

NEWS RELEASE



September 15, 2003

COUNCIL PRAISES (ALMOST) PIERLESS PLAN FOR BEACON COVE

The City of Port Phillip has welcomed today's announcement by the State Government about the future of stage two of Mirvac Corporation's Beacon Cove development in Port Melbourne. Beacon Cove is a joint venture involving the Office of Major Projects and Mirvac.

Mayor Liz Johnstone said that Mirvac's original stage two plan for Beacon Cove had been far too intensive and would have involved alienation of both public space and public rights.

"The council is particularly pleased to learn that the redevelopment of Princes Pier will no longer involve five-storey freehold apartments along its length. Building private apartments anchored into the seabed of Port Phillip Bay could have established an unfortunate precedent for the privatisation of other piers and waterways throughout Victoria.

"It's unfortunate that Princes Pier will be truncated but the cost of restoring it would have been prohibitive. This solution still recognises the pier's significant heritage values while offering exciting opportunities to explore that history further. I am sure our residents will have lots to say during the State Government's consultative process to determine how the pier could be used," she said.

Cr Johnstone said that the council was pleased to see that the project will return money to improve the Port Melbourne waterfront for the public to enjoy.

"The State Government appreciates that the Port Phillip foreshore is enjoyed by all Melburnians, as evidenced by Premier Steve Bracks' clear and decisive action to reconstruct the St Kilda Pier kiosk devastated by fire last week.

Altogether, the State Government decision on Beacon Cove should improve public access and use of the whole area. A widened boardwalk would better link Sandridge Beach to Station pier and beyond. At Sandridge Beach, a council master plan of improvements, approved last year, is being progressively implemented.

“All visitors, international, interstate and local, would benefit from having an engaging waterfront to explore, one which reflects Port Melbourne’s heritage as Victoria’s oldest port and that offers lots of water-related experiences – promenading (or blading or cycling) along the foreshore and pier, fishing, swimming, sailing, wining and dining with views of the port and bay, hopping on a ferry or water taxi and dipping into Port Melbourne’s rich local history and culture.

“Bay Street is obviously a fundamental part of this equation with better links to the waterfront. Instead of a car park at the entrance to Station Pier, there could be a public piazza. Tightened security procedures post-September 11 have pretty much stopped the public promenading or fishing at Station Pier when cruise ships are in port, which is a terrible shame. I hope it will only be short-term,” she said.

Beacon Cove Stage 2 was the largest single development project ever contemplated for the municipality – 679 apartments, including 5 storey apartment buildings on Princes Pier and further apartments on reclaimed land around a 42-berth marina.

Cr Hill said that the announcement puts an end to the prospect of apartments on the pier.

“This is a win for the Port Melbourne community. Public values need to prevail in public spaces. Preservation of public access to the foreshore is a well-established foreshore management principle going back eighty years in Victoria.

“All that’s needed now are the funds to make the Port Melbourne waterfront into a place that all Victorians will enjoy. Modifications to Princes Pier will be substantially lower than the cost of restoring it which enables funds to be allocated for broader waterfront precinct improvements,” she said.

Coincidentally, visions for the Port Melbourne foreshore designed by Deakin University staff and 4th year building and architecture students are on display at St Kilda Town Hall to September 26.

Cr Hill said there are common elements to many of the designs – a promenade along the pier with high-tensile shade canopies, a maritime museum or interpretive centre, a breakwater to create a sheltered marina, a wider and friendlier boardwalk extending from Sandridge Beach to Princes and Station Piers and ferries and water taxis linking Federation Square, Southbank, Dockands, Williamstown, Port Melbourne and St Kilda.

In one design, a remnant of the very end of the existing Princes Pier is left standing, separated from the remainder of the pier by a long stretch of water. In other designs, Bay Street ends in a quay and a public square replaces the current car park in front of Station Pier.

“Community feedback on these designs is crucial to the council being able to present a consistent and well-argued vision to both the State Government and Mirvac for the revitalisation of the area. The Deakin students and our professional consultants have shown us what is ‘conceivable’. We now need to work out what’s ‘possible and desirable’,” Cr Hill said.

Cr Hill said that the Port Melbourne waterfront was also crucial to Melbourne as a whole because of its connections to Webb Dock and Port Phillip’s industrial heartland at Fishermans Bend. “The Port Melbourne waterfront plays a key role in interstate and international freight services. With improved transport linkages, Bay Street could become a popular destination for cruise ship passengers and visitors from all over Melbourne and beyond,” he said.

A pic of one of the Deakin University designs of a truncated Princes Pier is attached.

To look at other Deakin University designs go to:

<http://www.deakin.edu.au/a+b/information/exhibitions.php>

For further information about the Deakin University project, contact Dr John Rollo on (03) 5227 8329 or ajrollo@deakin.edu.au

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