

The Redfern Waterloo Plan as seen through the RED Strategy Looking Glass

The RWA has now released the Draft Built Environment Plan (Stage One) for consultation. This plan along with the Human Services Plan (Phase One but not named as such) and the Employment and Enterprise (which we hope is only stage one as there is much left unaddressed), make up the initial Redfern Waterloo Plan (RWP) required under the Redfern Waterloo Act that established the RWA.

We know from the documents that make up the RWP that there are four aspects of human services not yet incorporated into the human services plan. These are services for migrant communities, the aged, people with disabilities and homeless people. Plans for these are to join the plans for services for children and families, young people and Aboriginal people which were in the initial Human Services Plan. Health services seemed downplayed in the initial Plan and hopefully more will follow on this aspect in the second phase.

We also know that the [Proposed Stage Two of the Built Environment Plan](#), subject to the Minister's guarantees to public tenants, will add plans to "revitalise public housing stock, improve the associated public domain, reduce concentration of public housing, increase the local population to establish a more sustainable social mix [and] facilitate the provision of affordable housing, including a shared equity model of home ownership." This work on public housing will add to all the above Plans in determining what will happen on all remaining NSW government land in Redfern-Waterloo.

We now have a reasonable idea of where the RWA is going with the RWP, so we can now look at how to evaluate it. The RWA in their Built Environment Plan (BEP) acknowledge the Plan draws on "earlier work and community consultation undertaken ... as part of the Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo (RED) Strategy in 2003" so we can go back to look at the outcomes of that consultation and compare these with the RWP now taking shape.

Three RED Strategy documents provided the basis for consultants' reports on the RED Strategy. These were - what [the consultants said the community wanted](#) during the RED Strategy consultation, [the core principles](#) agreed with the community and [the major issues](#) to be addressed (which were accepted by the RWPP Community Council and reported to the last RED Strategy Community Form in December 2003). The final document useful for comparison could be the [SMH's leaked cabinet documents](#) which indicated the government's thinking on the Redfern Waterloo Plan in October 2004 when they decided to establish the RWA but we have not gone into this in detail here.

Of the nine major RED issues identified in December 2003, three issues require much more work than is currently evident in the RWP. These areas are

- reduce the impact of regional traffic
- community transport
- enhanced public domain

The SMH papers told us that the government had looked at a number of tunnel options to get the arterial traffic out of the Redfern Waterloo town centre and then recommended a pedestrian bridge from the station to Redfern Street. The RWA Built Environment Plan recognises regional traffic as a major problem that "physically dissects the Redfern Railway Station from the Redfern Town Centre" but it is unable to come up with a solution and concludes "the solution may require a more strategic response which takes into consideration broader metropolitan and regional traffic issues and may not be imminent". (p15) The minimisation of "rat runs" impacting on the local area has also not been addressed.

Transport discussion in the BEP focuses on links to and from the station, but does not address the community issue of linkages for people who live in the area to the station and facilities like "Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and St Vincent's Hospital", or to "regional and local open space", the proximity of which the Plan says makes them "highly accessible" to Redfern Waterloo. In a community in which half the people do not have cars and transport services primarily pass through the area on their way to or from the city, local community transport becomes crucial for those that live here now as well as in the future. Some indicators of a successful linkage are whether you can get reasonably priced frozen peas and ice-cream home before they thaw on public transport or whether you can get to a hospital or open space in a reasonable period of time at reasonable cost if you are aged or infirmed.

The enhanced public domain gains a mention as needing much more work in large part due to the green space that has disappeared in the current draft RWP. The Redfern School oval which the RED people said should be retained as open space even if the school was sold off is not guaranteed on the current RWA proposed maps. The RWA CEO in evidence to Budget Estimates has recognised that "the way we have put the maps for the school site in this plan creates an incorrect impression that that sporting oval could be built over ... so we intend to take those comments on board when we finalise this plan and clarify it."

While it looks like there will be an oval at the old school site the map of the park next to the "Water Tower" in Rosehill Street that the RED Strategy showed as "public open space" in their vision map of how Redfern Waterloo could look has also disappeared. The State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) shows it all zoned for buildings and the BEP shows only a small pocket park remaining next to buildings up to 5 and 18 storeys. The BEP makes no mention of this loss of public open space in an area which is recognised by both the RED consultants and the Council as having very low per capital open space. In addition the BEP makes no provision for additional open space other than the civic square in front of the station and the space which may be able to be fitted in around developments in the height versus Floor Space Ration (FSR) trade off.

Floor Space Ratios (FSR) are the proportion of floor space allowed compared to land area, so 2:1 indicates there can be twice as much floor space as land area (sites allowing mixed use will normally specify a maximum FSR for the site as well as a maximum residential FSR for the site). Height restrictions indicate the maximum allowable heights. Height and FSR interact so at a FSR of 2:1, a building of 4 storeys might only cover half the land area, depending on the design and other development requirements. In this way open space may be created around buildings but unless it is a development covering a large area public space created is usually small and not conducive to many active uses.

Enhanced public domain is not only about open space, it is also about community safety and the amenity of the streets we live in and walk down. Apart from Redfern and Regent Streets, nothing has been said about enhancing the village shopping strips or about the RWA's investment into community safety so that the local people feel comfortable in getting around the area and visiting the planned new shopping strips. The RWA lack of involvement in the ongoing Redfern Waterloo Community Safety Taskforce has hardly been encouraging to those concerned about this aspect of the public domain.

The RED Strategy Major Issues that seem to have been picked up in the RWP are listed below although in some cases we will have to wait a while longer to see what is finally delivered:

- redevelopment of Redfern Railway Station (Plan out later this year)
- creation of pedestrian and bicycle linkages across railway lines
- provision of affordable housing and no reduction in public housing
- a revitalised town centre
- increase in employment opportunities
- the development of the area as a cultural precinct.

One major concern in the BEP is the omission of any articulated vision for the area. While a vision gets a mention in the document no vision is outlined. With the break up of the RED Strategy into three separate parts the BEP becomes primarily a planning document and the broader vision, principles and integration strategy fall between the cracks of the three plans.

If we go back to the RED Strategy Core Principles developed with the community you find that, of its seven Core Principles, the RWA Plan is strongest on three:

- Develop a Sustainable Town Centre to Serve the RED Area
- Capitalise on Redfern station's location in the RED area, infrastructure potential, and position in the Metropolitan rail system to support revitalisation of Redfern Station and Town Centre precincts
- Optimise Social and Economic return from Government Land Holdings

The remaining four Core Principles are in need of much greater attention by the RWA. These are:

- Provide a Safe and Activated Public Domain
- Ensure Social Equity in Public Life
- Foster Community Identity
- Strengthen Community Cohesion

Each of these seven Core Principles identified in the RED consultation contained a number of detailed strategies to implement them and a detailed examination of the strategies associated with each principle shows a number of areas needing improvement. These are generally in line with the RED Major Issues previously mentioned.

These RED Strategy Core Principles arose from the feedback received by the RED consultants to the proposals initially floated by them. Many of the comments recorded in the [RED second presentation](#) as community feedback remain important issues and many are yet to be addressed by the RWA in its Redfern Waterloo Plan.

It is important to remember that in December 2003 the Premiers Department's Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project promised the community that they would work on these proposals and then bring them back to the community for further consultation as a RED Strategy to address the issues raised during the consultation. The issuing of the Redfern Waterloo Plan in its various parts by the RWA is in effect the RED Strategy coming back to the community after a delay of two years. During the delay the government decided to change the implementing body from the local council to the RWA and to do this before they bought back a Redfern Waterloo Plan to the community.

Re-reading some of the RED Strategy documents which are available on the REDWatch website at www.redwatch.org.au/govt/nsw/red/ provides a useful context for considering your response to the Redfern Waterloo Plan. It is of ongoing concern that the government has never released the Cox Richardson Report nor any of the other reports which the NSW Government Submission to the Inquiry into Issues relating to Redfern Waterloo says were produced as part of the RED Strategy. We are sure that these too would help inform the response to the Plan from the diverse communities within Redfern Waterloo that the Plan needs to satisfy.

Geoffrey Turnbull, REDWatch 24th February 2006 www.redwatch.org.au .

Note: Documents underlines are available on the REDWatch website. They are available in text or as black and white images of the presentation slides. Colour images from the RED presentation slides have been added to the RWA maps section of the site at <http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/maps/> .