

Newsflash

February 2006

Hope you are refreshed and invigorated after the Christmas break, and that a very happy and healthy 2006 awaits you. The year has barely begun, and already several challenges have arisen for CRA.

Public Housing Development

In an apparent attempt to draw attention away from the Commonwealth Games Village fiasco, Housing Minister Candy Broad announced the Government's intention to demolish about 200 old walk-up public housing units in Rathdowne Street, and replace them with modern apartments. The Government will pay a developer \$50 million, and include 45 units of "affordable" housing on the Queen Elizabeth site in Swanston Street, opposite Melbourne University. In a controversial deal, the Bracks Govt. will hand over four hectares of immensely valuable public housing land (estimated value \$20m) to a \$200m private development of 550 units to be sold for private profit.

It is important to note that there will be no net increase in public housing. There are currently 35,000 Victorians on the waiting list. The Bracks Government's promise in 1999 to increase public housing stock now seems hollow, as stock has actually shrunk. Of equal importance is the loss of 4 hectares of precious open space on the overcrowded housing estate. Priority should have been given to public housing rather than private profit.

CRA has concerns about infrastructure, e.g. Carlton has one small supermarket to serve an ever-increasing population, currently 10,000. Minister Bronwyn Pike in a letter to the 'Melbourne Leader' (18.1.06) assures local residents that the increased housing will not overwhelm facilities. The usual spin! Whilst public housing will not be increased, the additional "550 new privately owned apartments" and the "at least 45 community-managed housing units" will certainly stretch the already strained resources.

If the public-private construction model of the Kensington Estate redevelopment is a "success story" as claimed by Ms Pike, Carlton tenants are in for a hard time. Kensington families were moved well outside the area during a long construction period; private and public housing are not integrated; public housing is poorly located on the site. Tenants have a long list of complaints, including tiny apartments, paper-thin walls, high noise levels.

The World Heritage listed Carlton Gardens / Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show

Since 1996 the World Heritage listed Carlton Gardens have annually been desecrated by a commercial event, the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, which builds large structures and brings heavy earth moving machinery onto the lawns. Because of extensive damage, the Gardens cannot be adequately developed, and run the risk of losing their heritage status. Additionally, the area is fenced off from local enjoyment for a month each year – of particular significance in Carlton where most families have little or no green space at home.

CRA, along with the Carlton Gardens Group and others, unsuccessfully appealed to MCC not to grant a permit for the Garden Show. Concurrently, Council staff from Sustainable Regulatory Services lobbied Planning Minister Hulls to amend the Melbourne Planning Scheme so as not to require planning approval for private events on public parkland. Thus CRA's appeal rights to VCAT were removed. Council's stated reason for removing our right to appeal is that commercial interests would then have the same right, and their coffers for legal battles are deep – surely a limp excuse for removing our democratic rights.

150 years ago our city planners had the foresight to create beautiful parks and gardens. Our State Government now considers these areas as free land, to be sold for development or taken over by commercial interests at will. Royal Park in Parkville is a prime example. Over the past 100 years significant areas have been taken over by Govt. institutions and sports fields, and fenced off from public access. Three years ago a 20 ha area was permanently excised and given over to an extensive private housing development by Singapore based company, Australand (under the guise of a Commonwealth Games village). Recently Health Minister Bronwyn Pike continued this policy by announcing yet another area of Royal Park would be excised for a new Children's Hospital.

Lygon Street Plane Trees

You may have noted several press articles on demands by Carlton Traders that the 180 plane trees in Lygon Street be removed. The headline was "Chop them down" (Herald Sun 13.1.06). The trees drop pollen, claimed to cause hay fever and asthma to some staff and patrons working and dining on footpaths. Memories are short: twenty years ago, eucalypts were removed for similar reasons, in this case because they dropped leaves all year round. Connie Paglianiti, president of the Carlton Business Association, has organized a petition to pressure MCC to remove the trees.

Melbourne Leader (11.1.06) published a survey of restaurant patrons praising the plane trees, their ambience, atmosphere, shade, beauty, blending quality. I have received numerous telephone calls from people living outside Carlton, who voice horror at the possibility of the loss of the trees. Responding to similar reactions, the Business Association is now proposing an alternative plan, to fell the Plane trees, and replace about one-third with Olive trees. *What do you think?*

"Piazza Italia" at Argyle Square

Here is another example of a lengthy struggle by CRA resulting in only partial success. Our efforts have at best achieved a modification of original environmentally destructive plans. The Italian community, claiming Argyle Square was a gift to them from Premier Kennett, had proposed covering the entire northern half with concrete steps and paving, using money compulsorily levied from developers for community resources. CRA objected vigorously. After much heated debate and with the considerable diplomacy of Rob Adams, MCC's Director Design & Culture, and his staff, the destruction was reduced and a piazza designed along genuine Italian lines, (blazingly hot at the official opening on 29.1.06!) and included a surround of young shade trees.

All four of Carlton's historic garden squares have now been substantially paved during the past decade.

Coming Events

CRA Annual General Meeting

Monday, February 20, 2006 Kathleen Syme Building, corner Faraday & Cardigan Sts, Carlton
Time: Business 7.30pm Guest Speaker 8.00pm

CRA needs your input and support. Please remember to renew your subscription and consider joining the committee.

Community Forum

Carlton residents have been invited to participate in a forum:

"Working together for Melbourne – Focus Community Carlton and Parkville"

wtfm@melbourne.vic.gov.au

Wed 22 February 2006, 6-7.30 pm Melbourne Town Hall, Yarra Room, Level 2 RSVP: ph. 9658 9658

Please take this opportunity to talk to MCC Councillors and staff about issues of concern in Carlton.

Greta Bird

Acting-President



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