



MOUNT BARKER
DISTRICT COUNCIL

13 December 2023

Media Release

Council Listens in City Centre Revamp

Mount Barker District Council and Burke Urban Investments have released a revised Master Plan for the first phase of the City Centre Project, influenced by community feedback and detailed feasibility studies.

The partnership will provide community services, office spaces, retail areas, accommodation, and a town square. Adjustments to the plan eliminate an initial proposal for underground and multi-level parking, increasing available public space.

The joint venture, shaped by community input and comprehensive design and feasibility studies, paves the way for an achievable vision that promises to unite locals and visitors in Mount Barker, delivering a catalyst for economic growth.

Kym Burke, Director of BUI, said the plan's adjustments included reduced building heights and on-site parking solutions. In response to community queries, Mr Burke also confirmed that the Council's Civic Building would be Council-owned rather than leased from BUI.

Mr Burke said the plan's natural evolution was influenced by community feedback and site-specific challenges.

"We've responded to the community's voice on several fronts, including reducing building heights, consolidating parking within the site, committing to the preservation of Druids Avenue's trees, and scrapping the planned multi-deck carpark," he said.

The project's first stage will introduce a town square, office buildings for the Council and Community Living Australia (CLA), and a retail section. The site design utilises natural elevations to provide two levels of substantial parking to service the site, with entry from Hutchinson and Stephen Streets.

Council's decision to switch from leasing space to owning premises within the City Centre, a move supported by BUI, promises financial benefits for the Council and provides the confidence to private sector for further investment into the precinct.

Marc Voortman, General Manager Planning and Community, emphasised the long-term financial benefits of this approach.

“Commercial advice has confirmed that adopting this ‘own, don't lease’ approach, will bring more favourable financial and capital advantages to the Council in the long run,” Mr Voortman said.

The success of the project will depend on a balance of open spaces, business presence, and community activity.

Mark Kulinski, CE of Community Living Australia, said locating its office and client facilities for group and social programs within the City Centre was “vitally important to deliver outcomes that benefit people living with disability and the community. This will help to create more opportunities for people with disability to be valued within their communities and improve access to local services.”

To support the project's progression, the Council has updated its engagement plan and anticipates engaging with the community on the community facilities and the final design of the town square in 2024. A Community Reference Group for the City Centre Project will also be established.

Mayor David Leach expressed confidence in the ongoing community engagement and the interim introduction of a temporary ‘Pop-Up Park’ as a foundational step towards the project's completion.

“We are looking forward to engaging with the community further to ensure the successful implementation of the new Master Plan,” Mayor Leach said.

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