

A 3 sites vision for Springwood.

The Blue Mountains City Council recently invited² certain people to discuss options for three Council owned sites in Springwood. The three sites are the Springwood Civic Centre, the "Northern" car-park and the "Southern" car-park.

The Civic Centre site also includes the Springwood Neighbourhood Centre, and Braemar (a heritage building currently operating as an art gallery), Council's library and some Council offices. The Northern car-park is adjacent to the Post Office and contains a building that houses an Early Childhood Centre and enclosed playground fitted out by the community, as well as a Council run public toilet. The Southern car-park is accessible from Springwood Avenue and is contiguous with the old Springwood School of Arts site on part of which has been built a small civic square, and which also contains a capped well which once provided water to the School of Arts.

Each of these sites represents an opportunity for both government and entrepreneurially spirited people to boost business prospects and jobs in Springwood and the lower Blue Mountains for the benefit of the whole community.

Possible use for these sites are suggested here to address a range of needs for new and revitalised facilities in Springwood to serve the local area and, with imagination, some needs of the State and the nation.

Funding to achieve these possibilities needs further investigation and detailed planning. Given the suggestions, some level of government funding is considered necessary and, needs be, inevitable. However, aspects of these proposals properly investigated, planned, marketed and promoted would support financially viable businesses. A detailed feasibility study and subsequent business plan are required to explore the numbers.

Springwood Civic Centre site

The following functions should be accommodated on this site, along with the possibility of adding complementary facilities on adjacent sites.

- Performing Arts Centre incorporating
 - 4 theatres of various sizes
 - Rehearsal spaces
 - All performance and rehearsal spaces to be fully web-cast enabled

² This meeting was held at the old Springwood and District Club premises (now operated by Springwood Bowling Club) on Thursday, 29th March, 2007. Invitees included landowners and business operators with land adjacent to these sites along with major users of facilities on the three sites.

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- Set and Property design, building, hire and storage space
- Costume design, making, storage and hire/sales space
- Sound and lighting design spaces
- Teaching and research facilities and space
- Serviced Offices, targeted at performing arts related small businesses and partially operated as an PA development facility and 'business' incubator.
- General Office space for an 'anchor' tenant or two
- Neighbourhood Centre
- Senior Citizens Centre
- Youth Centre
- Upgraded Library
- New Civic Hall
- Restaurant
- Café
- Tourist and Performing Arts related shops
- Additional parking: car, bus and truck.
- Links to accommodation on adjacent site(s)

The Northern Car-park

This site would be used to add shops and additional space for the expansion / relocation of one of the existing Springwood based IGA supermarkets, or a replacement for one or both of them.

- Parking under by excavating site to at or below level of adjacent railway line
- Shops fronting Macquarie Road
- Space behind shops or on second floor for an enlarged supermarket
- Additional office space on second floor
- Flat roof, grassed allowing 360° views including a glassed Café allowing indoor/outdoor eating

The Southern Car-park

This site has several constraints, one of which is the desire of a large proportion of the community to retain views over the site southwards to 'the bush' from Macquarie Road through the old School of Arts site, an option unique to any of the towns in the Blue Mountains.

- Promote the well on the old School of Arts site a feature as it draws its water from the same aquifer which (probably³) fed the spring first noted by Governor Macquarie in 1814 that prompted him to name the area 'Springwood'. The 200th anniversary of the crossing of the Blue Mountains (1813) is only a very few years away, followed closely by the 200th anniversary of the building of the first road

³ This needs to be researched by an appropriate authority. Given modern ground usage, any output from this source may need to be filtered – another promotable feature!

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across the mountains (1814). In any other country such a significant 'original' feature would be an excellent reason for visitors to be informed and educated. In addition, bottled and sold, this elixir could be a 'nice little earner'.

- A tourist and visitors information centre to contain a diorama of the whole of the Blue Mountains showing the major difficulties the terrain posed for the early Sydney inhabitants that kept them landlocked for 25 years after the establishment of white settlement at Sydney Cove in 1788. Using video and sound, along with computer guided laser pointers to indicate relevant features, tourists could have the geography they may be about to visit illustrated in an overview way that would add to their enjoyment, and safety, as appropriate. Similar visitor information is made available about the selection, design and construction of Canberra at the National Capital Development Commission building on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. Apparently a diorama of the Blue Mountains is housed in the Bush Fire Control Centre near Katoomba.
- A tunnel under Macquarie Road connecting the two developed "car-park" sites may be considered.
- Space may be made available for the Meals on Wheels kitchen and dining room if it is to be relocated from its existing position in the main hall of the Civic Centre.
- Over 3 million visitors go to Echo Point in Katoomba each year. Most travel by bus up the M4 and Great Western Highway. The highway bypassed Springwood in the 1960s (check date), and subsequently tourism in the area has never been a priority for business or consequently for government. Ways to divert a proportion of these visitors through Springwood for a stop & shop should be considered.
- Another aspect of the local ambiance is the fact that Faulconbridge was the home of Sir Henry Parkes, regarded as the father of Federation. One consequence of this was the original development, and continued maintenance of the "Prime Ministers Corridor of Oaks" on the southern side of the main western railway line between Springwood and Faulconbridge. Every Prime Minister since Federation has planted a tree in the Corridor. Unlike the USA, where ex-Presidents have libraries built to house their papers for future researchers to access, there are no similar facilities in Australia. There could be a case worth investigating to establish one central facility here in Springwood to house all ex-Prime Ministers' papers for future reference. It may compliment the Corridor of Oaks, and appeal to a small but discerning group of researchers and (well healed) visitors. Biographical details on individuals, possibly wax models as well as audio and video coverage of their speeches and the times in which they lived and worked may also provide a draw card to a segment of the population. Some may argue that such a facility should be housed in Canberra, if at all, but the National Capital does not draw anywhere near the volume of visitors that do make the trip to the Mountains. Perhaps only a small proportion of these would be interested, but most casual visitors would be unlikely to put Canberra on their 'must go' list just for this type of opportunity. However, a small diversion on the way to a major destination of interest may be more appealing. This needs to be the subject of appropriate market research.
- Bus parking as necessary.
- Overflow exhibition space for the Art Gallery of NSW, The Australian Museum, The Powerhouse Museum or other organisations willing to participate.