



BOB: Amanda, Council has been receiving submissions from the community on the Future City Proposals and I know that Put Orange First, the group you're part of, sent a submission in. What did it say?

AMANDA: Here it is in full -

Submission to Orange City Council's Future City Proposals

Put Orange First is a group of local business people whose goal is to bring the major players in the advancement of Orange together so that more impact can be made through collaboration than all acting separately. We aim to build a stronger relationship between our local businesses and consumers by building a stronger sense of a connected community where people can see the benefits of keeping their money local.

Put Orange First welcomes the Future City proposal to revitalise Orange's Central Business district and to encourage more people to come to Orange CBD and spend more time there, to build a CBD the people of Orange can be proud of.

It is a bold attempt and is so big that it is difficult to grasp. One of the elements on the website for discussion is a list of 106 projects. This makes it hard to visualise how all this will be implemented. Put Orange First suggests that there be a presentation to stakeholder groups and interested parties so that stakeholders can understand the vision for the future and the palette of ideas. This is a scenario planning approach where the vision for the future is clear and then we plan backwards to achieve it, removing the barriers in front of us. Scenario planning also asks 'if we don't do this what will the future be like?' There is a danger that people may descend into the details and argue over those rather than gain momentum to achieve the vision, and we urge decision makers to look at the big picture.

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It is important to gain the support of the property owners in the CBD so that they can play their part in improving the private domain when improvements to the public domain are happening.

Some of the proposed projects build on ideas put forward by organisations like Put Orange First, for example:

Orange City Place Manager - Council to engage the services of a place manager who would be responsible for the organisation, curation and coordination of events and activities in the city centre.

Orange City Centre Business Incentive Policy to attract targeted sectors into the city centre (E.g. Coffs Harbour City Council Business Incentive Policy). This could include a waiver of DA fees, discounted rates or access to Council owned property.

The proposal to develop an Orange City Centre Public Domain Manual should be one of the first cabs off the rank to ensure consistent quality in the public domain to encourage owners of the private domain to match the quality and design to outline in detail Council's objective and strategies for public domain investments and provides technical specifications and performance requirements for:

- Paving
- Trees and understorey planting
- Furniture and fixtures (seats, bins, bollards, bikeracks, drinking fountains, etc.)
- Water sensitive urban design systems and elements (WSUD)
- Street lighting and/or multifunction poles
- Public transport stops
- Wayfinding
- Public art
- Temporary installations and treatments

Another project that has our support and is probably overdue is for the Council and key stakeholders to develop a Public Art Strategy and Programme for the commissioning of public art in the form of murals/graffiti art on blank façades of public and private buildings, sculptures and installations in the public domain.

Future City includes proposals for transport movements including improved public transport; pedestrian safety and smart parking initiatives.

We also support consideration of the changing shape of the Orange City Centre resulting from the building of the new Department of Primary Industries offices. We support the overall concept of Future City and look forward to continued involvement in proposals to revitalise Orange CBD to encourage more people to spend time there and make it a CBD to be proud of.'

It seemed that the Future City proposals were not on exhibition for very long for community comment and I know there has been disquiet recently among CBD retailers about the exhibition of the South Orange Shopping Centre that seemed to be short and receive little publicity. I had understood that Council had undertaken to exhibit planning proposals for 40 days in response to COVID-19, yet I noticed that the Local Strategic Planning Statement was approved by Council on 21st July for a 28 day exhibition period which does not seem appropriate for such an important issue.

BOB: There's a lot of good sense in there, however call me a cynic, but given the way Councils do things these days, I can see this just getting bogged down with a myriad of different community opinions, objections etc. What can a Council like ours do to "avoid the arguing over details and gain momentum to achieve the vision" as Put Orange First put it?

AMANDA: I remember once being asked a similar question when I was working with a Council further north in NSW. I facilitated the community engagement throughout the local government area, with a main town and many smaller villages. I then worked with the Councillors and senior managers to develop the Community Strategic Plan on behalf of the community and the Council's Delivery Program where the rubber hits the road to deliver community priorities. One of the major issues raised by the community was that the local airport had been closed to passenger flights, and many people wanted passenger flights to return.

The Councillors asked me if they had to do what people were asking for and I said that the Councillors have a leadership role in explaining when something is not possible and what the alternatives are, and achieving momentum to deliver the alternatives. In this case, there was an airport only 40 minutes that was well served by passenger airline services. In this case the role of the Councillors was to lobby for a good, regular public transport service to get local people to and from the airport cheaply, not to try to persuade passenger airlines to return to the local airport. The Council planned of the local airport to be a freight centre, pilot training airport and industrial estate and that has been achieved.

So, that was a rather long answer and it reflects what I said last week about some of the qualities needed by Councillors include:

• INSPIRE DIRECTION AND PURPOSE

- o Create and communicate council's goals, priorities and vision for the community, and

• MAKE QUALITY DECISIONS

- o Make considered, timely and transparent decisions based on merit, and uphold the decision of council.

In the case of Future City, the Council needs to communicate, communicate, communicate the vision and the parts that are needed to deliver the whole. Communication includes having ambassadors from different walks of life to sell the vision too. So, Councillors, Council staff, local Members of Parliament, the local business community, community organisations and other stakeholders should all be ambassadors in owning the vision and gaining the commitment from others.

This does not mean bulldozing the whole thing through. Proper consideration needs to be given to local impacts and alternatives for all proposals. Of course, if Councillors fail to persuade the local community on an issue and go against something that is very dear to the heart of the majority of the community, the ultimate accountability is at the local government elections!!

One of the most contentious issues is always car parking and I expect that any proposed decreases in car parking spaces will result in a great deal of negative comments. I have heard about the widespread anger when the traffic lights were put in at the Post Office and the footpaths in Summer Street were widened which both resulted in the loss of