

BEGA VALLEY COMMERCIAL LAND STRATEGY

INTERIM REPORT - FINDINGS OF STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

EDEN, 27 AUGUST 2019

1. *What are the natural advantages and strengths of the commercial centre?*

- The availability of local seafood and dairy produce
- The Port of Eden which is an open unobstructed harbour and the environment/natural beauty of Twofold Bay and surrounding forests
- Adventure and eco-tourism opportunities, e.g, the Eden mountain biking trail for all levels of ability
- People who have a long experience of Eden from taking holidays in the area are attracted to retire here. New residents were previous tourists from Victoria, ACT and NSW
- We have a good story to tell new businesses and visitors on cruise ships – the history of the town and the whaling industry
- The location of the town between Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne
- There is opportunity for new businesses to establish in the town as there is little competition
- Volunteers now from Port to town
- Occasional festive events bring benefits and volunteering is supported, e.g. to meet, greet and transport tourists from the cruise ship at the port to the town centre

2. *What, if anything, is challenging development of the commercial centre?*

- Slow residential growth impacts on businesses as commerce follows residential development
- . The E2 zone over Crown land to the west of the town restricts expansion and opportunities for growth. There are large areas of residential land suitable for the expansion of Boydtown which have not been approved
- The town is a product of the 1960s with low quality accommodation and infrastructure is not capable of sustaining modern tourism. There is low population growth and tourists are needed to sustain business. Tourism underpins business but there are few tourists as demonstrated by an occupancy rate of 58%. We need more hospitality businesses such as cafes and restaurants, facilities to attract tourists, high quality accommodation options and higher customer service standards
- The existing streetscape and development standards require attention. There are vacant shops, poorly maintained roads, and no consistent colour schemes. The design of the public realm should be addressed by Council. The variable building height limit of 13 metres, 14

metres and 16 metres across the town centre. Some new housing is not in keeping with the character

- There is expected to be a rapid increase in cruise ships to 80 per annum ships docking by 2023 and a consequent higher volume of visitors. Visitation will increase through credit points gained by docking at Eden or White Bay in Sydney as an alternative to the overseas passenger terminal at Circular Quay. Cruise ships will not contribute much through low spend by occupants unless they can become repeat visitors. The Port of Eden is an international entry/departure point but won't be used as such.
- Slow development of the private marina
- The town has a low socio-economic base with high unemployment, homeless people and drug problems
- The leakage of expenditure to Merimbula due to a lack of a large floorplate supermarket

3. *Given the natural advantages and strengths, how could growth of the commercial centre be encouraged?*

- Raise the building height to a consistent 16 metres for all commercial sites and increase height limits for development in the R3 zone adjacent town centre
- The 1,600 traffic movements along highway is an opportunity, e.g. grey nomads, and we need to divert and attract motorists off the highway to activate the town. We should focus on domestic tourism and grey nomads by having an activated main street
- Improve the presentation of the main street and improve infrastructure such as upgrading the size and capacity of the airport to service tourists, providing parking for caravans, new signage, improved amenities including at the wharf precinct and build rail link from Cooma to Eden
- Enlarge the diversity of employment opportunities and turn volunteer positions into paid employment. Council needs to make it easy to start a business, build new housing
- Provide more shops and activities such as mountain bike trails and walking tracks for visitors on cruise ships. Improve the customer service skills of shop owners in advance of cruise ships

4. *What development principles or approaches are necessary to underpin growth of the commercial centre?*

- Ensure that towns are more collaborative, both within each town and with surrounding towns. Barriers causing parochialism need to be removed. A team effort between business owners and council and a positive attitude are required
- Need to increase the range of retail offerings and diversity employment and business opportunities, e.g. through technology-related businesses and on-line trading such as BirdsNest, to retain residents and ensure expenditure is local

- The town centre public car parking area relies on pedestrian access alongside the Hotel Australasia. Alternative access for vehicles is needed such as alongside the school. Currently the shuttle bus from the Port stops outside the Commonwealth Bank and interferes with people accessing the bank. This is a safety issue and will be worsen with the number of tourists visiting from cruise ships. The shuttle bus stop should moved to be behind Hotel Australasia and tourists then use the pedestrian walkway to access the main street

5. *What are some incentives to stimulate development of the commercial centre?*

- Encourage short-term rental of vacant commercial properties for pop-up shops
- Grant funding for new businesses
- Simplify requirements for development approvals
- Discount developer contributions
- Make it easier to rent vacant shops and support pop up shops