



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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YOUR NEW COUNCIL

A Housing Strategy in 2000?

Council has taken the first step towards effective control of the implementation of its planning policies. Although a schedule is still awaited for many of the "Further Strategic Work" items recorded in the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS), a timetable for the major studies is to be produced - and ideally included in the 3 year Corporate Plan for 2000 -2002.

So, while not advisable to hold your breath, you might soon be able to have some input into the formulation of Housing and Vegetation Strategies, and to later submit comments on these when they are transformed into Planning Scheme Amendments - hopefully before year's end.

Meanwhile, a panel hearing on the Heritage Overlay awaits other decisions of council - see item on *Demolition, Development and Loss of Value*.

Elections and a Disappearing CEO

In the revamped Council there are only two new faces. And in the new Central Ward we are now represented by Councillors Peter Allan and Jessie McCallum (now Mayor). Both were members of the previous Council but represented other Wards before the change of boundaries. Both have homes in the Ward and are aware of many of the planning concerns of central Blackburn residents.

On the eve of election close it was revealed that Peter Seamer was resigning as CEO. He disappointed by retaining the organisational split between statutory and strategic planning - and effectively emasculating the latter - and by apparently forgetting his early announcements about relying less on consultants and contractors. But he was a decisive administrator, with extensive experience in local government; and will be a hard act to follow.

THE NEW RESIDENTIAL CODE

The process of introducing a single code to cover all residential development continues. We have participated in the recent programme of workshops and there will be opportunities to comment on later drafts of the new code. The aim is to have final approval of a new code before the end of this year - more information may be found on the department's web site (www.doi.vic.gov.au/planning) under the heading of *ResCode2000*.

TWO STOREY HOUSING

This survey, to be included in the forthcoming Housing Study, drew a response of 46% (264) from randomly surveyed residents. It revealed that the majority favoured single storey dwellings although a significant minority (30%) did not mind whether new development was single or double storey. What wasn't explored in detail were the views of the 36% with a two storey dwelling next door. It must be presumed that their degree of acceptance would relate to how well the design suited the site and the extent to which the new two storey buildings took neighbouring properties into account in terms of overlooking, overshadowing, mass, etc.

The survey included some questions which seemed only marginally related to the topic but produced some interesting responses. For instance, despite the often repeated mantra that most people intending to move wanted to remain in the same locality, this didn't apply to many respondents.

Answers to another question revealed that 45% lived in a street where there had been medium density housing (MDH) development in the last four years. We would have thought the pervasive nature of infill development by MDH was so obvious that the conclusion by the surveyors that it was '*...relatively widespread, rather than being concentrated in some areas of the municipality*' is a classic understatement.

The leading motherhood question, on whether respondents believed the development of new suburbs outside Melbourne should be controlled, drew the expected affirmative (from 70%). But when asked if they supported '*urban consolidation as one method of stopping new suburbs on the city outskirts*' respondents were more or less evenly divided. No wonder - even ignoring the different perceptions of general terms such as '*new suburbs*', '*outside of Melbourne*' and '*urban consolidation*', some tenuous links are implied.

New developments on the '*city outskirts*' are unlikely to stop while they continue to meet the needs of young families seeking homes with private open space - increasingly unavailable in the older suburbs because of '*urban consolidation*'.

SOS ANNUAL MEETING

The AGM on 6 April was well supported and all Committee members re-elected. Those attending included the shadow ministers for Planning and Local Government, a reflection of the fact that there was now bipartisan support for many SOS policies. However, as President Jack Hammond pointed out in his report, the real test lay in effective and timely implementation of those policies.

CONCERNED ABOUT A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ?

You usually have little time to do something about it. Where do you start ? Your Committee has prepared brief notes for members concerned about a development proposal. These are not so much about the formal objection process but about the ways you can assess a proposal and the steps you should consider in opposing a planning permit application. If you are in that situation contact us for a copy of the *BVRG: INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTORS GUIDE*.

ELMORE WALK

As an example of the effort and vigilance required to gain and retain community assets, it is worth retelling the story of Elmore Walk, which links Laburnum Street and South Parade.

About 15 years ago, following the sale of *Kyalite*, there was a proposal to incorporate the lane as part of a redevelopment of the property. This was opposed by many local residents (some at various times supporters and committee members of BVRG) and as a result of their protests, the present footpath and reserve were retained for public use under the name of Elmore Walk. This commemorated the renowned local builder A.J Elmore, who had built the family home *Kyalite* on the adjacent eastern block in 1912 and whose joinery works were located on the western side.

Following the naming of Elmore Walk local residents had planted trees and landscaped the area, unaware that Nunawading Council had failed to limit the popular Walk to pedestrian use. Then late last year an abutting landowner claimed the right to use it for vehicular access. This was the first time the community realised that the former council had failed to tie up the loose legal ends, that failure being compounded by the issue of a building permit by a private surveyor.

Once more the local community mounted an urgent protest, obtaining in a few days over 240 signatures on a petition to Council and following these up with some 165 submissions and 14 oral presentations to the committee appointed to consider the matter.

On 15 May council adopted the committee's recommendation to discontinue the use of Elmore Walk as a road for vehicular traffic.

DEMOLITION, DEVELOPMENT AND LOSS OF VALUE

While SOS has expressed concern about demolition of historic buildings after the Building Tribunal has overridden decisions of the Heritage Commissioner, the State government has introduced legislation designed to give more local control over demolition permits.

In the meantime, our council is yet to agree arrangements for a panel hearing on the Whitehorse Heritage Amendment, as they consider the more immediate problem of how to deal with any proposals to demolish cited buildings.

On a more general note, there are an increasing number of cases where homes have been devalued because demolition and development on adjacent properties has reduced their amenity. The fact that these can result in rate reductions, however minor, should encourage councils to insist on new dwellings being respectful of their neighbourhood.

**NEW NEIGHBOURS INTERESTED ?
SHARE THIS BULLETIN WITH THEM -
ARRANGE FOR US TO CONTACT**