

BEGA VALLEY COMMERCIAL LAND STRATEGY

INTERIM REPORT - FINDINGS OF STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

BERMAGUI, 28 AUGUST 2019

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

- The unique character which is due to its location by the sea and the juxtaposition of open space and main street shops, the beauty of the surrounding natural environment, its small geographic scale with iconic views over the ocean and mountains, and its low key feel in a climate similar to California
- The town has an environmental focus with low level development and low land costs, caring people and young people building businesses
- The location affords easy access to national parks and day trips for tourists. The fishing industry contributes to character and crucial to viability of centre. Fishing tourism relies on proximity to the continental shelf which in turn supports retailers and hospitality. The town is a destination for holiday makers
- The separate commercial areas of the main centre and north Bermagui are complementary and the Fishermans wharf development in between draws visitors
- All the values of a small city in a nice town with amazing people and social responsibility. The centralised commercial area and relatively flat terrain is easily navigable, accessible for pedestrians and bicycles and uncongested. The mix of commercial and recreational activity in close proximity is unique
- There are a variety of businesses offering different experiences with a high number of good coffee shops and restaurants. Small businesses are surviving alongside major chain stores such as Woolworths and capitalising on their drawing power

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

- The height limits – there were varied opinions about whether height limits should be increased and whether the existing low rise, low level character should be retained. The lack of flexibility in planning for the town. Development restrictions and lack of flexibility of uses means village atmosphere is being lost with no variety. Old houses are more difficult to retain. Contrasting views were put to retain the town's character and beauty and unique village feel while allowing growth
- Preventing development that is the same as anywhere else and retaining the village atmosphere and variety of shops. Bermagui is one of the last small coastal villages although

there is no consistent architectural design and some unattractive buildings in the centre. There are threats to the surrounding natural environment

- Traffic and car parking during peak tourist season and lack of physical connectedness. There are few transport options, poor parking and footpaths, a lack of shade and trucks in the main street. The town has been designed for cars not people, with limited options for walking and cycling, lots of stairs, hard and its dangerous to cross the street
- There is limited commercial space and a lack of space for pop-ups, markets, festivals and community events. The separate commercial centres and the wharf commercial development are seen as a challenge due to dispersal of shoppers and the lack of connectivity between all three areas
- There is a lack of housing opportunities, particularly affordable housing, and there are no opportunities for new residential development, and building and materials costs are high. At the same time, there are an increasing number of vacant holiday houses. More residents are needed to sustain the local economy. There are not enough people and low-cost housing is needed to facilitate population growth and generate commercial opportunities. The low socio-economic characteristics of local population mean that many are struggling in terms of housing and services
- There is a lack of Aboriginal representation and no reflection of cultural history
- Community division and lack of communication. Getting consensus in the community is difficult as demonstrated by the streetscaping masterplan
- The seasonality of tourism challenges the off-season viability of businesses and job opportunities. There is a shortage of good quality accommodation for visitors. The Four Winds festival takes place at Easter when accommodation is at capacity regardless of the festival
- There are more young families coming to the area who need accommodation although the retaining youth is difficult as young people leave the area for work and education opportunities. Retaining opportunities for varieties of ages and demographic groups to be involved in the community to ensure diversity
- It is difficult to navigate the red tape of the approvals process which can thwart development. Need business support to navigate the language. There is a lack of clear direction for developers

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

- Enable more residential development in commercial areas and consider mixed use zones adjacent the commercial core with commercial at ground floor level and residential on upper floors. This will soften the edges of commercial development
- Need to promote the town's accommodation, natural assets and events throughout winter as alternatives to peak season as tourism underpins the local economy. Commercial properties

and holiday accommodation contribute to the promotion of tourism through a levy but unregulated accommodation types such as Air BnB do not contribute which needs to be addressed

- Provide a bus shelter, shared pathways and community places for physical connection and to allow people to socialise and connect. Attend to the quality of pathways, steps and pedestrian crossings. Need to encourage active travel and pedestrian and bike amenity
- Address congestion and traffic flows and provide additional car parking

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

- Encourage sustainable development through the use of solar panels on buildings, etc
- Build on existing strengths and retain authenticity and originality
- Protect the natural environment to ensure visitors continue to come and to attract people who use assets outside town but benefit the town
- Keep commercial centres viable and connected

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

- There is currently a parking deficit of 70 to 80 spaces in town. We cannot lose parking on the main street and need to manage and expand car parking opportunities to retain business viability. An alternative view is that fewer cars are preferred in town. Use shuttle buses to transport people from out-of-town parking areas to be run by council
- Connect the centre to commercial development at the fishermans co-operative and to north Bermagui through shared pathways
- Growth in population needs to be in line with needs of commercial centre. This may be achieved by facilitating a mix of commercial and residential development in the centre
- Tourism - upskilling of workers is needed to cater to tourists, marketing the town to attract visitors over the whole year, develop new business initiatives such as adventure tours, golf, fishing and events
- Have a future focus – provide electric car charging and better internet speeds
- Council could waive fees for development applications to attract new development and create affordable housing. Provide support to new businesses by offering guidance and assistance to navigate the approvals process. Clarify what development can go where, for community and developers
- Develop pedestrian amenity of Lamont Street, traffic calming devices, shade facilities, bus shelter, improvements to pavement and steps, and provide pathways and playgrounds as places for people to connect

Out of scope notes

- Disappointed that many commercial property owners were not invited to attend the workshop.
The business chamber is observing to report back to members
- Clarify the character statement for Bermagui
- Encourage the development of solar farms in the area
- Slow development application assessment process
- Aged care may be necessary to accommodate the ageing population