
Media Release : Save Williamstown

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Alternatives could net Developers \$80m in Profit

The Save Williamstown campaign maintains that the developers could net a substantial \$80m in profit from the appropriate development of the Old Port Phillip Woolen Mill site. Volunteers from Save Williamstown have drawn up a preliminary business plan (attached) which highlights the profitability of one of the design alternatives raised by Williamstown locals.

Yet as far as Save Williamstown knows the developers are still attempting to ram through large scale hi-rise residential development on the site.

According to Save Williamstown spokesperson, Godfrey Moase, "the story of the Port Phillip Woolen Mill encapsulates the problems of our economy today. The hardline pursuit of wringing the absolute most amount of profit will enrich a handful of old men, while endangering the livelihood of thousands and degrading quality of life for the rest of us.

This level of residential development right over the road from the Williamstown shipyards would threaten thousands of jobs. You just have to look at what happened to Garden Island in Sydney.

While the infrastructure of this small peninsula community is almost at breaking point. Roads, water pipelines, the electricity grid, schools and access to health facilities – they'll all be stuffed if we just dumps thousands of new residents down that end of Williamstown."

Alternatives for the Port Phillip Woolen Mill Site

The Save Williamstown campaign's Planning Policy subcommittee has found three proposals which encapsulate an alternative vision for the Port Phillip Woolen Mills site. The criteria the alternative proposals were judged against were:

- Consistency with Williamstown's unique local character and heritage
- The protection of thousands of jobs at the shipyards
- The creation of new jobs in the community
- A positive impact on social and environmental well-being

(1) The Williamstown Creative Industries/Health & Well-being Complex

The main features of this design are the inclusion of 3 film studios within the old Port Phillip Woolen Mill building which would provide much needed facilities to an area already world renowned as a shooting location.

Directly behind the film studios would be a three story structure zoned for commercial purposes. The first two stories would be highly useful for business related to film & television production, including perhaps critical post-production facilities. While the third story could be used as an IT Hub.

Over Aitkin Street and bordering Kanowna Street, would feature medical suites for medical and related health practitioners and a health & fitness program pool.

The rest of the site could be used for appropriate medium density residential development, including housing for the elderly (especially given its strategic proximity to a health & well-being complex), and still leave adequate space for 600 car parks. It also goes without saying that all existing heritage structures would be preserved.

Attached to this press release is a preliminary business plan which suggests development along this model could produce an estimated profit of \$80 million for the developers.

(2) The Williamstown Creative Industries Hub

The main difference with this proposal would be one less film studio as well as no three story commercial building. Instead, two small lanes off Nelson Place and Kanowna Street would lead into a circular village open space. While the Titanic Theatre Restaurant end of the site would feature a Arts & Craft Bazaar within the converted warehouse structure.

(3) The Williamstown Arts Hub

This design would have one less film studio again but feature a hall devoted to exhibiting produce, speciality foods and wines similar to the world-famous Ferry Building on the maritime precinct in San Fransisco. Like the Ferry Building the more modest Woolen Mill Building would be a certified farmers market featuring local, seasonal and sustainable produce, while celebrating the maritime history of our community.

The rest of the Port Phillip Woolen Mill site would be devoted to Art and Design production as well as appropriate medium level residential development.

The purpose of this community development process was to neither be prescriptive nor seek absolute consensus, rather it was a way of Save Williamstown attempting to provide a space for more sustainable and suitable alternatives to be considered. What it has highlighted is the limited reach of the developers' imagination and their inflexible pursuit of the greatest profit regardless of the consequences for the rest of us in Williamstown.