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9 AUGUST 2021

MORELAND CITY COUNCIL
Locked Bag 10, Moreland 3058

**Submission: Proposed sale of LAND /CARPARK
2-12 Wilkinson St, Brunswick (referred to as Rosser St Carpark)**

As representatives of the Business sector in the Community and managing aspects of the shopping strip of Sydney Road Brunswick, the Sydney Road Brunswick Association express our objection to this particular site being sold or handed over for the proposed housing. We are fundamentally in support of much needed affordable housing in our area and particularly social housing, but object to this particular chosen site, which accommodates our supporting customers and is located in the busiest section of the whole of the 2.7km Sydney Road Brunswick shopping strip.

We question the proposed use and what we for-see as detrimental impacts on the near-by businesses, where it currently provides safe and secure carparking for customers, businesses and their staff, even though limited spaces are provided here. The importance of the Sydney Road shopping strip as a whole cannot be underestimated, and in particular this section (Albert St to Victoria St).

A recent study undertaken by Mainstreet Australia – **The Value of Victorian Main Streets:** July 1, 2021, prepared by Geografia in association with Tim Nott- Executive summary states:

This report describes the value, scale and role of main streets across Victoria. It highlights the importance of main streets to the State's economy and social and even environmental landscape, how they are changing and their vital role in helping to rebuild Victoria's economy during a time of significant economic turmoil caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

This report gives a clear insight into the valuable contribution outdoor shopping strips make in our Community, both socially and economically. Victorian main streets have always been more than just a retail space. They are a place for residents and visitors to gather, meet, shop and be entertained; they are key service delivery points; and an important provider of jobs.

More info & full report: mainstreetaustralia.org.au/research/

The examples below, outline the key business drawcards to this immediate vicinity on the west side of this block, which are paramount to maintaining a healthy, mixed business strip for Sydney Road overall:

- Post Office – busiest P.O. in Brunswick
- A well patronised & very large Chemist & Pharmacy (Chemist Warehouse) ,
- A hot bread shop & favourite lunch pick up for Tradies in the area,
- Comm. Bank- one of the only two remaining in the strip with Thursday pension queues
- Bunnings hardware store- minimal car parks available for tradies and locals to collect often heavy and cumbersome goods, where a vehicle would be required.
- La Manna Organics & La Manna fresh green groceries- extremely popular with visitation from many areas of Melbourne.

These businesses alone, attract hundreds of customers weekly, both locally and from near-by areas and with many needing a convenient and safe car park.

Whilst we see an increase in 'online' sales, especially since the Covid lockdowns and restrictions, visitation to our shopping strip,(obviously by various means), provides numerous advantages to

the Community and the economic sustainability of Moreland, whilst also providing a high level of employment.

Does Council value the existing businesses and what they bring to Moreland and this area? If they do, then they need to support them and provide the infrastructure required to nurture the ongoing viability of the strip, especially after what these shops / businesses have been through in 2020 and are currently experiencing.

As there is no voice for small businesses or a representative experienced in operating and sustaining a small business on the MAH board, below is a simplified version of what operating a small business requires in order to survive :

How do businesses survive ?

- By being able to pay for ongoing - rents, rates, utilities, permits, overheads & staff.

How do businesses pay for these daily/weekly & monthly expenses?

Only through any sales they make on their product or services. A business may only achieve a Net Profit , as low as 5-10% of turnover. **That's .07cents to .10cents in \$1.00**

ATO benchmarked business turnover and expenses.

<https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/Small-business-benchmarks/In-detail/Benchmarks-A-Z/>

How do these sales arrive? – Some could be from online sales if set up to do so, otherwise, It is via whatever customers come through the door & then actually purchase something.

How does a customer come to be there- ?

- Perhaps for a specific reason, like posting a parcel or buying food for the week or coming to peruse the bridal sector.
- Maybe to visit the Bank. (espec. on a Thursday, with many elderly pensioners)
- They maybe there to meet friends and breakfast/dine together.
- Might even be to engage socially with people, get a coffee and wander the strip.

But who are these customers ?

- NOT just locals we know-

We make a significant point in that this strip would not survive solely on the local community, no matter how regular. Before the pandemic, we attracted visitation from broader Melbourne areas, regional, interstate and note that overseas tourists were slowly on the increase.

Our diverse business offering, with what was also the largest bridal sector in Melbourne, brought customers from outer areas, usually the whole family, obviously by car.

Being able to obtain a car park fairly easily is part of the equation and a fundamental component of encouraging visitation to the centre. By taking away much needed carparking in this area, you are taking away the prospect for the community to visit the centre- in a way they choose – which has already been limited by the tightening of the Transport Strategy, where the elimination and reduced time-limits of car spaces, along with substantial fees, forces the community to ride, walk or take transport to the area.

This in theory serves a purpose, but potentially also reduces their purchases, in not being able to carry and transport as much.

An obvious example would be the Bunnings store, located in this block, (for how ever long it may be there) but often demands a car for transport and collection of items (reinforced by the amount of 'tradie's' utes, coming and going from this area.) They are not local.

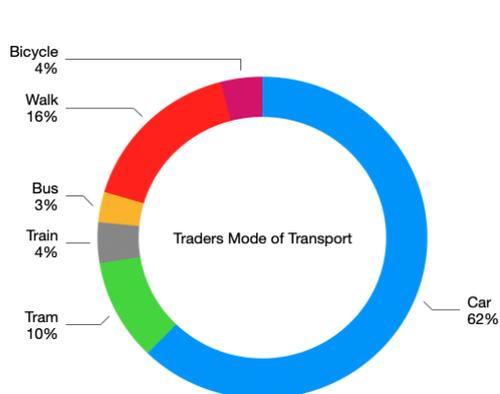
Other factors detrimentally affecting this block must also be taken into account, when considering reducing existing and much needed car parking in this area:

- A Clearway exists 5 days a week on this whole West side of Sydney Road, 4-6pm- where NO parking is allowed in Sydney Road for those wanting to visit these shops. (Could be after school pick-up hours or after work.)

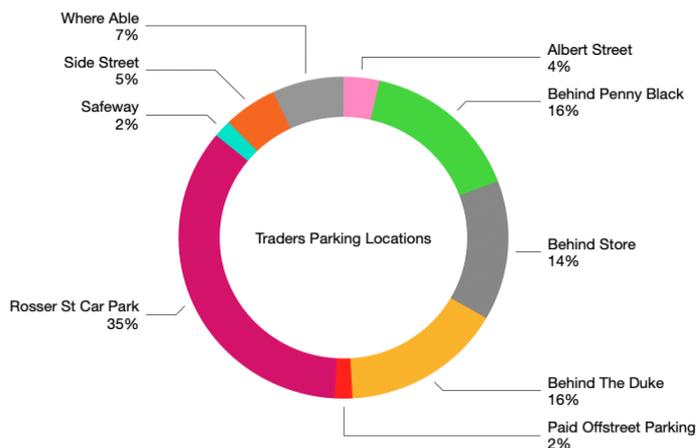
- NO right turns for cars travelling Sth- Nth (at Albert St or Victoria St) perhaps wanting to access the East side carpark & shop on both sides in this area. Not possible.
- No pedestrian crossing on Sydney Road in this busy section, (as in Coburg) where you can currently observe people risking traffic to access their cars on the East side with heavy shopping loads (mostly fruit & vegetables). This is not ideal or safe, to direct people to park there, (if they can get there), with several "NO RIGHT TURNS" activated, as mentioned above.
- Several on-street carparks in Albert & Victoria streets are now permanently taken up with increasing numbers of rental/hire car spaces eg: Go Get, Flexicar, Car flexi , etc-
- None of the historically built premises on this west side, have made provision for owner/staff car parks at the rear of their businesses when established and cannot be accommodated to do so.
There are other areas in Sydney Road where this does occur, but not here.
- The signage indicating the carparking to the west (as displayed in all of Sydney Road) is small, poorly displayed and not prominent amongst the many other signs in the street. (see pics)
The SRBA has been lobbying for over 15 years to obtain overhead signage to carpark in the strip, so people know where are off-street carparks can be found. This can equate to the possibility of the car park not being completely full, all of the time.
- This far west carpark, also competes with free and limited timed parking in the same block on Wilkinson St which is sometimes available and where you can often observe customers waiting for a free park , as opposed to paying \$3 an hour. Whether justified or not, there are some instances where people just cannot afford to pay \$3 for a quick visit or may actually object to the fee eg: to post a parcel, go to the Bank or pick up a Vietnamese Pork Roll for lunch.
Therefore, it may be the last car park section to be filled- but a longer more expansive survey would need to be undertaken to establish the daily use (not during Covid) and where consideration should still be given o support to the strip, in providing cheaper or free parking.
- The ratio of Business Permits allocated for the business parking is not in proportion to the actual spaces allocated for Business parking at 2-12 Wilkinson St car park. Therefore business staff may be required to pay \$10.40 a day here = \$52 a week, which is quite a large fee if working in the area. Staff needing to drive to work, find themselves searching for a suitable car park, for the duration of their shifts.

**37 businesses on East & West side of the area were surveyed :
90 employees & owners are included in the sample.**

How did they get here ? (61 came by car) :



Where did they park ? 35% - (Wilkinson St)



SUBURBS from where they drive from, 61					
Travelling from		Travelling from		Travelling from	
Aintree	1	Epping	1	Pascoe Vale	3
Avondale Heights	2	Essendon Fields	1	Preston	2
Brunswick	3	Fitzroy	2	Reservoir	3
Brunswick West	2	Fitzroy North	2	Springvale South	1
Bundoora	1	Fountain Gate	1	St Albans	2
Caulfield	1	Glenrov	3	St Kilda	1

Parking Locations		
Albert Street	2	
Paid Offstreet Parking	1	3
Rosser St Car Park	20	
Safeway- Albert St	1	
Side Streets	3	

The above charts outline the number of staff travelling from far-off suburbs, where there is a need to travel by car to their place of employment. During this pandemic and ongoing concerns of transmission, there maybe more employees choosing to drive, rather than take public transport, but here we demonstrate there are also employees coming from further distances that would otherwise take 1 ½ hrs to get to their place of work in Brunswick.

The proposal states:

“ Reduction in car spaces could be managed through adjustments in paid parking opportunities.

We question what this actually means :‘adjustments in paid parking’ ?

Proposal also states:

Trader- allocated parking provision can be reprovisioned on the eastern portion of the car park. “

How could the existing Business Parking Permits possibly be relocated to the East side of this car Parking area ? We note from your report that only 40 spaces currently exist.

Had we had more time, we could have recorded the actual visitation and turnover of people arriving to this area, indicating that 40 spaces is very limited to accommodate the demand.

In summary, we ask that Council re-consider the other sites nominated for the affordable housing, especially the site at 23-27 Frith St, which would not have such detrimental impacts in removing what is much needed carparking in this particular section of Sydney Road Brunswick business strip.

The Association strives to support the businesses in what is the main business sector in Sydney Road Brunswick, the employment they provide and most importantly the ability to encourage, attract and maintain a constant flow of customers, whether they be locals or visitors to the area, for the ongoing survival and viability of the shopping strip.

We would also like to register to speak to this submission at the hearing of 17th August 2021.

Claire Perry
Manager
On behalf of Sydney Road Brunswick Association