

CULTURAL SERVICES COMMITTEE 18 APRIL 2018	1
--	----------

CAIRNS GALLERY PRECINCT UPDATE AND ARCHITECTURAL WORKSHOP

Stephen Foster | 79/5/7-01 | #5597619

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that Council notes the update of the one day planning workshop with architectural leaders regarding the new Cairns Gallery Precinct and endorses the recommended next steps.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report provides Council with an update on the Courthouse one day planning workshop with Cairns' local and national architectural leaders which further explored the possibilities of what could/should be achieved within the new Cairns Gallery Precinct. The recommended next steps will be outlined for endorsement.

Council obtained practical possession of the Courthouse from the previous owners on 30 June 2017. It is anticipated that this workshop will provide direction for the revitalisation plan.

BACKGROUND:

During April, June and October Council conducted various workshops encompassing national and local arts and cultural leaders, including local and national architectural leaders to explore the high level opportunities. The focused conversation provided an opportunity to consider the Precinct without prejudgement and based on national and international experience.

Council acquired the historically significant Courthouse on 9 December 2016 after extensive negotiations with the vendor. The heritage-listed building is now back in public hands after 20 years, with the objective of creating a Cairns Gallery Precinct in the CBD. This is a substantial step towards Cairns becoming the arts capital of northern Australia.

COMMENT:

Council has taken the opportunity to bring this historic, centrally-located building into public ownership for the purpose of a Gallery Precinct.

The October workshop brought together local and national architectural leaders to explore opportunities presented by Council's acquisition of the old Courthouse building together with the associated adjoining properties in the CBD. Specifically, the workshop considered the high level vision developed at the national art leader's workshop for the development of a Cairns Gallery Precinct from a design point of view.

The workshop was held in Cairns on the 31 October 2017.

The following local and national architectural leaders were invited to share their perspectives based on their local/national experiences facilitated by Sandra Fields from Fieldworx;

Carlo Amerio – CA Architects

Gisela Jung – CA Architects

Roger Mainwood – Total Projects

Perry Lethlean – TCL

Andrew Prowse – Prowse Architects

Lisa Law – JCU

Mayor Bob Manning, Councillor Linda Cooper, the General Manager Community, Sport and Cultural Services, the Manager, Cultural Planner, Curator of Cultural Services and the Program Leader Strategic Planning & Sustainability Officer also attended the workshop.

The focused conversation with local and national architectural leaders was that as a community we need to be bold and limitless in what we can achieve.

Key emerging themes included:

- Creating an architecturally bold statement that becomes an attraction in itself
- A Precinct that does not try to replicate other galleries, but is a celebration of the city's unique environment and heritage and celebrates the art and culture created in Cairns
- Celebration of the heritage nature of the buildings
- A specific focus on celebrating and supporting contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts
- The use of the galleries to develop curators and other arts professionals in the region – including workshop spaces and 'artist in residence' activation
- A focus on activation that is not only world-class in terms of content, but builds a deep connection with the local community – workshop spaces, dedicated children's gallery
- The need to not just focus on the buildings within the Precinct, but innovative programming and ensuring this component is adequately managed and funded
- An opportunity to re-think the traditional nature of 'galleries' and consider a new model that supports the night time economy of the CBD
- Opportunities around building relationships with other galleries to host 'block buster' touring exhibitions
- Offering a diverse range of arts experiences with a focus on outdoor and garden areas hosting changing public art
- Presentation of multi-arts events in varied spaces within the Precinct including live performance and interactive exhibitions
- Opportunities for unique 'venue hire' event experiences embracing temporary activation during development stages
- Strategic relationships with commercial partners including multiple food and beverage outlets and the neighbouring Mantra property

Next Steps

Through focussed discussion and consideration of previous meetings a series of 'next steps' have been identified for delivery in the short term.

- Identify best practice standards regarding size and asset requirements for galleries and touring spaces
- A comprehensive audit of existing building sizes and assets against best practice standards
- Short-term activation, specifically focussed on the Old Courthouse building
- Analysis of cost and opportunity associated with retrofitting of the 'Old Mulgrave' office building to assess costs, building requirements and budget
- Presentation to, and workshop with, Councillors and key staff focussed on refined conceptual ideas for the building and activation
- Develop masterplan for the integrated site including staged timeline for completion and indicative budget
- Identify and explore funding opportunities above and beyond Council's own investment – State / Federal funding bodies and philanthropists
- Initiate a tender process to call for expressions of interest for design and construction

OPTIONS:

Option 1:

It is recommended that Council notes the update of the one day planning workshop with architectural leaders regarding the new Cairns Gallery Precinct and endorses the recommended next steps.

Option 2:

That Council requests further information.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

Council has been successful in securing the Regional Jobs and Investment Packages Grant (RJIP60077), for \$2.1 Million matched funding by Council for the heritage renovation of the old Courthouse building. Project is to be delivered by June 2020.

Council officers are currently in the process of preparing a Stage one application for funding under the Federal Government's Regional Growth Fund (RGF) grant program in respect of the Cairns Gallery Precinct. This Stage one application is an expression of interest for funding to undertake capital works associated with the establishment of the Cairns Gallery Precinct and would be separate from, and in addition to, the RJIP funding referred to herein for the heritage renovation of the old Courthouse building.

A report on this Stage one RGF application is expected to be presented at Council's upcoming Ordinary meeting scheduled for 24 April 2018. External consultants

(architects, engineering and cost consultants and economists) have been engaged to assist with the preparation of information required for the Stage one RGF grant application.

This work has been informed by the outcomes of the workshops referred to in this report and will address a number of the actions identified in the 'Next steps' section. Should Council's Stage one RGF application be successful, a full business case for the project will be required to be developed (Stage two). This Stage two application would be subject to further assessment by the Federal Department administering the RGF program before a decision is made on whether RGF capital funding will be approved or not.

Council also resolved at its Ordinary meeting held on 28 March 2018, to submit an application for funding under the Queensland Government's Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program to prepare the full business case required as part of the Stage two RGF application. Regardless of whether Council's application for funding under the RGF program is successful, the work currently being undertaken is considered necessary in order to support applications for funding for the project from alternate sources.

Community and Cultural Heritage

The Courthouse provides critical new infrastructure and space for the cultural sector within Cairns, specifically for visual arts exhibition and community engagement events.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

The planning workshop and future activation of the Courthouse is consistent with Cairns Regional Council's Corporate Plan.

Policy:

The planning workshop and future activation of the Courthouse is consistent with Cairns Regional Council's Arts and Culture General Policy.

CONSULTATION:

Consultation has occurred with a select group of national and local arts and cultural leaders, including local and national architectural leaders. These consultations will be utilised to develop an 'advisory note' for the Cairns Gallery Precinct. Consultations occurred with individual arts groups from around the region as part of the development of the new Cairns Regional Council Strategy for Culture and the Arts 2022.

Feedback from the CBD Masterplan consultation will also inform detailed design.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Cairns Gallery Precinct workshop three aspirations summary #5721300

Attachment 2: The city as a Cultural Precinct



Stephen Foster
Manager Cultural Services



Linda Kirchner
General Manager Community, Sport and Cultural Services

Attachment 1: Cairns Gallery Precinct Workshop Three Aspirations Summary



THE GALLERY PRECINCT

ASPIRATIONS SUMMARY

ICONIC : BOLD : TRANSFORMATIVE : CREATIVE : WORLD CLASS : UNIQUE

Throughout 2017 Cairns Regional Council, assisted by Fieldworx, has rolled out the initial phase of a comprehensive engagement process to identify opportunities to re-purpose several Council owned buildings into a world-class gallery precinct.

The process has been prompted by Council's acquisition of the 'Old Courthouse' property which is located in the CBD and alongside two other Council owned buildings - the Cairns Regional Gallery and Old Mulgrave Shire building with attached office block.

The consultation process aimed to identify opportunities and practical challenges around developing the three buildings into one connected 'Gallery Precinct' site while considering an overall creative vision for the buildings. Three stakeholder workshops were staged through the year bringing together national and local arts, culture and design sectors:

- April 3 – 4: National arts and cultural leaders
- June 5: Local arts and cultural leaders and organisations
- October 31: Council staff, architectural designers, local arts leaders

See attached list of participants

While the three consultative sessions brought together a diverse set of individuals and skill sets, a number of key themes emerged around the vision for the precinct, and challenges that need to be assessed and managed in order to ensure delivery.

Vision

The overwhelming consensus was the opportunity this project presented to create a bold and iconic statement that firmly places Cairns as a community that values and supports the arts. The development of this gallery precinct would play a key role in the emergence of the entire Cairns city as one of Australia's key arts destinations. This vision not only aims to build economic outcomes through tourism and community engagement in the arts, but is a celebration of the unique arts and culture created in Far North Queensland.

Key emerging themes included:

- Creating an architecturally bold statement that becomes an attraction in itself
- A precinct that does not try to replicate other galleries, but is a celebration of the city's unique environment and heritage and celebrates the art and culture created in Cairns
- Celebration of the heritage nature of the buildings
- A specific focus on celebrating and supporting contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts
- The use of the galleries to develop curators and other arts professionals in the region – including workshop spaces and 'artist in residence' activation



- A focus on activation that is not only world-class in terms of content, but builds a deep connection with the local community – workshop spaces, dedicated children’s gallery
- The need to not just focus on the buildings within the precinct, but innovative programming and ensuring this component is adequately managed and funded
- An opportunity to re-think the traditional nature of ‘galleries’ and consider a new model that supports the night time economy of the CBD
- Opportunities around building relationships with other galleries to host ‘block buster’ touring exhibitions
- Offering a diverse range of arts experiences with a focus on outdoor and garden areas hosting changing public art
- Presentation of multi-arts events in varied spaces within the precinct including live performance and interactive exhibitions
- Opportunities for unique ‘venue hire’ event experiences embracing temporary activation during development stages
- Strategic relationships with commercial partners including multiple food and beverage outlets and the neighbouring Mantra property

Challenges

A project of this scope brings with it a range of challenges that need to be addressed in order to deliver the best outcome. Consensus across the consultation sessions demonstrated that with a collaborative and strategic approach, key points can be addressed. They include:

- Maintaining a strong relationship with the local community, arts sector, Cairns Art Gallery Board, and nearby traders – specifically the neighbouring Mantra property, the café currently operating as part of the gallery, and the privately owned commercial building alongside the Courthouse that is earmarked for refurbishment
- Assessing the practical application of the Old Courthouse building as a suitable gallery and event space
- Re-imagining the role of an art gallery considering technical and environmental requirements for the storage and display of the current collection
- Understanding the costs and building challenges around the ‘Old Musgrave Building’ office blocks to assess its capacity to be retro-fitted into a gallery space or the need to demolish and rebuild on the site
- The best architectural and garden design approach to link the three buildings that create a connected experience, while preserving the heritage identity of each building
- Understanding cultural and historical associations for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community around the Old Courthouse building
- Considering a ‘staged’ approach to the precinct development that delivers a world-class experience while meeting cost and budget requirements.

Next Steps

Through focussed discussion and consideration of previous meetings a series of ‘next steps’ have been identified for delivery in the short term.

- Identify best practice standards regarding size and asset requirements for galleries and touring spaces

2

Prepared by **Fieldworx**



- A comprehensive audit of existing building sizes and assets against best practice standards
- Short-term activation, specifically focussed on the Old Courthouse building
- Analysis of cost and opportunity associated with retrofitting of the 'Old Mulgrave' office building to assess costs, building requirements and budget
- Presentation to, and workshop with, Councillors and key staff focussed on refined conceptual ideas for the building and activation
- Develop master plan for the integrated site including staged timeline for completion and indicative budget
- Identify and explore funding opportunities above and beyond Council's own investment – State / Federal funding bodies and philanthropists.
- Initiate a tender process to call for expressions of interest for design and construction

Attachment 2: The City as a Cultural Precinct



