

Case for purchase
of
2 and 4 Bunya Street
Maleny

June 2004



1 THE COMMUNITY'S COMMITMENT

- The Maleny community has voted for buying the site and creating a park.
- The Maleny community will fund a fair share of the purchase price.
- Substantial donations and pledges have been received in 4 weeks. With more time, the community can raise considerably more funds.
- The park development will be funded through ...
 - Barung Landcare,
 - Lake Baroon Catchment Care,
 - Maleny and District Green Hills Fund,
 - Grants from government and private enterprise funds,
 - Volunteer labour.

No Council funding will be needed.

- Ongoing maintenance of the park will be funded and implemented by the community.

No Council funding will be needed.

- Maleny has a proven record in this area: One stage of the Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve Masterplan is around 50% complete at a cost to Council of \$200 - thanks to community donations of money and labour.

2 COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR SITE PURCHASE AND PARK DEVELOPMENT

The Maleny community has expressed its desire to ...

- prevent the supermarket development,
- buy the site with Council support, and
- create an environmental showcase on the land.

There are several different measures of community opinion on the issue:-

(i) Petition supporting the site purchase

(5,300 signatures on the petition opposing the Cornerstone development, urging Council to buy the land and re-zone it to public parkland. More than half of the signatories live within a 50km radius of Maleny, 11% from within a 50-100km radius and 28% from further afield.)

(ii) The Chamber of Commerce survey

(Strong opposition to the supermarket development from local businesses. The Chamber has financially supported the "I won't shop there" campaign and has forwarded a submission to Council supporting site acquisition.)

(iii) The ABC-TV web site poll

(95% wanted the development stopped and the site purchased.)

(iv) Woolworths phone poll of Maleny residents

(Overwhelming majority opposed to the supermarket development.)

(v) The 22 May public meeting

(98% voted for site acquisition as their first preference.)

(vi) Correspondence to Council

(Correspondence is 23 to 1 in favour of stopping the development and acquiring the site.)

(vii) Letters to State Government

(More than 1,000 people have signed letters forwarded to Queensland Premier Peter Beattie.)

(viii) The Local Area Plan

(A highly consultative process over three years, which determined the best outcomes for this site with support from a clear majority of residents.)

(ix) City Plan consultation

(Numerous submissions requested that the remainder of the site be Open Space. Only one submission - from the developer - requested a return to Commercial.)

(x) The first petition presented to Council

(Over 1,000 signatures supporting acquisition were gathered in one weekend.)

(xi) Anecdotal evidence from the election campaign

(Candidates for Division One, including the elected Councillor Dick Newman, cited this issue as the primary concern of residents, with an overwhelming majority supporting site purchase.)

(xii) Comments from visitors to the site

(More than 200 visitors to the site "embassy" have written comments in the visitors book and 100% say they want the site protected from development. Half say they are motivated by a wish to protect local businesses and local jobs.)

(xiii) Donations of time by volunteers

(Division One residents have donated **4130** man-hours to the community campaign to protect this site. We estimate this time to be worth **\$270,000** in commercial terms.)

(xiv) Donations towards site purchase

(Substantial donations and pledges from residents, businesses and community groups have been received.)

Most community actions are a protest against development by nearby residents who feel a direct impact. The Maleny proposal is backed by a majority of citizens, most of whom are not neighbours of the development site. They are acting for the good of their community, rather than direct benefit for themselves.

3 HOW DOES MALENY TOURISM BENEFIT CALOUNDRA'S COASTAL ECONOMY ?

- Tourism is the Coast's biggest employer.
- 64% of visitors to Caloundra City go to Maleny.
- Seven of the Top Ten activities for visitors to Caloundra City are Maleny activities.
- Of visitors to Maleny who stay overnight, 77% use accommodation in beach locations.
- Maleny, therefore, attracts visitors to Caloundra City - and coastal motels, unit owners, restaurants and shops benefit.
- The supermarket and its traffic issues damage this.
- The People's Park enhances it.

Maleny is the key attraction and coastal businesses benefit

4 THE ONLY "PRECEDENTS" ARE POSITIVE ONES

- Buying the site will not "create a dangerous precedent".
- The precedent of Councils buying environmentally-sensitive land has already been created. Councils around Australia do this - e.g. a Sydney council is spending \$11 million on waterfront land to create parks.
- Caloundra City Council has secured a number of sites for environmental reasons. These include the Sharyn Bonney Reserve, the Meridan Plains property, seven parcels of land adjoining Pumicestone Passage, and land at Bells Creek, Little Mountain, Palmview, Mt Mellum, Glenview, Mooloolah, Landsborough, Glass House Mountains and Balmoral Ridge.
- There is little likelihood of developers "lining up all over Caloundra if Council purchased the site". Developers typically do not want to sell their land. They want to develop it and make a developer's profit (commonly a 30% return).
- Council has already created a precedent for buying this site. Council has indicated on several occasions that it wishes to acquire this land as part of the Maleny Community Precinct process.
- The Maleny proposal creates a wonderful precedent for achieving community assets at reduced cost to Council. If Council backs this plan, it will send a message to all communities: if you are proactive in giving time, labour and money, Council will support you. This achieves community facilities with a lesser impact on Council's budget.
- The Maleny proposal is the product of ...
 - unprecedented community opposition to a development proposal,
 - unprecedented community support for an alternative course of action,
 - and a developer's willingness to negotiate.
- The Maleny proposal achieves another positive precedent - that of Council taking an action to enforce the intent of a region's Development Control Plan. The Maleny campaign is focussed on preserving the spirit of the DCP (gazetted 28/4/2000), which called for open space at this site - it is not an anti-development program.

5 BENEFITS FOR CALOUNDRA CITY AND MALENY

5.1 Water quality: avoiding future cost to the City

Preserving the site as parkland protects Caloundra City's water supply

The land abuts Obi Obi Creek, which risks being contaminated by the proposed Cornerstone development. The Obi Obi flows into Baroon Pocket Dam which is central to Caloundra City's water catchment.

The Caloundra City Council publication *City Living* stated on 9 April 2004: "The CCC recognises that urban development is putting pressure on natural resources, which adds to council's burden ... to manage urban riparian areas in an holistic way," The article spoke of the risk of untreated car park runoff and said: "CCC is working to protect all waterways, including Obi Obi Creek."

The park will assist in dealing with stormwater run-off

Storm water run-off from Maple Street and Bunya Street presents an issue which Council will need to deal with in the near future. Treatment of stormwater soon will need to be to "tertiary standard". The most- favoured device for this treatment is a constructed wetland.

A constructed wetland requires a large flat open space, such as 2 & 4 Bunya Street. It also requires impermeable soils or a liner designed for the purpose. There are few other places near Obi Obi Creek where such a treatment device can be built. A device could be constructed and integrated into the proposed park, providing another habitat and possibly an educational tool for schools.

A constructed wetland of this type exists at Croudace Bay within the Lake Macquarie City Council area. That council has published a 28 page education kit to encourage schools to visit the facility to learn about stormwater treatment.

5.2 Traffic issues: avoiding future cost to the City

Council faces future expense in dealing with Maleny's traffic problems

Maleny already has major traffic issues along Maple and Bunya Streets, particularly at peak school times. As Mayor Don Aldous has stated, the proposed Cornerstone development would exacerbate these and create a danger to Maleny children.

The Cornerstone development would generate heavy traffic volumes not only at the site but in connecting roads up and down the range. Traffic problems will force Council into expensive remedies, such as a one-way traffic system and/or edge-of-town parking.

A park on the 2 & 4 Bunya Street land represents a traffic-neutral result.

5.3 Community groups: avoiding future cost to the City

Funding for sports teams and community groups

Most sporting and other community groups in the Maleny area operate without making demands on the Council purse because they are generously supported by local businesses.

The experience in towns and suburbs throughout Australia demonstrates that small local businesses die following establishment of major supermarket chains. Rob Parker, president of the Maleny Chamber of Commerce, believes that many hundreds of thousands of dollars in support from local businesses to community groups, including kids' sports teams, will be lost in the years following establishment of the proposed supermarket.

This will create pressure on Council funding to allow these groups to continue their essential activities in the community.

5.4 Community empowerment: avoiding future cost to the City

A model for Council-community partnership with little demand on the City budget

Supporting the land purchase demonstrates Council's responsiveness to community wishes. It creates a model for community empowerment and Council-community partnership. It demonstrates to other communities within Caloundra City that if they are prepared to be proactive in planning, fund-raising and ongoing maintenance of projects, the Council will be supportive. This will reduce pressures on future Council budgets.

5.5 Economic/tourism benefits

Protecting the economic integrity of Maleny

Maleny's distinct rural character attracts tourists from Brisbane and elsewhere, directly enhancing Caloundra City's economy. Tourism is the greatest generator of jobs and economic benefit in our region.

The Sunshine Coast is more dependent on tourism than any other Queensland region (Tourism Queensland surveys). 20% of all employment in the region is tourism-related. This is the highest proportion of tourism-related employment in Queensland.

The Hinterland is the single most-visited part of Caloundra City: 64% of visitors to the City came to the Maleny region. (The Caloundra Visitor Survey, updated in January 2004.)

The Top Ten activities for visitors to Caloundra City include: Go on a walk, visit Mary Cairncross, visit a national park, go to a café, visit markets, visit an art/craft shop and visit the mountains. These activities relate directly to the Maleny/Hinterland experience for visitors.

The Top Five motivations for visiting Caloundra City include: To enjoy the peace and quiet of an uncrowded destination, to experience nature, to relax and rejuvenate, and to spend time with my partner. These motivations all relate to the Maleny experience for visitors.

Visitors to Maleny primarily come from South-east Queensland, 60% are day-trippers and 82% arrive by private car. This is relevant to Maleny's concerns about the traffic impacts of the proposed supermarket at the entrance to the town. Visitor books in Maleny confirm that most of our tourists are seeking to escape the congestion and traffic of the city.

Maleny's tourism economy is based on its village character, historic streetscape and green hills backdrop. The Chamber of Commerce survey shows local businesses fear a supermarket and carpark on the entrance to the town will damage tourism, both visually and by creating traffic snarls at the entry point. They also fear many local businesses will be forced to close, replicating the experience in other towns around Australia. Research shows that 1.7 jobs are lost in the local economy for every one job created by a major supermarket.

Half of those who have signed the visitors book at the development site say they wish to see local businesses and local jobs protected. More than 200 have signed the visitors book and all want the site protected from development.

Preserving 2 & 4 Bunya Street from development removes the threat to local businesses, with economic consequences throughout the community:-

- The jobs created by these local businesses remain intact.
- Profits from local businesses remain in Maleny and circulate within the community.
- Profitable local businesses support sporting groups, community groups and charities.

Tourists seek environment, less crowding, less traffic

The Caloundra Visitor Survey finds that two of the three most popular aspects of Caloundra City are "hinterland/mountains" and "landscape/natural environment". Visitors also rate "parks/bushland/greenery" and "peace/quiet/not over-crowded" very highly.

Leading motivations for Maleny visitors include "to enjoy the peace & quiet of an uncrowded destination", "to experience nature" and "to experience local culture and heritage".

Also relevant to Maleny's situation is the Caloundra Visitor Survey's results for "suggested improvements" to the City's tourism appeal - visitors want restrictions on development, less crowding, less traffic congestion and improved parking.

Visitors to Caloundra City want to see "no more development", "restrictions on high-rise" and "less development/not like Gold Coast". These are the Top Three responses in the Caloundra Visitors Survey on "how you would like to see Caloundra City develop in the next five years". Visitors to the Maleny region are particularly strong on these issues.

Visitors to the Maleny region (when compared to visitors to Caloundra City generally) are far more likely to go on a walk, visit a park, visit markets, visit craft/art shops, and go to a café

(Caloundra Visitors Survey). This relates directly to the Maleny experience and to the environmental showcase park proposed by the community.

The proposed park has the potential to achieve the following advantages to Maleny's tourism economy and Caloundra City tourism generally:-

- An entrance statement befitting a town that thrives on tourism.
- A tourist attraction in its own right.
- A venue for tourist information, benefiting the whole region.
- An entry point to the Obi Obi walk.
- A potential venue for small-scale events in keeping with town's image and character e.g. local produce markets, craft markets, art exhibitions, musical performances.
- The potential to generate visits and economic benefit similar to Mary Cairncross Park.

5.6 Environmental benefits

The park will create a "green belt" pathway for wildlife movement. It would also preserve the platypus habitat which has attracted national media attention

It maintains the last bunya tree in Bunya Street, which has historical significance and, in conjunction with other park features, tourism potential.

The park will be a showcase in local government/community management of creeks through towns, highlighting the restoration and conservation of riparian native vegetation.

There is an opportunity to create a learning centre for sustainability - a model for future councils, governments, and communities.

6 FEASIBILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT/MAINTENANCE

6.1 Components of the Maleny Peoples' Park

It is envisaged that the park will provide:

- I. A refuge, a retreat and sanctuary for locals, visitors and wildlife.
- II. A performance space and market place.
- III. A corridor for wildlife.
- IV. A pedestrian walkway from Bunya Street to the planned Obi Obi Creek footbridge, leading to Gardners Falls and the Great Walk (State Government project under construction).
- V. A history trail (events impacting on the site from pre-history to the present day).
- VI. An ecologically sustainable open space, to remain in public ownership for posterity.
- VII. A visitor information centre.



6.2 Park development costs

The costs of developing the people's park will be met by:

1. Barung Landcare
2. Lake Baroon Catchment Care
3. Maleny and District Green Hills Fund
4. Grants from government environmental programs
5. Grants from private enterprise funds supporting community projects
6. Donations from the community
7. Volunteer labour from within the community

6.3 Models for community park developments

The development of community parks of this kind has many precedents throughout Australia. Three examples are:-

- Ceres Community Environment Park:** A 4 ha city farm initiated in 1982 on an old tip site under the jurisdiction of Brunswick Council in Melbourne. The Council has granted a site lease to the community. It is funded through the park's Education Programs, project grants from State and Federal Government, trust funds, sponsors and memberships. Supporters include members, volunteers, philanthropic trusts and government bodies. 60,000 students visit the site each year.
- Northey Street City Farm:** A 3 ha park in Windsor, Brisbane, which has been developing for over 10 years. It benefits from tremendous community input. Brisbane City Council has given 'Support In Kind' through free water, power, excess mulch and tools. It has given Council an ethical place to dispose of excess prunings and organic waste. A formal lease is currently being negotiated.
- Caboolture Community Garden:** A 6,000 sq.m. park in Watt Street, Caboolture. Community input has allowed the land to be developed for Council and less slashing is needed than before as much of the area is now covered by productive gardens. The only cost to Council has been \$500 for water to be connected.

6.4 Ongoing maintenance costs

The ongoing maintenance requirements of the park will be met by volunteer labour and income generated from visitors to the park.

There is considerable precedent for this in Division One: the cost of maintaining Council assets in the Maleny region is low compared with the coastal areas, because of the high level of community spirit and involvement.

A *Sponsor A Tree* program has been suggested. Sponsors pay the cost of buying and planting a tree with subsequent payments for park maintenance. A plaque honouring the tree's sponsor can be discretely placed by the tree.

6.5 The Visitor Centre

The Malanda Falls Visitor Centre has been examined as a possible model for the Maleny facility. Maleny's site has a similar riverside setting.

Malanda Falls Visitor Centre has a series of interpretive displays, including "The Volcano Room" which presents the geological history of the region, a "Touch 'n Learn" display in the "Rainforest Room", a cultural display by local indigenous people, a pictorial display by a local historical society, a book & video reference library and displays of regional information.

A feasibility study for creation of a Visitor Centre is attached.

6.6 Income from the park

The park presents a number of income-earning possibilities:-

- I. A small public building with visitor information centre and sales of local crafts.
- II. Platypus viewing feature.
- III. Naming rights for the commercial building.
- IV. Bus tours to the park.
- V. Donations from park visitors.

Based on figures for Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve for calendar 2003, the park could attract 3,000 people per year in school tours. At \$4 per head, this would raise \$12,000 per year.

We estimate that donations by visitors to the park would raise \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year.