

Ideas for The Future Boundary Street Precinct

West End Centre is in the midst of a dramatic change with a near doubling of shops through new shopping Centre developments nearby. Boundary Street is the traditional main street of West End: The heart of the Kurilpa community. How will the Boundary Street Precinct thrive amongst this change? How will the traditional main street continue to offer its distinctive character and shops?

Local landscape architect John Mongard in conjunction with the University of Queensland and Kurilpa Futures ran a 6-month co-design process to engage with the local community and traders. Over thirty town planning students collaborated with Kurilpa Futures and John Mongard to facilitate a community workshop and conduct a door to door trade survey. The students then developed a series of neighbor revitalization plans.

A community workshop was held on 5th August 2019 at A.H.E.P.A Hall on Boundary Street, West End. Over 100 hundred local residents and traders attended the workshop, including local, state and government representatives. The workshop was well attended by members of numerous community groups including WECA, Micah and Community Plus. A door to door survey was conducted along various shops on Boundary, Vulture and Russell Streets.

A range of issues and ideas were developed for maintaining a vibrant Boundary Street. The purpose of gathering and distilling these ideas is to offer initiatives and direction to Council and to the local traders based on the collective visions of the local residents.

Summary:

Local residents strongly support and value the main street and its traders. The Centre has always been a hub for an eclectic mix of shops and community facilities: residents do not want this unique character to be lost.

West End is a unique retail offering in Brisbane and attracts visitors as part of an authentic main street experience in Brisbane city. Pressure from increasing cars, residents and new shops nearby is causing stress to main street traders. Over time, some of the shops have become vacant and convenience shops replaced by cafés and restaurants. The Centre has developed strong nighttime activity. Increasing commercial rents and competition for parking have placed additional pressures on traders and covid-19 has substantially impacted street sales.

The Boundary Street Precinct can stay real by focusing on its unique place and trader qualities: a focus on the creative, green and cultural character which residents love.

Main themes emerging from workshop groups:

Traffic and transport – parking

- Develop and implement a Traffic Management Plan
- Traffic calming techniques and some car-free spaces
- More parking spaces for business precinct
- Re-routing of buses from Boundary Street
- Improve pedestrian safety

Character and heritage/buildings

- Preservation of character architecture
- Maintain height limit of new buildings in the precinct
- Greater compliance with building regulations and planning scheme
- Place-making initiatives
- Greater use of sustainable building materials and technologies
- Adaptive reuse of available spaces

Vegetation, street trees and shade in public spaces

- More shade trees on Boundary Street
- Wider participation in maintenance of street vegetation eg. traders, residents
- Combinations of street furniture, shade trees, water fountains, and roadside kiosks to improve amenity in summer
- Greater use of fruit trees in the street
- Green spaces for public activities
- Climate responsive design – planning for adaptation to heat
- Green walls and rooftop cooling
- Community gardens
- Create “pollinator pathways” through community garden initiatives

Affordability and rent

Issues

- Lack of affordability
- Decreasing income

Initiatives

- More local patronage
- Pop-up leases
- Removing cost of street furniture (table fees)
- Affordable leases

Economics, social enterprise

Issue

- New development decentralizing commercial space causing retail leakage from Boundary Street – retail closures

Initiatives

- Revitalize main Boundary Street precinct
- Commercial precincts with unique identity
- Activate empty shops by allowing pop-up leases
- Mixed use and affordable commercial spaces
- More utility shops eg. hardware, grocery, fruit and veg
- Large, warehouse type spaces for market vendors – flexible retail spaces
- Encourage more local patronage
- Establish a Boundary Street website for information and promotions

Arts and culture

- Creative workshop areas and public spaces
- Opportunities for community events and interaction
- Greater Indigenous creative opportunities
- Collaborative art spaces
- Pedestrian “Dream Trail” connecting historical places in the neighborhood.
- Creation of “yarning circles”
- Public art/sculpture

Parks/outdoor spaces

Issues

- Maintenance and cleanliness
- Social cohesion and diversity

Initiatives

- Spaces for community activities e.g. temporary art spaces, pop-up vendors, open-air events
- Wider participation in maintenance of street vegetation e.g. traders, residents
- Accessible public facilities and braille trails
- Night markets with opportunities for music/performance
- Activate laneways for community gatherings
- Shared responsibilities in maintaining the precinct
- Greater use of recycling bins/facilities
- Use of bollards for temporary street closures e.g. public events

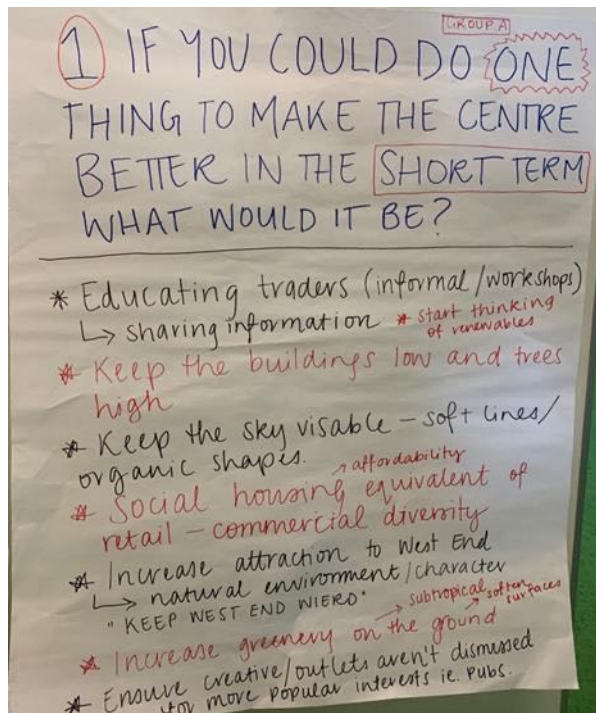
Vision for the Future

- A shared Vision Statement and clear objectives
- Shared meeting and workshop spaces
- Creative arts spaces/studios
- Multicultural and mixed use
- Mixed use and affordable commercial spaces
- Boundary Street as a “one-way lane”
- Unified elements – flowing green spaces

Workshop questions:

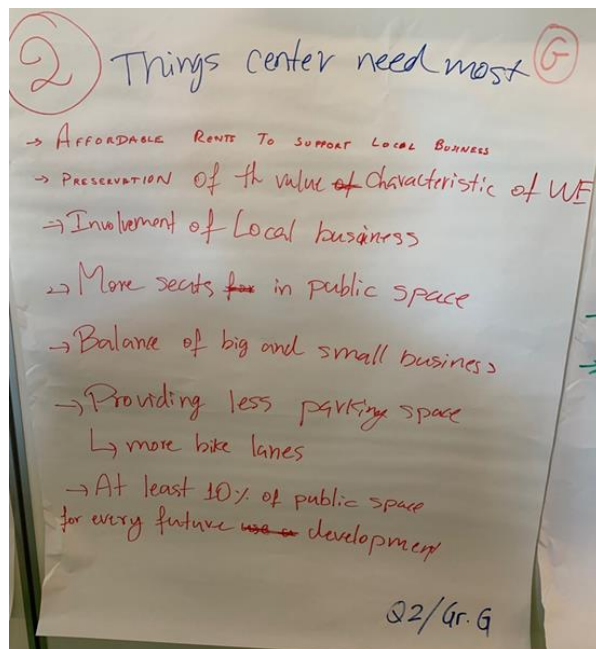
Q1: If you could do one thing to make the West End town centre better what would it be?

- Traffic calming techniques and some car-free spaces
- Re-routing of buses from Boundary Street
- Develop and implement a Traffic Management Plan
- Activate empty shops by allowing pop-up leases
- Encourage more daytime use
- More shade trees and greenery on Boundary Street
- Create “yarning circles”
- Public art/sculpture
- More utility shops eg. hardware, grocery, fruit and veg
- Affordable rents
- Create “pollinator pathways” through community garden initiatives
- Creative workshop areas and public spaces
- Accessible public facilities and braille trails
- Activate laneways for community gatherings
- Share information with and between traders
- Keep West End weird!



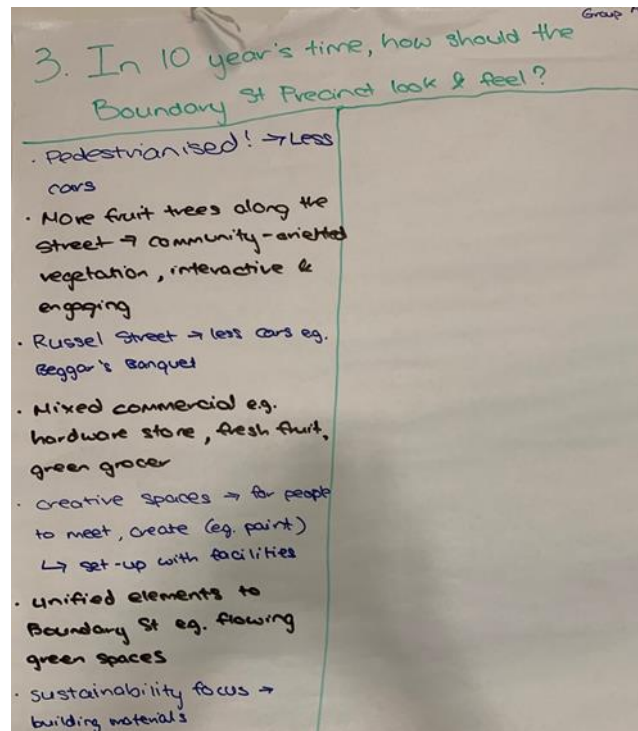
Q2: What are some things that the centre needs most?

- Seating, trees and shade
- Larger library for community interaction
- More community hall and gathering spaces
- Combinations of street furniture, shade trees, water fountains, and roadside kiosks to improve amenity in summer
- Mixed use and affordable commercial spaces
- Allowing different stakeholders to participate in the planning process
- Braille trails
- Presentation of cultural diversity
- Collaborative art spaces
- Core retail and basic shops
- Community night market
- A promotional website
- More green spaces



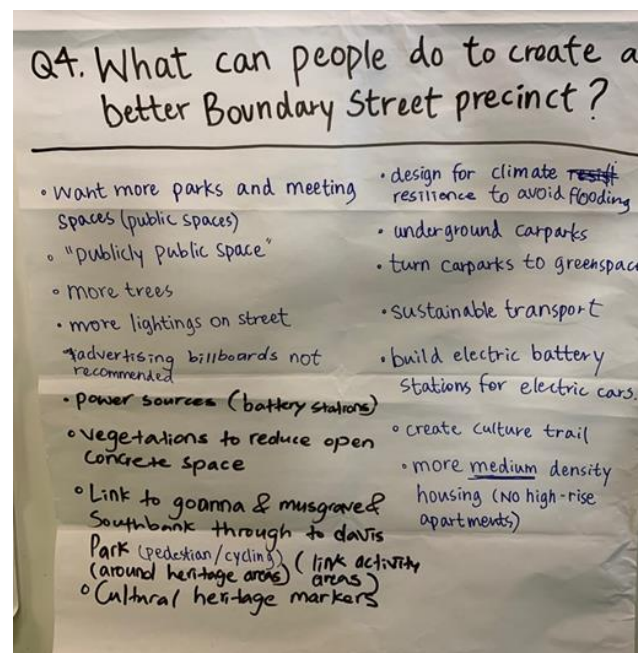
Q3: In ten years' time how should the Boundary Street precinct look and feel?

- Multicultural and diverse
- Unified elements – flowing green spaces, community gardens
- Shaded, green walkways, bikeways and streetscapes
- Mixed and affordable commercial spaces
- Traffic and parking is managed to maximize access, safety and pedestrian movement.
- West End, particularly Boundary Street, is safe at night.
- Cultural trails telling local history and connecting historic places in the neighborhood
- Indigenous art and culture is celebrated
- Night markets, live music and arts performances
- Local businesses are prioritized over chain stores
- Many shops support basic needs of residents
- Wide range of sustainable technology applications in buildings and services
- Integrated public places that are enjoyed by all age groups
- Shared meeting and workshop spaces
- Creative arts spaces/studios
- Building height in the precinct, and in surrounding streets, blends with, and does not compromise neighborhood character



Q4: What can people do to create a better Boundary Street Precinct?

- Shop locally and support local services
- Get involved in art projects and community service initiatives
- Retrofit Boundary Street for heat reduction
- More plants and art on Boundary Street
- Provide more market stalls such as fruit/vegs, fish
- Encourage landowners to charge affordable rents
- Use design to make the precinct unique and memorable
- Establish a "Boundary Street" website
- Link activity hubs in the vicinity with pathways/bikeways
- Redesign Boundary Street as a "one-way lane"
- Use vegetation for shade and improve air quality
- Promote interaction with a community street library
- Build battery-charging facilities for electric vehicles



What the shop traders say:

Q1: If you could do one thing to make the West End town centre better what would it be?

- Car parking; more of it and more flexibly regulated.
- Public transport
- Make rents more affordable for local traders
- Have a greater mix of shops
- Provide more recycling bins
- Upgrade public facilities
- Reopen the police station
- Surveillance
- Clean the street

Q2: What are some things that the centre needs most?

- Free parking
- Protection of heritage
- Public toilets
- Security and surveillance
- Vegetation along the street
- Public transport
- Better maintenance by council (cleaning)
- Public art
- Promotion of West End' s uniqueness
- Traffic management
- More community spaces
- Limits on liquor licencing
- Police station and presence
- Better footpaths

Q3: In ten years time how should the Boundary Street precinct look and feel?

- Vegetation around streets
- Preserved heritage and character
- More pedestrians, fewer cars
- Smaller, independent shops
- A welcoming and friendly place
- An artistic and cultural presence
- Clean with good facilities
- Tramway – light rail line

Other comments

- Boundary Street precinct is affected by continuing growth of retail outlets in new development, decentralizing local economic focus and initiating decline
- Economic focus should be returned to the main precinct
- Boundary Street Precinct should be revitalized to attract more daytime activity to enliven the street
- West End should retain its “quirky” character – distinctive streets/lanes and shopping precincts with their own identities
- Need a better connection between Vulture and Boundary Streets

- West End now has a distinctive daytime/nighttime culture

Supporting Information

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A. *“When the Living Is Good” A day in the life of Amelia, A Typical Kurilpa Resident of 2040.*
by Phil Heywood

B. *Change Is Happening for West End* by Michael Major

C. Workshop Agenda

A. "When the Living Is Good" A day in the life of Amelia, A Typical Kurilpa Resident of 2040 ***by Phil Heywood***

Throwing open her window to greet a beautiful August morning, in the year 2040, Amelia is welcomed by a colourful patchwork of medium and low-rise buildings clustered around small open spaces, all enclosed within the great loop of the busy Brisbane River.

Population has more than doubled in the last twenty years to reach the population cap of 50,000, while good planning has kept heights of new buildings down to eight to twelve storeys. A green net of play and ornamental spaces and community gardens links the magnificent fig trees of Orleigh Park across the peninsula to the grassy slopes of Dutton Park.

Recent development has reinforced Kurilpa as the city's arts, creative industry and entertainment hub. Cafes lining Boundary, Montague and Russell Streets throng with the design professionals, performance artists and many ethnic citizens for whom the area is famous. Hundreds of home occupations across the peninsula connect direct to their own global networks

Boundary Street's mix of daytime shopping, "third place" venues and nighttime entertainment link to the riverside cultural and resort focus of the South Bank and Stanley Street Precinct along the elegant Russell Street Boulevard, skirting but not intruding on, the traditional Aboriginal cultural focus of Musgrave Park.

Close relations with tertiary education and research make Kurilpa the place where the local universities' staff and students apply their social and educational research.

Now that through traffic is confined to Gladstone Road, Kurilpa has become a peaceful residential neighbourhood, with the city's highest levels of walking and cycling along its planted boulevards and greenways, to dine, shop and enjoy the active pleasures of unhindered movement. The green net provides attractive spaces that keep local residents fit, healthy and actively involved. The peninsula is again a peaceful living space well linked to all parts of the busy metropolis, performing its key role as a unique creative suburb.

The mix and pulse of the area's vibrant cultural life has intensified. Partnerships between governments and community housing associations have maintained generous supplies of affordable and emergency housing for local people and international arrivals whose energy and cultural range have strengthened Brisbane's place in the global economy, and safeguarded the presence of Aboriginal people and their art, triggering partnerships to ensure new developments combine social mix with design quality.

Kurilpa still combines roles as the city's reception area, creative hub and hi-tech incubator, while providing a much-loved home for nearly fifty thousand residents, mindful of its past and confidently creating an inclusive future with original dwellers. Now, well linked to all parts of the busy metropolis, it's both Amelia's place and a bustling metropolitan hub.

B. Change Is Happening for West End

by Michael Major

An expert's advice on how to protect the 'essence' and 'character' of West End for increased wealth and a thriving community. Darwin said the survival of a species is based on its ability to adapt to change, not necessarily being the fittest. To that you can add, there are only two things in life that are certain. Paying taxes and that there is no certainty in life.

Changes...

One thing is certain however, change is happening for West End. It's predicted 40,000-50,000 people are expected to move into West End over the next 5 years.

Nothing is going to stop this.

West End must adapt to survive if it's to retain some semblance of its uniqueness of spirit. To resist the change, will result in a slow decline to extinction from what the West End community knows itself to be today. Fiddling around the edges saying, *'let's have cleaner streets, better public toilets, better security, better parking etc'* are all very important, but these in themselves do not fundamentally address the changes West End has to make if it is to survive and thrive. To not survive would be a lost opportunity. This just can't happen. It can't become yet another anonymous, ubiquitous suburb lacking local character. West End is too special on so many fronts.

Challenges...

And yes, there are real challenges which many may seem difficult to overcome, such as:

- Seemingly indifferent landlords
 - o Rising rents/poor or no building maintenance
- New residential and commercial developments that threaten the character of West End
- Existing residents and retailers being forced out by the rising costs
- New residents having different aspirations potentially to the incumbents
- Tenuous council support and engagement.

The list is probably extensive. With such challenges, why bother? Why not just throw the towel in and roll over?

Uniqueness...

But there's something about West End that makes it worth fighting for; not just for the West End community, but for the wider community of Brisbane and visitors.

Its uniqueness lies in its:

- fiercely passionate community
- history which is worth protecting for today and future generations to come
- easy proximity to the CBD
- real community authenticity
- eclectic character - one of the few Brisbane suburbs left that's truly distinctive
- present mix of retailer tenants – there're not many franchises or managed chain stores
- ethnic diversity

- diversity of styles and scale of the built environment in Boundary Street
- diversity of sophistication within the built environment – from the sleekness to the grittiness - not everything is obvious, beautiful or predictable.

For someone visiting Brisbane, Boundary Street in particular, retains some of the characteristics of ‘old’ Brisbane. There are many places around the world that visitors stream to, to immerse themselves in the city’s character environments. Places like New Orleans’ French Quarter, Barcelona’s Las Ramblas, Hong Kong Markets and dare I say it, Paddington in Sydney, are just a few examples!

These places aren’t Disneyesque – they’re real and authentic built over years. Go to The Grove in Los Angeles, if you want a Disneyesque shopping experience.

Solution...

The fundamental solution is to start with full collaboration by all interested parties. This can include, but not exclusively: -

- Residents, existing and new
- Community groups
- Retailers
- Building owners/landlords
- Brisbane Council
- State Government

Collaboration...

If collaboration is not achieved, everything else going forward is just academic.
If collaboration is to be achieved, then everyone must benefit.

Why would the existing building owners/landlords and their families, who no longer live in West End be interested? It seems, on the surface, that there’s no point investing in their buildings if they can’t increase their rents. And why would the Brisbane Council or State Government invest in West End? What’s the upside except to win some votes?

The big picture...

The answer lies in the big picture. And herein lie the compromises that all parties must agree to when it comes to collaborating. For collaboration to be successful everyone must win even if it means everyone has to compromise to some extent. It’s the way of the world. There can’t be a ‘we win, you lose’ mentality. There’s no enduring positive solution when this happens.

The big picture is understanding what the challenges facing Brisbane are, and identifying one of the challenges that West End can be a solution for.

Stay one more night...

For argument’s sake, let’s say visitor length of stay in Brisbane is a challenge. For Auckland in New Zealand, this was a similar challenge. Auckland is the gateway to the rest of New Zealand, similarly Brisbane is a gateway to the rest of Queensland. Over the years, Auckland introduced

more things and promoted more things that can be done in Auckland before visitors departed for the rest of New Zealand. They encouraged visitors to stay at first one night, then two nights, to spending a week in the Auckland region. This is the same for Brisbane; the zip line in Mount Coot-tha, for example, was originally conceived (in part) for the specific purpose of providing another reason for staying an additional night in Brisbane. The Queens Wharf development is another example. Ironically, most of the things being conceived can be experienced pretty much anywhere in the world, they're not unique to Brisbane per se.

This is where West End comes in. Here within easy walking distance from South Bank is a slice of Brisbane and Queensland history virtually unchanged. How many visitors to Brisbane wouldn't be interested in exploring West End with its rich history, its rich diversity of cultures, rich and poor living and working together 'cheek by jowl'? West End is the living embodiment of an authentic community.

What's in it for everyone...?

Its indigenous spirit, its eclectic character has remained effectively the same for decades if not for thousands of years! This spirit, this essence is about community, family, a place where people gather and care for each other.

Family is of primary importance to so many cultures and there are so many cultures living and working in West End who value family first and foremost.

West End has the potential to provide another reason to stay another night in Brisbane.

Brisbane Council and State Government benefits...

For Brisbane Council and the State Government, this might be a benefit that is sufficiently strong enough for them to step in and introduce various inducements to the building owners/landlords to invest in their buildings and maintain or reduce their rents. Brisbane Council and the State Government may also support the 'protection' and revitalisation of West End providing funds for the public spaces.

Privately owned buildings and landlords' benefits...

For the privately-owned buildings and landlords, these inducements may, from a pragmatic perspective, be enough for them to re-invest, but there's no real guarantee. What is more likely is appealing to their values, their beliefs etc. Could it be for them about protecting their family's future with a steady income stream? Could it be about creating greater wealth for their children? What's important to them?

Corporate building owners and landlord's benefits...

For any of the corporate building owners/landlords, the benefit lies in making easier residential sales, attracting better quality retail tenants with 'lower sweetheart' deals and having a timeless development that doesn't get caught up in the fickleness of market short term trends.

Retailers' benefits...

What's in it for the retailers? Well this is more obvious. If greater numbers of people are coming to West End, and in particular Boundary Street, this means a higher footfall of potential customers walking past their shop door. All they have to do is to encourage them inside to browse. And it stands to reason, the greater number of people walking past, the greater the probability of people walking in.

Something very special...

There's another value to consider that is also very powerful. This is the sense of pride - pride in what has been achieved, pride in being part of a special community, pride in contributing to others. Nothing gives greater pride to an individual or a community than feeling they're making a difference, however big or small.

Making a difference can be done in so many ways. Boundary Street, West End could make a fundamental difference to the lives of the people who live at West End, to people who live near and far who come to visit and for Brisbane as a whole. To achieve this would be something really special for everyone involved, particularly the key stakeholders I've mentioned already. A sense of pride that could be carried through from generation to generation.

This doesn't happen easily. To truly make a difference, there has to be a bold inspiring vision as I stated in my talk *Thriving precincts, thriving retailers*. No dipping your toes in the water here - you must be bold and fully commit.

Bold inspiring visioning...

A bold inspiring vision can start with questions such as:

- what is the one word, the one phrase that you want West End to be known for?
- what is this overarching theme that captures the essence, the spirit of West End that everyone is inspired by and can own?

This must come from all of you collectively and collaboratively. Not from me, not from anyone else.

You may want to consider ideas that are related to the history of Boundary Street in its very name. Could West End be known for breaking boundaries, breaking stereotypical thinking – a place that new thinking, provocative thinking occurs.

Another idea could be – that West End be known for 'collaboration' as a work ethic, a lifestyle ethic?

A third idea could stem from the fact West End is a potpourri of cultures. Could the overarching essence be 'fusion'? The melting pot of ideas.

How would all these ideas (and I'm sure there are many more) be expressed physically throughout the public spaces perpetually as well as through all of the business offerings in a bold, inspiring way? What events could be put on each year as a ritual that people come to in

numbers? There's already the Kurilpa Derby which attracts people. What else can be done that fits under your chosen overarching theme?

Certainly, the UQ students will be developing ideas for all of you to discuss. This will help your collaborative thinking too.

The opportunities for West End are indeed 'boundaryless'. You just need the courage to be bold and have the conviction to work collaboratively ongoingly.

The dangers of NOT collaborating...

There are indeed challenges to be addressed and they need to be addressed on the front foot. Be proactive rather than reactive in resolving these issues. Some individuals may think they'll benefit more by looking after their own interests first, but the reality is they may experience some short-term smaller gain, but they'll miss out on the enduring greater benefits. What needs to happen is create an inspiring vision that everyone can see the benefits for themselves as individuals and collectively.

As I stated at the beginning, Darwin said the survival of any species is based on their ability to adapt to change. West End must have a bold collaborative vision and take collective action sooner than later to make it happen if West End is to adapt to survive and thrive.

Michael Major – Mobile: 0406-449-007

Major & Associates – Email: michael@majorandassociates.com

30 years of international awarding winning experience creating environments that thrive.

Words: 1907 (END)



BOUNDARY STREET PRECINCT WORKSHOP NOTES

AGENDA:

- 8.00 – 8.30** - Set up information table, set up chairs, set up projector, set up catering
- 8.30 – 9.00** - KF team to meet with students for a briefing by John Mongard. Allocate KF people per student table group (pre-allocate, 1-7 tables) -1 KF member per table minimum.
- 9.00 – 9.04** - Welcome and acknowledgement - Elizabeth Cowie
- 9.04 – 9.06** - Workshop opening – Jonathan Sri: Councilor for the Gabba
- 9.06 – 9.09** - What is good urban regeneration – Dr. Sebastien Darchen (UQ)
- 9.09 – 9.12** - Boundary Street: past, present, future - John Mongard
- 9.12 - 9.16** - The crafting of the goanna space - Joyce Watson: Indigenous artist;
- 9.16 – 9.20** – Boundary Street: Social dimensions – Kylie Waldron: Indigenous community development worker
- 9.20 – 9.35** - ‘Vital precinct: Vital traders’ – Michael Major: Retail expert
- 9.35 - 9.40** - Questions – Hosted by John Mongard
- 9.40 – 9.55** - Break into groups and have a snack/cuppa
3 students to facilitate each table – scribe, drawer, talker
KF, WECA, traders, agencies to brainstorm with students
(need to get 5 non students per table = 35 locals)
- 9.55 – 10.35** – Workshopping ideas for the future:
9.55 – 10.05 – Q1: If you could do one thing to make the centre better in the short term – what would it be?
10.05-10.15 – Q2: What are some things that the centre needs most?
10.15-10.25 – Q3: In ten years time how should the Boundary Street Precinct look and feel?
10.25-10.35 – Q4: What can people do to create a better Boundary Street precinct?
- 10.35-11.00** – Sharing what we learnt - John Mongard and Sebastien Darchen
Each group: one student presents key ideas raised
(7 tables – 3 minutes per group)
+ what the shop traders say
- 11.00-11.05** – Close: where to next - John Mongard
Students to develop regeneration plans
KF to take ideas and needs from workshop and traders’ survey
- 11.05-11.30** – Clean up and pack
John Mongard to photograph all sheets and surveys to share.
Students debrief / pack sheets



**BOUNDARY STREET PRECINCT SURVEY:
Ideas For The Future**

A survey of people’s ideas for the future of the Boundary Street Precinct.

By the University of Queensland Town Planning students and Kurilpa Futures.

Would you mind if we asked you three questions about the shopping area here?
We would like people’s views about what is important to keep or manage ...

- NAME: (Optional)
- NAME OF SHOP:

1. If you could do one thing to make the centre better in the short term – what would it be?

2. What are some things that the centre needs most?

3. In ten years time how should the Boundary Street Precinct look and feel?

4. Any other comments?
