

A Sense of Place Coburg

The Coburg Initiative

In 2002, Moreland City Council embarked on extensive consultation with the community to produce the 'Central Coburg 2020 Structure Plan'. The plan was adopted by Council in 2006 and provides a framework for planning proposals and major projects in Coburg. Further work and extensive community engagement refined Coburg 2020 and produced the Coburg Initiative – the action plan to accompany the Central Coburg 2020 framework.

The Coburg Initiative is about new jobs, housing, services and retail. It will lead to improvements to the public realm and will address safety and accessibility issues. It will celebrate and preserve the things that make today's Coburg great. The Coburg Initiative focuses on new connectivity between people and their places of work, culture, sport and leisure.

A Sense of Place

During April and May 2009, the Coburg Initiative asked people who live, work and/or visit Coburg a series of questions to begin to understand Coburg's Sense of Place.

Sense of Place can have many meanings, but at its simplest it is the connection people have with a place. It can be the character of a place, or the meaning people give to it. More often, it is a combination of the two.

By asking the community to think about Coburg as a place, they were able to identify what is important and what they would like to change. This paper provides a summary of the responses provided during the consultation process.

The outcomes of the consultation process will be used to inform the Sense of Place Framework. The Framework will be used to ensure the Coburg Initiative enhances the qualities of the community and will underpin the Masterplan for the study area.

The responses provided are a summary of the key themes identified during the consultation process.



What makes Coburg unique?

Coburg has little hidden gems and there is a sense of discovery when you visit. Its cultural diversity is ever-present and there are lots of different communities within the one community. Coburg has a busy, vibrant and accessible central shopping area. The mixed-use shops and undercover malls are unique, along with the speciality stores. The great food is a distinctive part of Coburg.

People of all ages and ethnicities live, work and visit Central Coburg. There is a range of community services and facilities catering to their needs. It is multi-use and a hub to get essential items and services. The library is well used and has a number of key community services available. Coburg is also unique because of its range of transport options including trains, trams, buses and bike paths.

It is an old town and Coburg's heritage makes it unique. There is a sense of history through its landmarks including the churches, the station and Sydney Road's 19th century facades.



What kind of place is Coburg?

Coburg is friendly, diverse and earthy. You do not feel anonymous in Coburg – people have conversations. It feels more like a big village or country town. Coburg is a day time place and is lacking in night time activities.

Coburg has everything including great shops, services and transport. Walking is encouraged. Everything is accessible on foot.



How does it feel?

Coburg feels welcoming, comfortable and unpretentious. It feels like a shopping strip did 30 years ago. It is an inviting, homely place. Central Coburg feels safe compared to other suburbs. It is an interesting place that is not sanitised. Coburg still has a lot of character.

The local people are very friendly and it feels personable. Shop keepers know everyone. It has a village feel. Coburg has a strong sense of community. It is a very loyal community and people really look after one another.



"I love Coburg. I came from Lebanon 25 years ago and Coburg has been a very welcoming place".



"Coburg feels like my home. It is very homely and comfortable and the people are friendly".

"I am 82 years old and I love that I can still walk around Coburg. Everything is close and easily accessible".



"Victoria Mall is a great place. I know everyone, my kids know everyone and lots of people come down here when they're lonely. It's nice because there are many familiar faces".



"The many migrant communities add an incredible richness to Coburg, making it a unique and wonderful place to live".

"I love Coburg for its amazing diversity of people, food, shops, parks and open space. The central shopping strip is like a regional centre with everything you need, allowing residents to shop, live and socialise locally".



"I love that there are so many independent and diverse shops in Coburg. It's great to have all these small businesses".

"I like that Coburg is friendly and familiar. It has a village-type atmosphere. There are so many familiar people and faces and even the shop keepers know everyone".



"Coburg is a fantastic community. Everything is here. There is so much life to Coburg and lots of people are always out shopping, having coffee and walking around".



"It's great that Coburg is so multicultural. It's great to have all different people and foods mixed in together. Coburg feels very comfortable".



What could be improved?

Coburg needs an iconic centre, an address for Coburg, which people recognise.

The traffic along Sydney Road needs to be better managed to create a safer environment for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users. Footpaths need to be made wider and pedestrian access needs to be improved throughout Coburg. The land where the carparks are located needs to be developed with mixed use residential/retail. The cars need to get off the ground level. Upfield bike path needs improved links from Reynard Street to Coburg Station.

The general maintenance and cleanliness of Coburg needs to be improved by providing regular street sweeping and litter control.

The diversity of the shops needs to be improved. There are too many discount stores and not enough shops that sell high quality merchandise and clothing. The retail mix needs improving along with better restaurants, key drawcards, enhanced market, nightlife and general evening activities.

More green spaces and trees need to be introduced, along with more places for the community to gather, more open spaces and more seating. The use of 'dead' spaces could be improved. These spaces could be turned in to active, well-used public spaces. Improve the shops, buildings and make Coburg a 'green' suburb by ensuring any new building has a six star energy rating.

The primary school needs to be consolidated to one site or an alternative site is required in Coburg. Coburg could be improved with

an education hub that includes a secondary school and lifelong learning opportunities.

Public toilets need to be improved, upgraded or replaced. Baby change facilities and places for families to sit and feed children will encourage more people to use Central Coburg and stay in the area.

What needs to change?

Currently too much status is given to cars rather than humans. The carparks dominate the whole area and sometimes the behaviour of drivers makes Coburg feel unsafe. Pedestrian connections throughout Coburg need to change, including connectivity between the Victoria Mall and Coburg Train Station and pedestrian links across Bell Street.

A resident population needs to be introduced to Central Coburg. The housing stock should diversify and include medium and high density options to cater to smaller household sizes. Coburg needs social housing for newly arrived, people with disabilities and lower socio-economic groups.

Coburg needs night time activities including a cinema, music venues, cafes and restaurants. The Leisure Centre needs to be relocated or reconfigured so more people can access it. The sports oval also needs to have better access. Take down the fence around the oval and make it more open and accessible to the wider community. The issue of two pools in Coburg needs to be resolved.

Provide some space for children to play. Coburg also needs more facilities and amenities for youth. Coburg needs a junior high school that links in with existing community facilities.



What does this mean for the Coburg Initiative?

Throughout the consultation process a series of key themes have emerged. These themes reflect what is important to the people who live, work and visit Coburg. The themes have been clustered into the following; **P**reserve, **A**dd, **R**emove and **K**eep Out.

Preserve

- The cultural diversity which is reflected in the shopping, food and character of Coburg
- Busy, vibrant shopping centre which includes specialty and mixed use shops
- Location of the library as a key community service and meeting point
- Opportunity to access a range of public transport options
- Heritage landmarks including churches, the Coburg Train Station and Sydney Road's 19th century facades

Add

- Traffic management measures along Sydney Road
- Wider footpaths and improved pedestrian access to Coburg Train Station, Leisure Centre and along Sydney Road
- Diverse housing opportunities including social housing
- Evening activities including restaurants, cinema and cafes
- Life long learning opportunities including a high school
- More public spaces including green areas and places for community members to meet
- More public toilets with amenities such as baby change facilities
- A network of laneways throughout Coburg

Remove

- Some of the existing carparks and car dominated environments
- Fencing around the Coburg Oval
- Harsh surfaces throughout the Coburg Initiative area

Keep Out

- Poorly designed and unsustainable buildings
- Housing developments with insufficient transport options and access to open space

For more information:

For more information about the Coburg Initiative please contact the Project Information Desk on 03 9240 2475 or email info@thecoburginitiative.com.au. Alternatively, please visit the project website www.thecoburginitiative.com.au for regular project updates.

Representatives of the Coburg Initiative will also be located in the Victoria Mall every Thursday commencing on the 30th of April 2009.

Language Link

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