



VILLAGE VOICE

QUEEN STREET & WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION NEWS BULLETIN

MAY, 1975

ACTION PLAN WITH COUNCIL

The Queen Street and West Woollahra Association's architectural work reached an important milestone late last year when its proposed action plan was submitted to Woollahra Municipal Council through the planning department.

When we went to press, this document was about to be presented to the full Council.

In view of our excellent relationship with the Council's planning staff and committee, we are hopeful that our ideas will substantially influence the Council in the formation of its own plan and zoning principles for the West Woollahra area.

Our action plan is a carefully prepared document, which has involved a great deal of work over many months by the association's architectural sub-committee.

In essence it aims to do four things:

- To conserve West Woollahra as a medium density, mainly 19th century living area with an intermixture of acceptable commercial uses within the pre-established pattern.
- To ensure that any redevelopment or sub-division of large sites should continue the existing scale and character of West Woollahra.
- To ensure that any new building, or alterations and additions to existing structures, should conform in scale and character with the existing buildings, though not necessarily in an identical architectural style.
- To improve generally the existing townscape.

John Spatchurst, chairman of the architectural sub-committee, supplied the following report for *Village Voice* on the factors which influenced the architectural sub-committee in forming its principles:

The sub-committee looked hard at the Paddington Plan and although there is a

ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL MEETING ON MAY 14

The Annual General Meeting of the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association will be held on Wednesday, May 14, at 8 p.m.

The venue is the Congregational Church Hall, Jersey Road.

Business will be:

- (a) To receive the President's Report.
- (b) Election of Officers.
- (c) Discussion of the Association's proposed Action Plan for the area.
- (d) Discussion of the future of Queen Street Fair.

We hope as many members as possible will attend, and would also welcome prospective members and indeed anybody who would like to hear about our ideas for future planning in the area.

strong architectural affinity with Paddington, the overall mix in West Woollahra is different.

Whereas Paddington is substantially terrace development, in West Woollahra one encounters terraces, larger more Italianate buildings (primarily in Ocean Street), a number of colonial buildings (Waimea and the former Council Chambers, now the Park Gallery), early 20th century buildings such as the Queen Anne style terraces in Woods Avenue and Waimaea Avenue, the exceptional late 19th century building St. Kevins (built in 1893 by a pupil of Horbury Hunt), the former bank at 123 Queen Street, and a sprinkling of curiosities, such as the former tobacco factory at 36-40 Queen Street and the façade of Woollahra Public School in Forth Street.

The area also has a unique survival in a mixed commercial-residential strip along Queen Street. Here some outstanding small shops survive in original condition and mingle with idiosyncratic terraces such as the triple decker No. 34.

The area has been referred to as having a "village atmosphere" and Queen Street likened to a traditional village high street.

West Woollahra also exhibits a compactness which the rather sprawling Paddington lacks. It contains a number of buildings of no particular architectural merit if considered separately, but of critical importance in terms of townscape value.

The approach of the sub-committee was to draw up a well-judged assessment of West Woollahra as it stands, determining exactly what is of value and what should be kept in terms of buildings, spaces and townscape.

Coupled with this was an assessment of where opportunities exist for change, without detracting from the townscape, and where change could be a positive improvement.

In short, the sub-committee treated West Woollahra as a conservation area which allows the community to change in a creative way, as opposed to preservation which tends to be static and inflexible.

Our submission to Council classified each building as an individual structure, and as its contribution to the townscape.

From this was drawn up the main "core areas" — those groups of buildings which embody the essential architectural character of the area. It was proposed that changes in these "core areas" be subject to special architectural and townscape consideration.

The remainder of the area not covered by the "core areas" and not individually important would be subject to the normal planning controls of land use and plot ratio, while maintaining the existing scale.

It is stated in the submission that "nothing could be more damaging to the character of Queen Street and West Woollahra than the introduction of 'block' zoning which would permit houses to be turned into shops or commercial premises.

CONTINUED BACK PAGE

WE'RE OUT OF THE RED

On this page we reproduce the statement of income and expenditure for the Queen Street and West Woollahra Association and the Queen Street Fair for the period February 1, 1974, to February 28, 1975.

These have been audited by M. P. Gilovitz and Associates of Edgecliff, the association's honorary auditors.

Queen Street Fair made a surplus of \$5131, compared with less than \$1000 in each of the previous years.

Expenses were considerably up, but so

thankfully was income, enabling us to make a satisfactory addition to the funds of the association.

Considering the enormous amount of effort (voluntary) which goes into organising the fair, we do not feel the surplus is unduly high. It represents about 27 per cent of the turnover.

What are we doing with our riches?

As the general statement of income and expenditure shows, the association started the year with a deficit, caused principally by the cost of preserving Helen Keller Hostel until a new buyer is found.

We had a bank overdraft which was very kindly guaranteed by two officials of

the association. So first this had to be wiped off.

However, as our surplus from the Queen Street Fair was higher than anticipated, we decided to use some of it for local community work other than our own.

We are making a gift of \$500 to the Woollahra Senior Citizens Association to buy furniture for their building which is being extended, and \$600 to Woollahra Demonstration School P and C Association towards the purchase of a portable video camera.

A gift of approximately \$500 will be made later to Woollahra Children's and Community Association to be spent on equipment for their new building at Holdsworth Street Playground.

It is expected that cheques for the Senior Citizens Association and Woollahra Demonstration School P and C Association will be handed over at our annual meeting on May 14.

QUEEN STREET AND WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

Statement of Income and Expenditure February 1, 1974, to February 28, 1975

INCOME:		
Subscriptions		999
Bank interest		88
QUEEN STREET FAIR — SURPLUS		<u>5131</u>
		6218
LESS EXPENSES:		
Bank fees	61	
Postage, printing, stationery & secretarial expenses	677	
Village Voice — newsheet	183	
Helen Keller preservation campaign —		
Maintenance & repairs	469	
Advertising	22	
Reception	<u>211</u>	
		1623
SURPLUS:		4595
Less Deficiency at February 1, 1974		<u>- 776</u>
		<u>\$3819</u>
Represented by:—		
Cash at bank and on deposit	3973	
Less sundry creditors	<u>154</u>	
		<u>\$3819</u>

QUEEN STREET FAIR

Statement of Income and Expenditure

INCOME:		
STALLS RENTAL		
Sale of goods, commissions & donations		10534
		<u>3104</u>
		13638
LESS EXPENSES:		
Stocks for resale	1049	
Insurance	737	
Compensation	50	
Cartage & labour	2245	
Cleaning	633	
Advertising — Media	257	
— Posters, letters, printing & distribution	1196	
Postage, printing & stationery	405	
Security	152	
Hire — equipment	1442	
— Band	100	
Sundry — licence, prizes, gifts, etc.	<u>241</u>	
SURPLUS:		8507
		<u>\$5131</u>

TALKS ON CENTENNIAL PARK

In the last *Village Voice* we reported the rather chilling reception we received when we asked the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Crawford, for a meeting with our architectural sub-committee regarding the future of Centennial Park.

Now our local member, John Barraclough, a staunch friend of the association, has offered to use his good offices to arrange a meeting and we hope it will take place soon.

The need for dialogue between local residents and the controllers of Centennial Park is becoming very urgent. The following comments were made by Douglas Gordon, an architect member of the association, in a letter to our president, Leo Schofield:

Re: Centennial Park

"It may well be that the destiny of the abovementioned park is in sensitive and competent hands. A number of things have happened recently which seem to me to be somewhat questionable.

"1. A wonderful cricket pitch near the rose gardens has been systematically destroyed and replaced by mounds of sludge dredged from the duck pond. In particular there are two substantial mounds which are completely alien to natural topography.

"2. Some sort of fill is being placed inside the stone retaining wall in the pool which has the bridge over it. The whole is being done in defiance of logic and with complete disregard for the laws of statics.

"3. Strange looking bench sort of things now seem to line the side of some roads, making the natural progression from road to field impossible."



GOODBYE JOHN SPATCHURST

A very valued member of the association's committee, John Spatchurst, is leaving the area and will not stand for re-election at the annual meeting.

A designer by profession, John has served as chairman of the architectural sub-committee and was principal author of the proposed action plan for West Woollahra which is now before Woollahra Council.

An enormous amount of detailed work went into this document, and the whole local community should be grateful to John for his unstinted efforts on their behalf.

John also prepared the street plan for all three Queen Street Fairs and was responsible for the masthead design of *Village Voice*.

Apart from John, the principal office bearers of the association have all decided to offer themselves for re-election — president Leo Schofield, vice president Robin Brampton, and treasurer Neville Marsh.

A new secretary was recently appointed in Mrs. Joy Shirley. To her we say welcome.

THE SKID ROW AFTERMATH

Another unhappy chapter has been reached in the sad saga of the corner of Ocean Street and Peaker Lane.

We can rejoice that the last of the decaying properties, so long the subject of litigation, have disappeared from view.

But what is to take their place? Not, as we hoped, a co-ordinated development fronting on Ocean Street, but a town house sub-division with a new right of way opening into Peaker Lane.

The developers are trying to sell the sub-divisions off as separate lots, without

any building plans as far as we are aware.

The sub-division was approved by Woollahra Council on the recommendation of the engineering department, which for some reason does not have to consult the planning department on such matters.

Apart from the inherent danger to the building line along Ocean Street from the proposed individual development of the sites, our association is very concerned by the question of access.

Peaker Lane is extremely narrow and to judge from the plan exhibited on the site, the right of way to the town houses will be no wider.

The mind boggles at the task of getting a council garbage truck or removal van into it.

ALARMS AND INCURSIONS

Recently the eardrums of inhabitants of a wide area around Queen Street were assailed for a whole weekend by a shop burglar alarm which had been accidentally tripped off.

As there was no burglar to catch, the police were spectacularly disinterested and the alarm could not be switched off until the shop staff arrived on Monday morning.

Burglar alarms are essential in lock-up premises, but very sensitive. May we appeal to shop owners who fit them to leave keys with a trusted neighbour so that break-ins can be quickly investigated and an alarm which is accidentally switched on can be silenced again?

Curiously, a continuously sounding alarm is a bad security risk.

Burglars have been known to break into premises where the alarm has been ringing some time. They know that an investigation has already been made and is unlikely to be made again.

WHO'S COMING TO QUEENS COURT?

Queens Court, the development of 11 shops plus offices around a central courtyard at the corner of Queen and Moncur Streets, is now complete.

The development has been created by reconstructing and adding to the former pharmacy and hardware store which stood at the corner.

Apart from two rather annoying flourishes of featurism (imitation brass lanterns and ceramic lettering) the general aspect is pleasing, particularly of the inside courtyard where the architect did not have the problem of integrating the new development with the old.

The association would like to see the development adding to local shopping amenities by increasing the number of stores where day-to-day items can be bought.

Our survey on the planning needs of local residents two years ago showed a strong demand for more service businesses rather than boutiques, however much these contribute to the quality of commercial life in Queen Street.

A fish shop, a cake shop, a high-class takeaway food shop and a hardware store are all badly needed in the area.

John Cowling, an association member whose company is acting as leasing agent for the property, shares the view that some at least of the shops should be service businesses.

In a letter to the committee, his company said it was hoped that a small hardware store would be established in Queens Court to replace the old McDonald's Hardware store which once flourished there.

At the moment this remains only a hope, despite the fact that small hardware stores are enjoying a revival as escalating wage rates for tradesmen force ever more people to do their own decorating and maintenance.

The first Queens Court lettings have all been to speciality shops. Although we are assured the quality of their merchandise will be high, they will not be selling the sort of things householders run out of and like to be able to buy locally.

Only one of the 11 shops is adequately equipped to sell food. Until a few weeks ago, Mr. Cowling had a prospective tenant very interested in taking it as a coffee shop, to serve tables in the courtyard. Sadly the party has now withdrawn.

Would anybody like to take their place? A coffee shop is badly needed in Queen Street.

Mr. Cowling can be contacted at Cowling Larkin and Associates, immediately opposite Queens Court.

HELEN KELLER STALEMATE

More than two years have passed since that dramatic week when the decisive action of local residents halted the demolition of Helen Keller House.

Sadly, we still have no conclusive news on the future of the building.

Along with the house, the Royal Blind Society owns the considerable parcel of land in which it stands and a number of cottages in Woods Avenue and Waimea Avenue, all of which it is anxious to sell.

As a leading member of the preservation committee, our president, Leo Schofield, has been working unceasingly to bring together the Royal Blind Society and a developer able to buy and preserve the property.

Earlier this year, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of the Mayor of Woollahra, Alderman Graham O'Neill, to try to resolve some of the planning considerations which would influence a potential developer.

The Council is sympathetic, but constitutionally cannot take any initiatives itself.

Two developers currently have offers before the Royal Blind Society. One of them has worked very closely with the preservation interests in forming his plans.

The future of Helen Keller House obviously may take some time to resolve. Meanwhile this interesting Georgian building is quite safe from the return of the demolishers' bulldozer.

The property is subject to a green ban, and despite recent changes in the leadership of the Builders' Labourers Union, we are assured that green bans on properties with

a National Trust classification will be respected.

Until a purchaser takes over, our association will continue to take responsibility for protecting the fabric of the building.

A temporary roof was installed last year, and recently the association arranged for the building to be cleaned out and the windows more completely sealed against the elements before winter.

THE LAST WORD ON JERSEY ROAD

In the last *Village Voice*, we reported that despite the recommendations of Mr. Commissioner Bunning, the Jersey Road extension — with its threat to local property and amenities — was still part of the Main Roads Development Plan.

Now the news is happier.

In a letter to the correspondent who provided our last report, Sir John Fuller, Minister for Planning and Environment, says:

"After consideration of a report by the Authority, I have approved of action being taken to suspend the provisions of the Scheme affecting the subject land and to make an Interim Development Order permitting development in accordance with the provisions of the Residential 2(f) zone of the Scheme, with the consent of Woollahra Municipal Council. A notice giving effect to my decision will be published in the Government Gazette in the near future."

In other words, the long sad story of the Jersey Road extension scheme has finally closed with the Government admitting, very slowly and reluctantly, victory for resident action.

ACTION PLAN WITH COUNCIL

CONTINUED

"The West Woollahra area is one of the few surviving parts of Sydney that includes shops scattered through largely residential areas.

"It is unarguable that these shops provide much of the character of the area and provide attractive visual interest at pedestrian level, especially the isolated ones (28 Moncur Street, and the corner of Holdsworth and Morrell Streets).

"It is no more practical or sensible to suggest that they should revert to dwellings than it is to allow existing dwellings to be turned into shops or commercial premises, simply because someone has outlined a particular block on the map and given it an arbitrary zoning without considering the quality of the streetscape and the relief that shops among houses and houses among shops can provide."

THE QUEEN STREET AND WEST WOOLLAHRA ASSOCIATION

A residents' action association covering the area bounded by Jersey Road, Edgecliff Road and Oxford Street, West Woollahra, N.S.W.

Address: Box 50, P.O. Woollahra, N.S.W. 2025.

Subscription: \$3 a year. Life membership \$25.

President: *Leo Schofield*

Vice President: *Robin Brampton*

Secretary: *Joy Shirley (328 6961)*

Treasurer: *Neville Marsh*

Committee: *Robin Broadbent, Marion Cowper, George Freedman, Michael Magnus, Marcel Piat, John Spatchurst.*

Honorary Auditor: *Michael Gilovitz*

Village Voice is published approximately every four months. Letters and other contributions on local topics are invited. The editor is Robin Brampton (357 1488 day, 32 4475 evening and weekends).

CHANGING THE FAIR?

We are getting a number of inquiries and applications for stalls at the 1975 Queen Street Fair.

At the moment there are no firm plans to hold a Queen Street Fair in 1975. This will be a matter to be decided by the new committee elected at the annual meeting on May 14.

The 1974 Fair — the third to be held — was a great success in the size of the crowds which were the biggest ever, in the number and variety of the stalls, and again thankfully for the weather.

Also, last year the Fair had grown to such a size, with almost 300 stallholders, that the association was able to make a reasonable financial profit for all the hard work the committee put into organising it.

However, after the event, several members of the retiring committee felt some serious reappraisal should be made of the Fair before an application is made to Woollahra Council to hold it again in 1975.

The question they think should be decided is has the Fair become too big and unwieldy? Would it be more attractive to local people if it was smaller, with stallholders invited to participate on a selective basis, and more room to move between the stalls and attractions?

Comments will be invited at the annual meeting on May 14. If you have a point of view, please come and express it.

Meanwhile, if you would like to register your interest in having a stall in 1975, write to Queen Street Fair, Box 75, PO Woollahra, and your name will be added to a list to be contacted nearer the time.

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