

WERA Committee 2009

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Contents

38 Storey Tower for
Box Hill Central

WERA website

Residential
Re-Zoning

Bushfires

Council
Elections

VCAT Review

Wattle Day

Mont Albert Fair

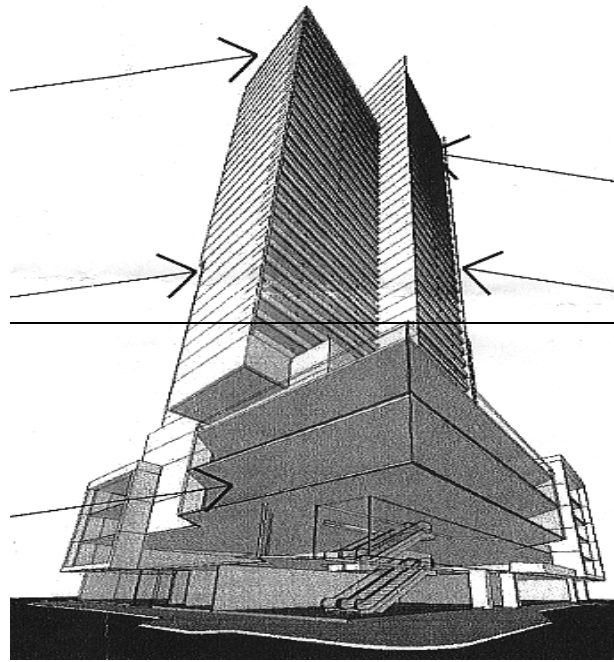
Victorian Environment
Assessment
Council

Open Space in
Whitehorse

Student
Accommodation

Membership Renewal

Permit Application for 38 Storey Building cnr Station Street and Carrington Road Box Hill



WERA has objected to the proposed development of a 38 storey apartment/retail complex on this small, vacant allotment presently being used as a car park.

. Our grounds for the objection are:

- * location is an over-development of this site;
- * visual bulk and negative, off site impacts on surrounding traders and residential areas from wind tunnel effects, shadowing and loss of privacy;
- * application for a car parking waiver. For 1000 residents, plus office and retailworkers, the plan only allows 330 places, instead of the 1300 to 1400 places required by the Whitehorse Planning Scheme. No visitor parking is included.
- *aggravation of existing traffic and parking congestion
- *added delay to bus and taxi access into Carrington St.;
- * added delay to existing, retail trader deliveries. (For example there appears be only one restricted loading zone for the building in a lane next to the market

Residential Re-zonings

WERA supports the location of more intensive development within the Box Hill Activity Centre in accord with the proposed Box Hill Activity Centre Structure Plan. However, this relatively small and “landlocked” site, on two of the most congested streets in the retail centre, with no provision for landscaping or softening and insufficient parking is not the place for a development of this size and prominence.

While a 38 storey building may be appropriate in Collins St. or Docklands, it is totally inappropriate in Box Hill. If 38 storeys are approved, will Centro Properties then want to build over the current market & shopping centre with 40 storeys?

This so called ‘landmark building’ has only a 4.5 Green Star Rating, whereas it should be 6-7 Star; and there will be limited water harvesting. No public housing or green open space contribution is provided; nor is there any parkland close by

WERA looks to Whitehorse Council and the State Government to develop a comprehensive transport plan for Box Hill before any large, new development is irrevocably constructed.
G. White and E. Meredith.

Website Announcement

We are close to finalizing the development of a WERA website. Members will be able to access newsletters and submissions prepared by WERA as well as links to key sites related to planning. We will notify all members as soon as practicable but if you have access to internet please start looking at the end of March on www.wera.org.au.

As part of this initiative, some of the Newsletter articles will appear in more detail for you to peruse on this site. If you do not have the internet, you can follow up on an article by contacting the Committee Member who is the author.

We look forward to receiving your feedback on the usefulness of the site. Printed copy of newsletters will still be provided where requested. Members may, upon request, receive a copy of any WERA submissions

The State Government has just released a Consultation Draft of the proposed new residential zonings which can be viewed at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/residentialzones

Submissions on the draft can be made to the Department of Planning & Community Development until 9 April 2009.

The proposed zones have been designated ***Substantial Change, Incremental Change and Limited Change.***

The Substantial Change Zone aims to provide medium to higher density buildings. These zones would be close to existing transport, retail and community facilities. Likely areas are town centres and along public transport routes. Maximum heights would be 13.5m. or –5 storeys [although a greater height may be specified by a Council.]

Incremental Change Zone is intended to allow additional housing that is to respect the existing character of the particular neighbourhood; or its preferred future character. Here a 9m. height limit would apply.

Limited Change Zone (formerly Residential 3) identifies neighbourhoods where there is limited opportunity for change. This may be due to established character or recognised heritage attributes or because of environmental constraints that limit the opportunity for additional housing. Even neighbourhoods that are close to community facilities and services or public transport services may be included in this zone if specific characteristics limit the opportunity for additional housing.

Existing planning controls that protect vegetation through the vegetation and landscape protection overlays will continue to apply A maximum building height limit of 9 metres (3 storeys) will also apply. However, councils can set a lower limit in appropriate locations.

WERA made a submission (refer August 2008 newsletter) to the Discussion Paper released in March 2008 as did over 400 others. Some of the main concerns expressed by the general public and community groups were:

- the removal/reduction of procedures for notifying development applications
- increase in building height and impact on existing neighbourhoods ,amenity rights and protections.

- Incomplete information about these new zones and how they would be implemented.

WERA advises all residents to remain alert as these changes are introduced into the Council planning schemes. We will advise you of any submission we prepare on the draft. *G. White*

Bushfires

WERA expresses our sorrow and sympathy to all residents of the bushfire ravaged areas, particularly to all residents and members in Elgar and Riversdale Wards that, directly or through family and friends, are suffering loss. The restoration of the communities will need the long term empathy and help from all of us.

As is evident from the voices of the survivors most want to re-establish and to be living again within a neighbourhood; we all can reflect from this disaster the importance of that aspect in our own areas.

On your behalf WERA has made a contribution to the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal. Also, during the Sunday afternoon Tramways Band Recital on 15th February, Friends of Wattle Park were assisted by WERA in collecting over \$1,000 towards the Bushfire Appeal.

Council Elections

Eleven of the 13 candidates standing for election in the Riversdale and Elgar Wards attended and spoke at WERA's "Meet the Local Candidates" evening held on 13 November 2008. Each was given 5 minutes to address the audience on what they saw as the key issues needing to be dealt with by them should they be elected. At the conclusion of their individual presentations residents then asked questions. We thank Mr. Chris Lobb for so ably and impartially chairing the evening.

WERA congratulates the re-elected Councillors: Helen Harris, Robert Chong, Sharon Ellis and John Koutras to the Elgar and Riversdale Wards respectively. Furthermore we congratulate and express our support to Cr Helen Harris as the newly elected Mayor of Whitehorse.

VCAT Review

On 13 October WERA attended a public session at VCAT chaired by Ms Helen Gibson, Deputy Chair, VCAT and also attended by the President Justice Kevin Bell. Almost 50 residents representing either themselves or various community groups participated. Many, like WERA, had made written submission on the need to review various areas of VCAT's procedures. (N.B. WERA issues were reported in August 2008 newsletter).

The meeting was helpful in noting the common issues, e.g. the ability to attend hearings and under resourcing for residents and, to also note, the experience of others where natural justice appears to be overlooked. The outcome of the review is anticipated early this year.

Wattle Day

The forecast for Wattle Day was not good, but after a cold windy morning, the weather improved and a very pleasant day was had by everyone. This year, WERA again participated with Holmesglen TAFE in the colouring competition for children. We helped to supervise the activities, and provided prizes for different age levels



WERA Committee member, Elizabeth Meredith, with one happy participant and Holmesglen TAFE helpers

Mont Albert Fair

WERA was to participate in the Hamilton Street Mont Albert Christmas Fair, but this time the weather was atrocious and all the activities were cancelled.

Victorian Environment Assessment Council [V E A C]

The State Government has requested V E A C to systematically identify and assess the uses, resources, condition, values and management of Crown land, and public authority land in metropolitan Melbourne.

Of especial interest to WERA is the requirement to report on appropriate future uses relevant to Melbourne's liveability and natural values; and to report on the contribution of Crown land, and public authority land to Melbourne's liveability and opportunities for enhancement of this contribution.

WERA is preparing a submission to V E A C requesting that, wherever possible within Whitehorse, any remaining Crown or Public Authority Land be used for the development and extension of Public Open Space.

Open Space in Whitehorse, Can Council Deliver?

On 19 July 2007 the Combined Residents of Whitehorse Action Groups (CROWAG), of which WERA is a member, responded to the Whitehorse Draft Open Space Strategy and in that submission strongly supported the key outcomes identified in the Strategy, in particular that of providing adequate open space to meet existing and future population needs.

Whitehorse is already low in the municipal ranking for the provision of public open space as a ratio of population, having about 4.2 hectares per 1000 people against a metropolitan average of 9.3 hectares. In particular, the Surrey Hills - Mont Albert area has only 6 sq m per person while areas like Vermont have 119 sq m.

The Open Space Strategy, as now endorsed by Council, accepts the need to acquire more public

open space to match the expected population increase in Whitehorse, The Strategy identifies anomalies in the distribution of open space across the municipality and gaps in the provision of open space; this demonstrates that Council will need to raise significant funding over the next 15 years to maintain and increase the provision of public open space in Whitehorse as a ratio of population.

In order to increase the ratio of open space to population a number of issues need to be addressed. These include:

- greater transparency and improved reporting of the collection, management and expenditure of developer contributions for the purchase of open space;
- a review (increase) of the rate of developer contribution in Whitehorse if the rate and quantum of open space acquisition is to improve in Whitehorse, particularly in the western wards of the municipality;
- a more proactive and creative approach to the acquisition of lots for the provision of open space, including that for organized and passive recreation, community health and fitness, and off leash areas for dogs..

Will the current development contribution and rate of open space acquisition be enough?

Council's own figures from the Housing Study and from data supplied by Council during comments on its Vision 2016 document show some 3000 plus units constructed from 2001 to 2006 or thereabouts. Had there been a 5% developer contribution in place during this time there would be have been significant revenues generated towards provision of greater open space. Open space expenditure is required where the developer contribution is incurred, i.e. at the site of development. Given the rate of infill development west of Elgar Road, where are the new open spaces provided to offset more intensive development?

Applying average values for Whitehorse units, as published in the Age newspaper and elsewhere, of around \$400,000 in current terms, this equates to some \$1.2 Billion dollars of development over that time period. More has occurred before 2001 and much more since 2006, as demand for middle ring, suburban housing has blossomed in Melbourne. Five percent of this sum would yield some \$30 to \$60 Million dollars over that period.

The money collected should be applied to the provision of improved open space and recreation facilities for the areas undergoing the growth.

Despite these figures, not one houseblock of land was purchased during this time as open space for the residents of our area.

Whitehorse Council has confirmed that its Open Space Strategy would be the mechanism by which planning and provision for future open space requirements for Whitehorse would be achieved. While WERA supports the Open Space Strategy, it is not clear to us how the relatively low ratio of open space to population growth will be tackled by Council. *J. Sharples*
Further detail www.wera.org.au

Whitehorse Planning Scheme - Amendment C 99

This amendment proposes to alter the amount of public open space contribution that developers must provide or pay when subdividing land. The contribution is to be amended to 4% of the site value as land or money to that value. It would also give Council the power to require a land contribution.

This amendment is currently open for public consultation. While WERA is preparing a submission, we encourage you to make one of your own. . *J. Sharples*

Student Accommodation – NOT a Standard Residential Development

Readers will recall that WERA has opposed a number of student accommodation developments in the west of Whitehorse- the most recent being the Carrington Road development. This application was opposed by Whitehorse council and WERA, but approved by VCAT in late December 2008. Yet again this decision reflected the lack of a Student Housing policy or a Box Hill Activity Centre policy in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme.

Residents had previously unsuccessfully opposed developments in Hotham Street Mont Albert, Poplar Street Box Hill and in sites near Deakin University, Burwood. In all cases VCAT had determined that they were residential developments and therefore they should be able

to be located in any residential zone in the municipality.

However, these developments are not standard apartments. Usually they are large buildings designed with common living areas, limited outdoor space, and are granted exemptions from the standard residential building code requirements for car parking spaces- on the grounds that international students don't have cars and/or the proposed student accommodation development is located near public transport.

In response to WERA's call for a student accommodation policy that would designate the preferred locations for large student accommodation buildings and limit their proliferation in residential streets, Council initiated a student housing study in 2006 and drafted a student accommodation policy amendment process (Amendment C87) in 2007. WERA made a submission arguing for tighter controls. This draft policy was reviewed by a Panel, which did not support Council limiting the locations of student housing. WERA maintained its position, arguing strongly that student housing should be kept out of local residential streets, and that Council should specify locations as Stonnington had successfully done.

Unfortunately, Whitehorse Council rejected WERA's approach. Instead, it supported the Panel, deciding that such accommodation units could be erected 'near' an Activity Centre – ie they could be in residential zones. This remains of great concern to WERA. Why should Whitehorse permit the building of large student apartment blocks in residential streets where other Councils, like Stonnington, have successfully restricted the areas in which such buildings can be erected? . *J. Sharples*
Further information on both the Student Accommodation Policy and the VCAT decision on Carrington Street, visit : www.wera.org.au

Membership Renewal

Please note that *your annual membership renewal* notice is attached to this newsletter. Your continued membership and support is most appreciated and critical to our on-going operation.

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