



Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association

VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF NELSON BAY

June 13 2011

TRRA acknowledges the benefits which will accompany growth in residential, commercial, retail and tourism developments in Nelson Bay. It believes that the township badly needs a strategy to guide its future development. However, planners should recognize the need to protect the natural beauty of Nelson Bay, including linkages to the waterfront, vistas across the port, and its natural wooded backdrop. Our vision is for quality development of a style and scale which revitalizes the centre. It should maintain the character of a coastal town rather than importing the dense high rise built form common in major cities or in tourist destinations such as the Gold Coast.

An outcome which proves attractive to permanent residents will also bring in the tourist market. Our aim should be to cater for these people's preferences rather than to pull in fly by night, tax dodging investors.

To create a vital and successful town centre we need the focus of a town square as well as nearby cultural features such as galleries, cinema, an outdoor performance space, an interpretive centre and as proposed in the 2030 Strategy, farmers markets.

The growth targets for residential and commercial development must take into account the Settlement Strategy plans for the doubling of Salamander Bay Shopping Centre and major additions to residential capacity in Corlette and Anna Bay. Otherwise we will just add to the rash of vacant shops and empty one and two bedroom apartments we now have throughout Nelson Bay.

Residents, tourists and shoppers, in our view, are attracted by an open, airy, landscaped and sunny ambience, rather than the dense, oppressive big city architecture from which they seek escape. The footpath coffee and dining spaces on Magnus Street have succeeded and point the way to the sense of place we should be striving to create.

TRRA looks forward to a more diverse mix of retail and commercial activities which are supported by planning guidelines that encourage additional permanent residential population and holiday accommodation which is better aligned with visitors' needs. Two to three bedrooms with off-street parking are what the market demands.

The town will need to offer quality specialised shopping, and tourism experiences, such as a conference centre and marine interpretive centre. These would help to reduce the current highly seasonal pattern of business activity.

TRRA has repeatedly called for a comprehensive traffic and parking strategy to be prepared as foundation stone to any plan for the future of Nelson Bay. Our recommendation is for an immediate designation of a by-pass for through traffic to Shoal and Fingal Bays and traffic calming on Government Road and Victoria Parade to facilitate pedestrian interchange between the Town and the Waterfront.

Councillors have asked for an exploration of options for variation of height controls. TRRA has long maintained that building heights should step back from the waterfront so as to preserve view lines across the bay and that if there are to be higher buildings they must be kept to the back of our amphitheatre. Even on the periphery, high rise towers would impact on the wooded backdrop provided by our surrounding hills.

TRRA believes that the following additions and or planning initiatives would help to transform the Bay:

- A high quality hotel and conference centre
- Redevelopment of a new full scale supermarket as a southern anchor to prevent the unnecessary leakage of retail spending from Nelson Bay. This should have underground parking and associated retail and residential functions
- A farmers' market with fresh local and Hunter produce
- An improved transport interchange with reliable real time information and an additional bus stop in the eastern end of town
- Improvement of Apex Park as a multipurpose public open space that can be used for outdoor performances and markets
- Improved pedestrian connectivity including through lively laneways
- A town square in the centre of town linked to the redevelopment of one of the large sites
- Adoption of a theme for the town to be the basis for all signs and logos on public facilities
- Standards for landscaping, signage, lighting, paving and awnings to ensure a high quality sense of place
- Provision of adequate public parking in the Town CBD which can also serve the needs of the waterfront.
- A state of the art centre to present the rich history of Port Stephens and to interpret the marine environment to provide an all-season focus for tourism and education

TRRA believes we need to build on what works well now – for example:

- The Magnus Street precinct with its sunny outdoor spaces, attractive landscaping, unobtrusive traffic management
- Quality retail and restaurants that attract both locals and tourists
- The flexible community open space offered by Apex Park as demonstrated by its use for festivals and public occasions
- The recently redeveloped foreshore with its extremely successful children's play area

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