

# Redfern Business Precinct – Towards the Future

Redfern and Waterloo Chamber of Commerce Business Forum, 6 May 2008

## Key Point Summary

### 1. Broad Directions – Theme and Character

- Edgy, funky, alternative, mixed enterprise precinct with heritage qualities preserved. Not tarted up. 'Tracky-dak' friendly. Artistic and creative, inclusive. Music, visual arts and applied arts. Urban, gritty, interesting, exciting, vibrant. (e.g. Tribeca, SoHo, Meat Packing District in New York).
- The emerging character of Redfern should be authentic and relate to the current community. A place of respect where people look after each other. In addition to developing new opportunities, the Redfern Business Precinct should continue to serve the local community of low-income people (public housing tenants and students) by offering basic services at good value prices. 'Red Fern' – safe and family friendly.
- Indigenous character – strong and positive culture. Redfern could be a destination that is a source of pride. The meeting expressed strong support for initiatives like the proposed Australian Indigenous Cultural Centre and City of Sydney's *Eora Journey* as they could make Redfern unique in Australia and the world. An opportunity for Redfern to be a national centre for the continuing development of Aboriginal culture.
- Redfern could be a beautiful, appealing, safe precinct with interesting shops in attractive streets (flowers and lighting).

### 2. Key Issues/Problems

- Street parking has been reduced by the upgrade. Some businesses report reduced business as a result. Too many loading zones on Redfern Street till 10.00am.
- Empty shopfronts look bad and reduce the retail offer. The meeting raised a number of possible reasons, including high rents and owners holding on for future gain when new developments are realised.
- Shop shutters look bad and convey impression of dangerous area. The meeting noted that some shutters were used by uninterested landlords to protect empty premises.
- Beggars – unpleasant for shoppers.
- Some thought that the needle exchange bus attracts drug users and associated anti-social behaviour. Others thought that the bus meets a valid need.
- There were concerns that the Community Centre proposed for Redfern Street will attract social problems and this will have a negative impact on retail business nearby. It was acknowledged that the Centre will provide necessary services but it should not be located in a struggling business precinct.
- Anti-social behaviour leave rubbish (and worse) in front of shops and cause 'pilfering'/shop stealing.
- Redfern business area does not have a strong physical centre of gravity. The separate elements are not well connected. ATP, the Station, Regent Street, and the two sides of Redfern Street are

all somewhat separate. The 'doughnut' – there is a lot of investment at each end of Redfern Street (ATP/ Eveleigh and the Oval) leaving a vacuum in the middle. The middle needs attention and resources.

- There is a risk that economic development could encourage gentrification and ruin the current character of Redfern (rip out the soul).
- Need to address root issues as well as immediate symptoms.
- Redfern lacks integrated promotion with clear positive reasons to visit.
- Redfern lacks strong 'attractors' that will encourage visitors from out of the area to use local shops and services. Even locals do much of their shopping in other places.

### **3. Actions**

- Establish a long term direction for the future of the business area.
- Devise a plan to remove shop shutters, starting immediately. Explore options for support from City of Sydney and insurance companies. Share the experiences of shops that don't have them.
- Devise a plan to use empty shops in constructive ways, starting immediately (e.g. student projects).
- Talk with owners to discover the reasons why shops and business premises are untenanted.
- Establish a program of community events (e.g. Redfern Festival) that will attract locals and visitors to the area.
- Establish a program of promotions and activities that encourage locals and visitors to come.
- Consider ways to encourage Indigenous businesses to establish in Redfern.
- Explore issues around the location of the Needle Exchange Bus, especially the perspectives of local residents, businesses, health and police professionals.
- Develop better communication networks so that local activities are highly visible locally (e.g. Indigenous Youth Festival planned for end of May should have posters in shop windows).
- Develop better communication networks to share local news (e.g. fall in crime stats mentioned at meeting by Local Area Command).
- Devise a communication strategy that finds good news stories and communicates them regularly and responds to bad news stories with examples of positive news events (e.g. strategy that has helped redefine perceptions of Cabramatta over 10 years).
- Consider how the separate sub-locations (e.g. Regent Street vs Redfern Street) might be encouraged to 'specialise', and develop meaningful ways that linkages can be developed between them.
- Promote Police services such as 'Safer by Design' assessments for businesses. The Local Area Command has the resources to provide this service.
- Consider whether greater use of CCTV would enhance safety and perceptions of safety.
- Encourage local community support for long-range initiatives such as the mooted Australian Indigenous Cultural Centre and developments at ATP/Eveleigh.
- Develop local interpretation and walks, aimed at Sydney Uni students, Sydneysiders and tourists. RWCC could have a presence at Orientation Week.

### **What next?**

The consultants will collate further information and prepare recommendations for future action. A second forum with Redfern businesses in early June will be invited to review these recommendations before the report is submitted to City of Sydney Council.

## **Additional points from the Redfern Waterloo Chamber of Commerce**

### **Key issues/problems**

- Strong consensus that Gibbons and Regent Streets are seen as divisive and dangerous thoroughfares. Better link to the Station is required and an incentive to road users not to fly past but turn into Redfern Street.
- Anti social problems associated with the Waterloo Methadone clinic is a major concern and threat to the viability of local businesses.

### **Actions**

- Need to define the geographic boundaries of the RWCC.
- Explore issues around the location of the Waterloo Methadone Clinic, especially the perspectives of local residents, businesses, health and police professionals.
- Explore the idea of busing in shoppers to Redfern Street as occurs with the Alexandria factory outlets.
- Explore possibility of closing Redfern Street between George and Redfern Streets ala Manly Corso.
- Pick whatever “low hanging fruit” (i.e. simple and cost effective improvements) sooner rather than later.
- Re -design RWCC web site as a portal for Redfern containing on line business directories, news and a tool to rationalise the number of interest and community groups and activities.