

CHATSWOOD MALL

ATTACHMENTS:	1. CONCEPT DESIGN (CIRCULATED SEPARATELY)
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	JEFF ELLIS - ECONOMIC AND PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT DIRECTOR
AUTHOR:	GARY PARSONS - PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
MEETING DATE:	7 SEPTEMBER 2009

Purpose of Report

To present the proposed concept for the redevelopment of Chatswood Mall to enable Council to adopt the concept and allow detailed design development to continue for tender and construction.

Background

The plans for redevelopment of Chatswood Mall have culminated from a number of studies and reviews undertaken over the last five years. Previously, Turf Design (Landscape Architects) undertook a master planning exercise that reviewed all previous studies and produced a master plan that made major changes to the mall including changes to its topography and included options for central free standing cafes. The master plan was exhibited and presented to Council and received a mixed response, particularly in terms of access and design. The master plan was also reviewed in terms of financial cost and the indicative price was approximately \$8 million.

It is noted that approximately \$3 million is currently allocated towards the malls redevelopment, including development of the design, survey work and service location studies, as well as demolition and construction works. This figure was based purely on replacing the existing mall with like for like rather than a significant upgrade of the space.

Council engaged Arterra Landscape Architects in May 2009 with a brief to reviewing the previously completed Masterplan having regard to the issues raised with that design, together with an achievable/realistic budget and develop a concept design which upon adoption would be further developed for tender and construction.

The development of the concept design the subject of this report has involved input and review by a multi-departmental team to ensure that the intricacies of the space are realised and that the design responds to various issues.

Report

In general, the concept design proposes a wholesale change to the space by replacing the two existing, edge located rows of trees and lighting with a single central row down the middle of the mall. The newly centrally located trees and lighting are supported with a centrally located seating, café, market zone maximizing pedestrian access down each side of the mall.

Trees

An independent Arborist's assessment of the existing trees found that whilst they were generally in reasonable condition their safe useful life expectancy (SULE), was estimated to be approximately between 5 and 15 years which is significantly shorter than the anticipated life-cycle of the revitalized mall. The Arboricultural assessment also noted that the

refurbishment works and potential future redevelopment of adjoining sites would also accelerate the existing tree's decline.

It is without dispute that the existing trees due to their compromised planting conditions including restricted soil profile, poor availability of water, stunted growth, proximity to shop awnings, have and will not ever reach their full potential or grow much beyond their current size.

Given these factors it is recommended that the opportunity be taken to reposition and replace the existing trees with more significant trees, incorporating modern planting methods including improved soil conditions and water sensitive urban design to provide planting conditions that will maximize the opportunity for the new trees to achieve their potential and become a focal point for both the revitalized Mall and Chatswood CBD.

An intrinsic criterion for the selection of any replacement tree was the need for a deciduous species in order to maximize summer shade whilst providing winter solar access. It is acknowledged that this requirement excludes native species, however due to the needs of the space over the seasons, this choice is considered unavoidable.

A detailed selection process was carried out to assess suitable replacement species. Fourteen species were initially identified, of which four were short listed by the consultants and Council staff.

In short listing the trees consideration was given to the tree's suitability in terms of height, spread, age to maturity, proven track record, maintenance issues; leaf/branch/fruit drop and aesthetics. On balance the Chinese Elm, *Ulmus parvifolia* was selected as the most suitable being a handsome, broad spreading, clean trunked, deciduous tree that has proven to be hardy and reliable in urban settings throughout Sydney. It is not known to be highly allergenic and is not a tree which drops a lot of fruit, seed or flowers which come hazardous in the mall environment.

Located in the middle of the Mall at 15 metre centres, the proposed new trees will have room to develop a full and balanced canopy without being adversely affected by adjoining buildings or each other. The trees when planted will be approximately the size of the existing trees and it is anticipated that they will have a canopy of approximately eight meters in diameter within the next five to ten years.

The design of the tree planting area incorporates WSUD treatment which will utilize rainwater re-use, methods to avoid soil compaction, structural soil profiles and maximizes the area available for root growth to ensure the trees reach their potential and longevity.

Circulation and use of Space

Currently pedestrian/vehicle circulation is separated into three zones by the two rows of trees and furnishings. The two outer zones provide shelter and window shopping opportunities for pedestrians as well as footway dining, the central spine provides a pedestrian space and is also used for the location of market stalls.

Under the proposed concept, circulation is divided into two zones, one on each side of the central spine, this arrangement increases the overall pedestrian space on each side of the mall and because the trees, lighting, seating and other improvements are centrally located, space for unimpeded pedestrian access is improved. In addition, the design rationalises and increases the versatility of the space. The central spine will provide a zone for footpath dining, market stalls and public seating under trees, which are all out of the primary pedestrian thoroughfare.

Vehicle access through the mall includes limited service/delivery vehicles as well as access for emergency vehicles. The proposed design provides access for these vehicles. It is proposed that the detailed design of the project will include methods to better manage vehicle access.

The existing event/shade structure at the intersection of Victor Street and Victoria Ave is proposed to be removed. Due to the removal of the original kiosks, light structures and trees the area available for events has been increased and the detailed design of the project will further investigate how the area will be used and what structures will be required in the area for events.

Pavement

The aim of the repaving is to provide a smooth, non-slip, durable and even pedestrian footpath surface which is timeless, easily maintained and repaired and that can be used for events, outdoor dining and some vehicle circulation.

Following issues raised in the previous master plan exercise a variety of paving materials have been considered when developing the concept design including asphalt, stamped concrete, decomposed granite/sandstone, areas of lawn, reconstituted stone, clay pavers and natural stone.

For a variety of reasons the material chosen by Council staff and the consultants is a dark grey Australian exfoliated granite known as "Austral Black". It is a highly durable material from South Australia and has been used extensively in the Sydney CBD (80,000m²) and many other urban centres around Australia. It is noted that cheaper, alternative Chinese granites are available however due to the environmental costs of shipment, the proven track record of the Australian product and that the preferred product is guaranteed to be available for future use, the alternative Chinese products has been not pursued.

The proposed paving will be laid in two formats. The larger format paver will cover the majority of the space and will be laid in a running bond across the mall. This bond will make the Mall feel wider and the varying lengths will more forgiving in future repairs and restorations.

Additionally, a smaller format known as "Muffin Sets" which are a modern, flat topped version of a cobble stone with a more even surface than traditional cobbles, will be used to highlight the public seating/tree areas of the central spine and also delineate the central areas available for café seating/market areas.

It is noted that the area outside St Mary's Cathedral above the Cook & Phillip Swim Centre in Sydney City has examples of the use of the muffin sets as well as the conventional format.

In conjunction with repaving the Mall, a major issue will be the renovation/replacement of service pit lids. It is proposed to provide a consistent finish by using new pit surrounds with granite infilled lids wherever possible. The pits will also be marked to identify the service below.

Pedestrian Lighting

Pedestrian and general lighting will be provided with multi function poles located within the central spine. The poles will be similar to others in the Chatswood CBD and will have provision for banners, public address systems, power and water outlets.

The use of solar powered lights was considered however due to overshadowing from adjoining buildings has been discounted for use in the mall. The detailed design of the project will include ensuring that the lighting is energy efficient.

Seating

Seating will be provided within the central spine through a combination of conventional timber bench seats that have arms and back-rests, along with more informal pre-cast concrete forms surrounding the base of trees. The concrete seating will incorporate feature lighting, as well as public art which will be developed in conjunction with Council's Arts and Cultural Services Manager during the design development phase. In addition, the concrete forms will be integral to the water sensitive urban design (WSUD) process by corralling water into the tree bases, thereby reducing the trees dependence on other forms of irrigation. The concrete forms will also be used at the Victor Street junction to reduce the cross-fall in this area, which will assist pedestrians, in particular those with disabilities.

Telephones

There are a number of telephones currently located throughout the mall, initial discussions with Telstra indicate that the phones are well used and it is desirable to maintain this service. The detailed design of the project will address the number of phones, their location and the design of the booths. It is recommended that Council investigate the use of booths provided by companies such as JCDecaux or Adshell which will offset the replacement costs, manage on going maintenance and through third part advertising provide a recurrent income stream contributing to the ongoing maintenance in the mall. Initial discussions with one of these companies indicate that the phones could generate up to \$20,000 per annum. A requirement of any agreement would be for the inclusion of a percentage of 'community advertising' for events and Council initiatives.

It is noted that whilst this recommendation would be contrary to Council's existing policy (Res 90/1591) which does not allow advertising on public telephone boxes, given the location of the phones and the service they provide it is considered reasonable and quite different to phone boxes on a street corner.

Other Elements

Whilst the current level of design does not specifically address other elements such as signage, bubblers and bottle re-fill stations, these have all been considered and the more detailed design will incorporate these elements.

Another element of the design is to future proof the mall for example by laying additional conduits for future CCTV, additional lighting of trees etc or maximising space for events, markets and café spaces.

Consultation

There has been extensive internal consultation with Council staff in relation to the proposed concept design and there is broad support for the proposal. The detailed design of the concept will continue with input from across Council.

The concept design considered previous comments from the Access Committee and was presented to the committee at its meeting of 19th August 2009 where it was well received. The Committee were "*very pleased with the new design for the mall and a majority vote to approve the concept plans was achieved*". The detailed design will continue to address the issues raised by the Access Committee particularly with regard to paving finish, way finding signage and seating detail.

The various service providers have been advised of Council's intentions of refurbishing the mall so that any works to services could be undertaken prior to the major refurbishment works.

NSW Fire Brigades have also been consulted and their requirements for access have been reflected in the concept plans.

It is noted that previous consultation with adjoining properties and shops did not generate a any real interest or input into the design of the master plan. The construction of the works will have the greatest potential impact on the adjoining properties and in this regard, the detailed design will incorporate staging and timing schedule to minimise disturbance to business and method to manage the process.

The detailed design of the project will also include a framework for community consultation associated with the construction activity and public/press releases detailing the design of the project and an image gallery.

Financial Consideration

A quantity surveyor has reviewed the draft design and examined likely project costs. Staff support the estimates provided within the report and have included additional funds for public art and also for staff time in the final project estimates. Total estimated costs of implementing the proposed plan are approximately \$4.5 million. A more accurate figure will be known once the works have been formally tendered. The current remaining balance of funds is approximately 2.9 million dollars. To fund the likely shortfall the following strategies are proposed.

An application to the NSW Infrastructure Fund has been submitted for \$1.57 million. This program is effectively an interest free loan repayable over ten years and is designed to support the installation of infrastructure into areas of high growth prior to Section 94 funds being available. An application under this program has also been made for Civic Place Works.

Alternatively as construction will continue into next financial year further funds may need to be allocated to this project in the 2010/2011 Management Plan. Should these funds be sourced from reserves it is proposed that any increase in outdoor dining or advertising revenues be quarantined to the repayment of any reserve that assists in the funding of this project.

Tender and Construction

Council's Infrastructure Services Division have sought expressions of interest from suitably qualified contractors for refurbishment works. A shortlist of Contractors has been prepared and tender documentation will be issued upon the completion of design development. This will enable construction works to commence at the end of January 2010. It is anticipated that construction will take approximately seven months, however this time-frame will need to be reviewed upon completion of design and tender process.

Conclusion

Using a select pallet of materials and a considered layout the upgrade will transform the aesthetics of the mall and maximise the flexibility of the space to provide for a wide variety of uses and events. The incorporation of WSUD principals will contribute to the on-going improvements in the management of water throughout the city. Using the latest technologies to provide the best possible growing conditions the new trees in the centre of the mall will spread to form a natural green canopy over the space for the enjoyment of all. The quality and classic nature of the materials will ensure the mall retains a clean and contemporary appearance well into the future.

Sustainability has been a driver in terms of paving, lighting and tree choice and will continue to be considered in the detailed design of the project.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That:

- 1. Council resolve to adopt the concept design proposed for Chatswood Mall and that this design be developed for tender and construction.**
- 2. a further report be brought back to Council advising of tenders for the refurbishment works.**
- 3. Council resolve to permit advertising on public telephone structures in the mall subject to a further report being returned to Council prior to entering any agreement.**
- 4. a program for ongoing community consultation and information regarding the design and construction activity be implemented.**

<<Insert Link Here >>