

THE 1973-74 REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE 1971 CITY OF SYDNEY STRATEGIC PLAN

Notes of an Address to be given at the Council of the City of Sydney Action Planning Forum, Wednesday, November 22, 1972, in the State Office Block Theatre, by Mr George Clarke, a Principal of Clarke Gazzard Planners and Urban Systems Corporation; and Director, City of Sydney Strategic Plan .

The Sydney City Council has to-day given a practical demonstration of the city planning process in action. I would like to give a brief summary explanation of the evolving philosophy and procedures which have formed the foundation of Council's continuing programme of strategic and action planning. This philosophy and these procedures have been, and are being, carefully and gradually evolved by Council in determined and continuing efforts to overcome the difficulties in city planning and development control which had been allowed to proliferate unchecked throughout the nineteen fifties and sixties, until the launching of the present process in 1970.

The City Council's new planning process is, to the best of the abilities of Council and its Consultants, and within the limit of Council's powers:-

- a) systematic, in that it proceeds from the general to the particular, from the definition of basic objectives, through the gaining of public support for an interlocking set of broad policies, followed by action to interpret and implement those policies year by year in practical and specific detail in accordance with realistic priorities. Council's 1971 City of Sydney Strategic Plan determined a flexible long range strategy, on the basis of which Council decides its tactics for a particular year, and determines the action it will take month by month;
- b) open, in that not only are Council Committee Meetings open to the press, but also in that Council seeks to encourage the maximum possible citizen and interest group participation in every stage of the planning process, and to achieve the maximum possible exposure of planning problems, opportunities and controversies to the media, so that public opinion can play a more knowledgeable and effective role in both the shaping and the implementation of planning objectives than it has ever been allowed to do in the past;

- c) co-operative, in that Council seeks to maximise liaison and assistance to and from the Council and regional and State authorities, welcoming their guidelines, advice and assistance.
- d) responsibly independent, in that Council seeks to regain the respect and support of the public and of other authorities, by gradually strengthening Council's own capacities and skills for effective City management, and so gradually to re-assume responsibilities for City government which have been, over previous decades, taken over by ad hoc bodies or State authorities;
- e) continuous, in that Council will regularly review and as necessary revise and amend its objectives, policies and priorities in the light of the feedback of new information and the reactions of public opinion and of other authorities.

As the first step in the launching of this process, Council decided to prepare an overall strategy to guide and govern the management and planning of City development. This is what we now refer to as the 1971 City of Sydney Strategic Plan.

Effective management, guidance and direction of a complex urban system like the City of Sydney must itself be a complex, systematic and continuous process. Effective City management can only be generated by repeated cycles of information, investigation, decision and action, followed by the feedback of new information regarding the effects of action taken.

The first step in the cycle is the collation and analysis of the kinds of information and the types of investigations summarised in the research and technical sections of the 200 page book of the 1971 City Strategic Plan.

The second step in the work cycle is to establish the City's objectives, policies and priorities for action. This part of the process is what we call 'strategic planning'. The 1971 Strategic Plan for the City of Sydney comprises four closely integrated Objectives, sixteen interrelated Policies, and eighty-three interlocked Priorities for Action.

The third step in the work cycle is the making of decisions and the taking of action to manage, guide and direct development in accord with the adopted objectives, policies and priorities. This part of the process we here call 'action planning' or 'planning in action'.

The fourth step in the work cycle must be to assess the experience gained by planning in action over several years. New information and experience can only be gained through action. On the basis of this new information, the management cycle begins again. Thus, the 1971 City of Sydney Strategic Plan is to be reviewed, and, if necessary, refined and revised as a whole during 1973 and 74.

A contemporary city planner, William Alonso, has summarised today's needs for this approach to planning as follows :-

'... What is needed is continuing planning, which produces every year a plan for the next few years, and every few years a plan for the next two or three decades, so that the next steps and the distant goals are known at all times'.

Thus, City planning and management must be understood as a continuing process, because City growth and change is a continuing process. It must regrettably be complex, because the City's people, and their values, problems and needs, are complex. It must be systematic, because the City is a system: action or inertia concerning one physical, social or economic element in the City affects all of the other elements of the urban system.

Council has resolved to comprehensively review and revise, for publication by mid-1974, the 1971 City Strategic Plan. The desirability for this review and revision was foreseen and recommended on page 70 of the 1971 Plan. It will now be conducted in the light of such new factors and subsequent events as :-

- a) The greatly heightened public awareness, appreciation and knowledge of urban planning problems and opportunities, in the creation of which the 1971 City Strategic Plan has itself been, as was intended, a significant generating force and catalyst;
- b) The longer term implications of the emerging data and results of SATS, to which the 1971 City Strategic Plan was itself an input, and which can now in turn receive inputs from SATS;
- c) The current over-supply of office space, and the consequent likely amendment or postponement for the next 5 to 8 years of office projects not yet commenced, which appears already to have affected many proposals, particularly schemes for the Rocks and Woolloomooloo areas, which during 1971, were projected in the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority's approved scheme, and by State Planning Authority officers, as likely to attract additional CBD-type workforce of a total of 112,000 to 152,000, which alone were sufficient to take the CBD workforce to a total of 360,000;
- d) New data now available to Council's Consultants from surveys only recently completed, which indicate that the City office workforce may actually have fallen slightly between 1969 and 1972, and indicate that the Council Consultants' lower projected CBD workforce growth rates of between 0.7% and 1.3% per annum are likely to apply during the next 8 years;

- e) New data becoming available from the Council's own action planning program, and other private and governmental sources including the 1971 Census and the 1969 Economic Census;
- f) Inputs to be requested from the SPA of new research data and regional policy guidelines relevant to the City's role in the Region, in more precise terms and specific detail than was able to be incorporated in the 1968 Sydney Region Outline Plan or made available to Council during the preparation of the 1971 City Strategic Plan;
- g) The possible future significance of recent new initiatives and decisions by State and Federal Government regarding public transport and selective decentralisation;
- h) New advice and guidance to be requested from CUMTAC, SATS and the new Public Transport Commission regarding improvements in public transport systems;
- i) The outcome of further consideration and action by Council and the SPA, together with other relevant bodies, regarding such matters as amendments to the City Statutory Planning Scheme Ordinance and Map; simplified procedures for the processing of Development Applications; the desirable balance to be sought between short term and all-day parking and practicable techniques for achieving this balance; pricing policies regarding parking meter and other parking charges; the possible long-term phasing out of parking meters; alternative methods of raising finance for car parking purposes; the implementation of further pedestrianisation proposals in the CBD and elsewhere; practical legal techniques to ensure the preservation of historic buildings; and a detailed residential development control code for the City;
- j) Experience gained in the application of Council's new 1971 Parking and Floor Space Ratio Control Policies and Codes, and consideration of the implications, for these Policies and Codes, of the rising standard of floor space used per worker, the growth rate of which some observers put as high as 2% per annum.
- k) More detailed proposals, and the results of more detailed investigations, arising from Council's 1972-73 Action Planning programme.

With the advantages of feedback from these eleven specific sources I have just listed, Council will be able to make the 1974 Strategic Plan a significant advance on the 1971 Mark 1 model, which was prepared under great difficulties in less than one year.

In reviewing some of these difficulties, it is useful to recall the context of decision making by other authorities within which Council was striving to work during the first half of 1971.

During 1968-70, the SPA had sought but failed to achieve governmental, professional, public or Council acceptance of a simple FSR formula proposed for the whole of the County Centre Zone, of relatively easy-to-earn FSR Bonuses which would allow a Maximum FSR of 12 on a Basic FSR of 6. However, the SPA's 1969 Woolloomooloo Plan, which was able to give untrammelled expression to the SPA's central city planning concepts and techniques, had been accepted by the outgoing City Commissioners. This Plan had been subsequently supported by the newly elected City Council, which determined to assist the SPA in its implementation. Council believed, as a matter of basic principle, that the planning efforts of other authorities should be supported, and that every effort should be made to maintain public confidence in this initial "action plan".

The Council accepted the impending gazettal of the City of Sydney Statutory Planning Scheme, which had been finalised by the SPA under the direction of the Minister, without any significant participation by the new Council. The pre-printed Scheme Map zoned 540 acres as "County Centre", within which virtually any use was to be permissible. The final Draft Ordinance had been amended to permit office buildings in the additional areas zoned "Light Industrial".

On February 3, 1971, the Minister for Local Government announced the Government's adoption and approval of the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority's Plan for the Rocks area, which provided for an addition to the CBD workforce of 32,000. In February, 1971, SPA officers predicted a workforce in the order of 80,000 or more for Woolloomooloo. This estimate was confirmed by the calculations set out in the Table on page 83 of the 1971 CSP, which showed that with an average overall FSR of 8 to 10, as permitted under the SPA Plan, Woolloomooloo could contain a workforce of 80,000 to 100,000.

Also in February, 1971, SATS advised the Council and its Consultants that SATS had adopted CBD workforce estimates of a low of 380,000 and a high of 530,000 for the year 2000, as alternative "dispersed" and "centralised" regional employment distribution projections.

Thus, the new Council, in preparing its 1971 City Strategic Plan, was confronted by a number of "faits accomplis":-

- a) The to-be-gazetted County Centre Zone was larger than the CBD;
- b) The final draft Ordinance permitted office buildings in Light Industrial Zones;
- c) The SPA had failed to achieve acceptance of a single FSR formula for the County Centre as a whole, which set a Basic FSR of 6 with relatively simple Bonuses giving a Maximum FSR of 12;
- d) The SPA Plan for Woolloomooloo permitted a "Maximum" FSR of 10, with provision for this being exceeded in "special locations and circumstances". The future Woolloomooloo workforce was consistently projected by independent calculations to be in the order of 80,000;
- e) The Rocks Scheme, with a projected workforce of 32,000, had been approved;
- f) Government plans had been approved in principle for a Tertiary Education Complex in Ultimo projected to cater for up to 60,000 students, and Cabinet had announced support for a major World Trade Centre at Pyrmont;
- g) Even if the then estimated CBD workforce of 230,000 to 240,000 within the then existing CBD were assumed to remain stagnant, the additional workforce planned for two sub-areas alone - the Rocks and Woolloomooloo - would bring the future total to 340,000 or 360,000 to which would need to be added other increases likely to result from other decisions concerning, e. g. Light Industrial Zones, the development of the Ultimo Education Complex and a possible future World Trade Centre.

It would have been irresponsible of Council and its Consultants at that time to have disregarded such decisions, approved plans and statements by other authorities. In fact, the Council's Consultants did question the magnitude and possible effects of some of the above proposals, and in the Table on p. 83 of the 1971 CSP, invited attention to these potential effects within the County Centre Zone.

In the light of the situation described above, the 1971 City Strategic Plan assumed and warned that there was a contingent possibility that the CBD workforce could, not would, grow to the order of 360,000 to 400,000 by the year 2000, and that in view of this possibility, the City Council and the public should recognise

the need for strong planning measures within the City such as were proposed in the other parts of the Strategic Plan. This assumed that the proportion of the Region's workforce in the CBD would continue to fall - from 34% in 1947 and 21% in 1966, to about 15% by the year 2000.

The Council's estimate of workforce contingencies published in the 1971 CSP were, in fact, conservative, in view of the possible effects of the decisions and actions of other authorities. In view of those decisions and actions, BOMA urged Council's Consultants to plan for a future CBD workforce of 600,000. At the time the 1971 CSP was published in July, 1971, the figure of 360,000 was the lowest estimate of possible future City CBD-type workforce that had ever been made by any authority or consultant.

The 1971 CSP called for a strongly rail oriented linear Central Business District (See Action Priority 2B on pp 82 to 84), concentrated along the traditional and firmly established north-south spine, with extensive pedestrianisation in the core and parking on the fringe. It was envisaged that this linear spine would extend from Circular Quay to Central Railway, and that it would possibly continue along the Railway to Redfern Station. This spine CBD is readily accessible to and from railway stations serving all rail lines radiating from the City.

This concept is consistent with the SPA's 1968 Sydney Region Outline Plan principle of "linear extension along communications corridors with high intensity activities, such as commercial and industrial centres, and universities, located on the rail system where possible". It was on this basis that Council's Consultants recommended against extensive office development to the east in the Woolloomooloo basin which is cut off from the CBD by the Domain, and which will have rail access from one line only. However, since large-scale office development then seemed certain in that basin, the 1971 CSP warned in a bold-typeface note on page 49, that "Any significant growth of offices within the City, but outside the Central Spine Business District, will be at the expense of the CBD". In other words, future City CBD-type workforce would not grow beyond the estimated maximum contingency. Eventually, it would either be concentrated within the lineal Central Spine, in accordance with the recommended strategy, or else dispersed or scattered at a lower average density over a much wider area of the City - including the rest of the 540 acre Statutory "County Centre" Zone and the Industrial Zones.

In our work for the 1971 City Strategic Plan, we will be reviewing not only these but all the other policies of the 1971 Plan in order to test their validity, and if they are in any way found wanting, we will have no hesitation in revising them.

Many of the Action Priorities of the 1971 City Strategic Plan have already been wholly or significantly implemented by the Council acting alone.

The implementation of others, particularly those under Policy 5 on Public Transport, are now beginning to be implemented by the State and Commonwealth Governments. The State Government has established the NSW Public Transport Commission, the purposes and functions of which have been defined by the Government and by the new Commissioners in the same terms as the Strategic Plan's Policy No. 5 and Action Priority 5B under that Policy.

Action Priority 4D of the 1971 City Strategic Plan, which dealt with the need for longer term capital investment budgeting in the public sector, called upon the Commonwealth Government to recognise that there is a major need for increased investment in city transportation facilities. It is heartening that this appears now to be well recognised in Commonwealth circles.

There are, nevertheless, a number of Action Priorities of the 1971 Plan which have not yet been implemented, although a start has been made on some of them. One such example is provision of retirement villages within the City. The Council has recently acquired a site for elderly people's housing in Surry Hills, and is proceeding with the planning and design of the project.

Much can still be done to prosecute the Policies and Action Priorities under the third Objective of the Plan - that of "DIVERSITY". Policies under this Objective deal with Residential Life (Policy 9), Retailing and Tourism (Policy 10), Community Services (Policy 11), and Leisure and Learning (Policy 12).

I believe that with every month that passes, pursuit of the "Diversity" Objective is assuming greater importance and is being prosecuted more vigorously. This is evidenced by much of the Council's recent work, and particularly by the Action Plans presented here today.

It may be expected that the 1974 Strategic Plan, and the new Action Priorities it will set, will reflect this emphasis on the quality and diversity of living and being in the City of Sydney.
