

# Yarra Residents' Coalition<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The Yarra community groups have joined together to convey their concern about the scale of development going on across Yarra, which is intrinsically linked to the destruction of heritage, neighbourhood character and public amenity. These are the real values of Yarra that money can't buy. This reality was beautifully illustrated at a recent planning consultation meeting, when a resident asked the developer's representative "How does a 12 storey building fit with the existing neighbourhood character and heritage?" The consultant eventually stated "The neighbourhood character of this area is all about change", the incredulity of residents was abundantly clear. This is the crux of the problem.

The community is not opposed to development, but they are very worried about the impact of unrestrained development upon the existing community, and the future community that we will be left with. We know that it is about balancing the needs of our current community and the needs of a growing Melbourne. We believe there is an imbalance being driven by greed, with our amenity being stolen by rampant development generating enormous profit through producing tiny boxes to be sold to investors here and overseas.

Professor Michael Buxton has remarked how nowhere else would this situation be tolerated, that Yarra is "under siege". Even a property investor has been publically quoted warning other investors to avoid the area close to the Yarra, as it is becoming a Docklands or Southbank with too many towers in one area. The Yarra community has discovered, to their dismay, that planning guidelines they entrusted the Council to formulate and implement, have not worked. They have been exploited to benefit developers, to the detriment of the public good. Professor Buxton has warned that Yarra has lost a lot of its heritage already and urgent action is needed.

The proliferation and collaboration of community groups reflects a strong will that a change of approach by Council is required. There was a universal desire that our community remain diverse and inclusive, with overwhelming support for the mandatory expansion of affordable community housing. Planning for development must be balanced with valuing heritage, neighbourhood character and public amenity. The Yarra Residents' Coalition provides a voice for community groups to be heard by Yarra Council. The community also wants action to change the incentives for profit gauging by developers. The flat rate fund even encourages increasing heights and mass. Developers walk away from the lost amenity and lost heritage, and pass on infrastructure and services costs to the public and the communities around. It is obvious that the current developer fund does not reflect the

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<sup>1</sup> A coalition of community groups in the City of Yarra including Fitzroy Residents' Association, Collingwood and Abbotsford Residents' Association, 3068 Group, Protect North Fitzroy's Skyline, and Walmer Street Action Group.

new cost of supporting the additional population, in the short and longer terms. as these costs are passed on to the public.

## **RESOLUTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE CITY OF YARRA COUNCIL**

The following resolutions were passed at a residents' meeting convened by the Yarra Residents' Coalition at the Fitzroy Town Hall, on Thursday, 17 November 2016

### **STRIP CENTRE HERITAGE PROTECTION**

1. THAT Council request the Minister for Planning to introduce immediate protection for historic shopping streets through an interim amendment to the City of Yarra planning scheme, to alter the building and works requirements of the Commercial 1 and Activity Centres zones requirements to include:
  - a. a permit to demolish buildings
  - b. for new buildings and works that:
    - i. no building can be constructed within 10 metres of the frontage
    - ii. further than 10 metres from the frontage, no building can exceed 11.5 metres in height

and that the Minister approve the advertising of a concurrent amendment to apply to these requirements only to buildings constructed prior to 1939.

### **MIXED ZONE USE**

2. THAT Council request the Minister for Planning to introduce immediate interim height control to the Mixed Use zone and General Residential Zones (Schedule 3) in the City of Yarra through the introduction of a Design and Development Overlay (DDO) specifying a maximum development height control of 13 metres and a development set-back of 10 metres and approve the advertising of a concurrent amendment to the planning scheme.

### **AFFORDABLE COMMUNITY HOUSING**

3. THAT Council request the Minister for Planning to amend the Planning Scheme for all relevant zones to adopt the practice that developments of more than 10 dwellings provide a minimum of 10 per cent of dwellings defined as affordable community housing, developed in association with an accredited housing association, on a sliding scale to 20 per cent for developments above 100 dwellings.

### **PUBLIC HOUSING PROTECTION AND INCREASE**

4. THAT Council request the Minister for Housing to protect the existing level of State public housing and increase it to address the government waiting list of some 30,000 people, including the homeless (as well as others in inferior accommodation) and to protect and improve the future rent and living conditions (including public open space) for existing tenants.

### **INCREASED OPEN SPACE**

5. THAT Council request the Minister for Planning that legislation be amended to require the open space contribution in a development to be proportionate to the number of dwellings.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF HERITAGE OFFICER**

6. THAT the City of Yarra appoint a Heritage Officer, independent of the Director of Planning, with responsibilities to include
  - a. promoting heritage within Council and the community
  - b. being available to residents to offer support, access to information and advice on heritage-related matters
  - c. provision of in-house expertise to Council on heritage matters and policy, including strategic planning
  - d. provision of heritage advice on planning applications, advice on heritage policy, including attendance at Internal Development Approvals Committee (IDAC) and other Council meetings.

#### **BANNING OF DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS**

7. THAT the Victorian Parliament ban developer contributions to political parties and individual politicians.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Yarra Residents' Coalition is determined that these resolutions will not be subjected to "death by committee", which too many participants have learnt about from bitter experience when trying to achieve genuine change through Yarra Council processes. For this reason, we have decided to defer our request for the establishment of a committee under s86 of the Local Government Act, to demonstrate good faith in action being undertaken immediately to respond to the resolutions provided. This would include an Implementation Plan, as agreed upon between Council representatives and Yarra Residents' Coalition representatives (and expert consultants as required), to be presented to the Yarra Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 6 December 2016.

Put simply, we are asking that at tonight's meeting, council agree to setting up this consultative mechanism with the YRC for its immediate action to progress the motions council endorses tonight with the first reporting of this consultative group, to be at council meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, 2016