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Professor Helen Lochhead  
Dean  
UNSW Built Environment  
KENSINGTON NSW 2052

JVH (CIS)

14 May 2019

Dear Ms Lochhead,

I refer to the article in the MUDD 24 Yearbook entitled "*How to Create and Capture Public Value: Current Debates in North Sydney*" by Mr Jeremy Dawkins, published by the University of NSW in March 2019.

Whilst Council supports spirited debate and welcomes different perspectives on complex urban issues, it would be remiss of me not to outline my concerns to you. In particular, I feel obliged to highlight some of the concerning statements, fundamental errors and misrepresentations contained within the article.

North Sydney Council is working tirelessly to accommodate the State Government's significant job growth targets for the North Sydney Centre, whilst negotiating the delivery of major public open space upgrades and new community facilities to support that growth. Articles such as Mr Dawkins' service to significantly undermine these efforts and public confidence in the planning process.

My main concerns are as follows:

**The article suggests the heights of commercial buildings proposed in the Ward Street Masterplan have been determined by identifying 'the amount of 'uplift' that will be needed to fund the public components' of the masterplan.**

Such a process is not supported by the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* ('the Act') and misrepresents the process.

The Ward Street precinct, which is soon to be serviced by a new Metro station, is the appropriate location for tall commercial buildings that contribute towards mandated and ambitious levels of employment growth. The built form envelopes under the Ward Street Masterplan were informed by a detailed urban design analysis undertaken by Hassell, a highly respected design practice, and exhibited for public comment. The resulting uplift was then used as a basis to determine the public benefits could be delivered as part of the scheme, in line with the Act.

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All this information is in the public domain and, therefore, readily available to the author. That the article describes this process as happening in reverse, where height is determined by the amount of money Council wishes to raise for public benefits, is disingenuous.

**The article makes various references that the Ward Street Precinct is ‘peripheral’ to the centre of the North Sydney CBD.**

It states that *‘its only significance is that Council owns two sites at the end of Ward Street.* The article goes on to state that the Council land could be sold, and other land bought *“in a better location”*. It further cites existing pedestrian flows as evidence that reinforces the notion that this is a peripheral location.

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The article does not acknowledge the delivery of the new Metro station in 2024 which will be located literally across Berry Street. Indeed, the precinct will be located between the two Metro portals.

To describe the Ward Street Precinct as ‘peripheral’ and compare its potential future development with existing pedestrian movements ignorant of the arrival of the Metro, is disappointing in its omission, given that the article is all about planning in North Sydney. The Metro is expected to generate an additional 15,000 pedestrian movements in this part of the city in the morning peak hour. This will undoubtedly aliven the centre in the north and pedestrian movement patterns will be fundamentally different after the opening of Metro in 2024. Some of this patronage will result from a shift from the existing rail station.

**The article erroneously states the Ward Street Masterplan will deliver only ‘a public space of about 500 m2 and a branch of the city library’**

The quoted amount of open space proposed to be delivered is incorrect. The Masterplan identifies a total of approximately 5,400 sqm of open space comprising a central square and greenspace totaling 3,200 sqm and a network of active new laneways.

The Masterplan also aspires to deliver not just ‘a branch of the city library’ but almost 5,000 sqm of public facilities for a Knowledge and Cultural Hub, contributing to developing our Smart Cities agenda.

Misrepresenting the significant public benefits proposed to be delivered in the CBD serves only to cast doubt on the benefits of the value capture process North Sydney Council is employing, which appears to be the central argument this article is attempting to make.

**The article ignores the significant efforts that are currently being made to deliver the additional open space opportunities in the North Sydney CBD.**

Whilst the article references the *Place Book - North Sydney CBD Public Domain Strategy Stage 1*, there is no consideration of the significant transport and urban design modelling and planning that has been invested to close Miller Street between Berry Street and the Pacific Highway to vehicular movements to create a new, centrally located, sundrenched public space. Nor has the other significant, public domain opportunities identified in the Place Book which are well known to the author, been considered.

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Given the good relationship North Sydney Council has with the UNSW, employing several alumni (one of which features in the MUDD 24 Yearbook), I am surprised to see an article from your faculty that suggests our staff lack the '*dynamic spatial imagination*' to holistically consider the impacts of new development on CBD. The article paints a very narrow approach by Council towards its planning responsibilities and ignores much wider initiatives of planning, negotiation and approvals that are currently being undertaken by a group of hard working and dedicated public employees that seek to improve the vitality, amenity and attractiveness of the CBD.

Academic input into the planning process is highly valued, and I would ask in future that the UNSW Built Environment provides a more accurate and balanced approach towards debating these important matters that affect our city.

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Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned on 02 9936 8300 should you wish to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely,



JOSEPH HILL  
DIRECTOR CITY STRATEGY