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Increased density is obviously required in our cities. Transformation and renewal are also important considerations and sometimes needed within local communities. It is possible that the Preston market precinct could benefit from both. But we need to retain what works and strengthen it when introducing any change to this site.

And community interests (not private interests dressed up as community interest) should be placed at the top of our priorities when introducing this change. For if the community is ignored and effectively relegated within the planning and building process for the precinct, then a valuable asset is likely to be lost forever.

Change, particularly with such important precincts as this one, should be in the interests of the entire community and not weighted heavily in favour of one sectional interest or group of interests. And it certainly shouldn't be with financial return as the dominant factor guiding the decision-making process.

Losing the uniqueness of the Preston Market precinct, including the variety and range of stall holders, and the community activity, interaction and participation that this stimulates, would destroy a unique asset that belongs to our current community and future generations. It brings us together in a way that strip- or shopping centre trade does not.

Nobody reminisces about walking through Chadstone, Highpoint or Northland Shopping Centres. It's the community market precincts such as the Victoria Market, South Melbourne and Preston Markets that enable this. Likewise, the older back lanes and alleys of Melbourne's CBD are another guide to an approach that should direct our thinking around height limits (at this precinct, 4-5 storeys max), accessibility and character of our built forms.

Box Hill Central is not what is wanted or should be replicated on this site.

If increased urban density is agreed, then this can be accommodated, but must be done with an eye to livability, human scale and world class design. We should have more, not less open space. Why not 50% open-space? Including a mix of open parkland, a lake perhaps, and many more trees. Why not a native botanic garden? This can be done. And would provide both a return to private investors and to the community.

The market itself should be "open", allowing more access to the sun, as appropriate; not covered and built over with parking, a tower, or any development sitting on top.

Development must embrace and enhance the current Market's cultural and heritage significance.


Cars should be housed underground and foot traffic given precedence.

Heights limits should be a mix of 3-5 storeys (with five the maximum).

Housing should be a 50-50 mix of private and social housing that is geared to excellent architectural form and promotes community connection and green space.

Likewise, environmental sustainability should be among the highest priorities: with energy efficiency, tree coverage to improve liveability and reduce summer heat build-up, reduced waste, recycling and use of resources including rainwater, run-off, and grey-water, all to be important considerations (not simply lip-service).

The decision on the final format of this precinct will have ramifications for generations. We should not allow private investors to diminish a precious site with profit the only, or predominant, guiding principle. This is a site that should be so much more.

  
Local resident, 3072

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