noel Withers	9457 1675 9435 2978 9435 4513
Bass Coast Shire	Carola Adolf	5678 2286
Bayside	Cheryl May Jocelyn Lee	9596 1823 9596 6835
Boroondara	Keryn Christos David Tink Adele Barrett Gillian Simonson	9817 3755 9830 5280 9836 0640 9813 2186
Geelong	Judy & Bob Hutchinson	5278 7203
Glen Eira	Cheryl Forge Orek Tenen	9509 6290 9572 1511
Hobsons Bay	David Moore Patsy Toop Roy Armstrong	9397 5773 9397 7666 9398 1594
Kingston	Janelle House	9772 4862
Knox	Jill Wright Greg & Gayle Mackenzie	9762 7632 9739 8585
Manningham	Rosa Miot Ray Smith	9842 1292 9848 1534
Maribyrnong	Alan Ross Jack Harrison	9318 5833 9317 7843
Moonee Valley	Rick Clements Diane Adey Michael Gill	9337 5647 9379 4513 9379 9686
Moreland	Ronnie Whitmore	9380 1481
Mornington Peninsula	Arthur Moore Ralph Percy	5975 6148 5974 1222
Port Phillip	Ian Macroe Rohan Hamilton	9690 7604 9225 8755
Stonnington	Tom Moloney Dianne Duck Ann Reid	9510 3540 9576 1492 9572 3205
Sydney	Sally Pike	(02) 9437 1427
Whitehorse	Philip Warren-Smith Juliy Sharples	9898 6107 9890 8038
Yarra	Ian Wood	9429 3581
SOS Liaison Officer	Ronnie Whitmore	9380 1481

Note: Municipal representatives needed in Darebin and Frankston. Please contact Ronnie Whitmore if you can help.

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Sponsorship

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