

2.4 MONASH INTEGRATED CULTURAL PRECINCT

(Author: AP)

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

To note and endorse the MGA/WHL Monash Integrated Cultural Precinct (ICP) Feasibility Study business case for submission to the Victorian State Government.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

The Monash ICP leverages the significance of Monash Gallery of Art (MGA) as a national cultural destination and the knowledge resources of the Wheelers Hill Library (WHL) to create a unique integrated cultural and learning destination that seamlessly connects the visual and the literary arts to drive cultural tourism, job creation and strengthen the cultural capital of the region.

This reimagining presents a major opportunity for south-east Melbourne and the State to capitalise on the opportunity to create a destination that drives cultural tourism, promotes job creation, and embeds it into a network of cultural hubs throughout Victoria.

The project will achieve enhanced cultural infrastructure and address deficiencies in operational and capital infrastructure that were identified during the ILM process:

- Inability to meet changing expectations and increased demand for community, cultural and education programming inhibits audience growth and diversification.
- Failure to leverage and exhibit a world class photographic collection, undermining its status as a cultural destination and learning and creative centre.
- Inadequate capacity and dysfunctional configuration of gallery, library and café reduces quality of visitor experience and utilisation of services and facilities.
- Failure to preserve and develop a unique, nationally significant collection seriously threatens its condition, integrity and long-term accessibility.

The preferred solution focuses on creating an integrated cultural precinct on the current site as an arts, cultural and learning destination.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Economic Analysis has highlighted the positive regional and local economic benefit which Monash ICP will generate locally and regionally, in addition to a significant range of non-financial benefits across arts and education, health and well-being, community cohesion and quality of life. Operational financial modelling has been undertaken and is incorporated into the economic analysis.

The project delivers a benefit cost ratio of 1.9 and a net present value of \$59.1m. The Monash economy is expected to benefit from the construction of the project. Based on the estimated cost of the project, a total of \$59m of output, \$23m in value-add and 277 local jobs will be supported within the Monash City Council region over the period of construction. The project delivers positive results in economic efficiency and in regional economic impacts. The strong CBA results (BCR = 1.9) indicates that the benefits of the project significantly outweigh the costs of provision. Visitors and online users benefit significantly from the development of the project. This indicates that there is merit on delivering the project as it benefits users more than the initial and ongoing investment at a ratio of almost 2 to 1.

Cost planning: The total anticipated development cost for the preferred option is \$59,796,000 excluding GST. This is based on a single staged project delivery.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

To endorse the MGA/WHL Monash ICP Feasibility Study business case for submission to the Victorian State Government.

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes and endorses the Monash Gallery of Art (MGA)/Wheelers Hill Library (WHL) Monash Integrated Cultural Precinct (ICP) Feasibility Study business case for submission to the Victorian State Government.

INTRODUCTION

Council is requested to note and endorse the MGA/WHL Monash ICP Feasibility Study business case for submission to the Victorian State Government.

BACKGROUND

In 2017 MGA Committee of Management (MGA COM) commissioned MGS Architects to undertake a scoping study of MGA and the Wheelers Hill Library. Council subsequently received a Victorian State Government grant of \$400,000 via the Community Support Fund which is administered by Creative Victoria to support the development of a Feasibility Study. The project seeks to understand the feasibility of leveraging the unique cultural assets on the site through the development of an integrated Cultural Precinct for the City of Monash. It considers how to address key issues hampering the delivery and development of cultural activities and address site constraints including; ageing infrastructure, inadequate building capacity to store the collection, inadequate gallery space, inadequate facilities to provide education, workshops and public programs to the local community, and poor configuration and lack of integration between MGA, Library and Café which negatively effects visitation, participation and engagement for the community at the City of Monash's arts and cultural facility.

The Study is being conducted in six stages (stages may overlap):

- Stage One: Final Project Brief
- Stage Two: High Level Analysis and Preliminary Business Case
- Stage Three: Architectural and ISP recommendations and QS
- Stage Four: Implementation, Branding and Marketing
- Stage Five: Advocacy and Support Campaign
- Stage Six: Final Business Case

The Business Case is scheduled to be submitted to the Victorian State Government on 1 April 2021, with the acquittal due 15 April 2021.

DISCUSSION

Vision

The Monash ICP leverages the significance of MGA as a national cultural destination and the knowledge resources of the WHL to create a unique integrated cultural and learning destination that seamlessly connects the visual and the literary arts to drive cultural tourism, job creation and strengthen the cultural capital of the region.

When Monash Gallery of Art (MGA) opened its doors in 1990 it began its journey to become the only Australian public gallery wholly devoted to collecting and exhibiting photography, with the only collection solely dedicated to Australian photography. MGA has become renowned as the home of Australian photography with a unique and important role to play within the broader network of public galleries.

Joining forces with the Wheelers Hill Library in the early 2000s, a wing was added to the Harry Seidler designed building that resulted in a site that incorporated both the library and gallery with a café. However, as the standing of these two entities rose in popularity, profile and reach, site constraints began to hamper operations and effect growth, impact and reach within local, national and international audiences.

The Monash ICP aims to create a cultural centre that drives cultural tourism through connecting key assets in the region and support the growth and vibrancy of a diverse, connected and inclusive community.

The development of an integrated cultural precinct creates a central corridor that links a network of arts and cultural organisations from the CBD to the south eastern regions – embedding a suburban creative belt into the fabric of the State. This reimagining presents a major opportunity for south-east Melbourne and the State to capitalise on the opportunity to create a destination that drives cultural tourism, promotes job creation, and embeds it into a network of cultural hubs throughout Victoria.

Across the creative and cultural industries, the arts industry is an engine for economic growth, innovation and jobs. The ICP will become an educational and programming centre, providing opportunities for life-long-learning including a dedicated children's gallery-library, targeted schools and tertiary programs and public engagement initiatives across the site that seamlessly combines the visual and literary worlds. The Monash ICP will act as a resource, particularly for secondary and tertiary students across the region. Recent years have witnessed a growing trend of lateral industry connections, 'like-minded' partnerships and creative incubator development: MGA/WHL site has unrealised potential for similar arts and lifelong learning

relationships and experiences, a reimagining of its purpose as a cultural hub and the reinstatement of its iconic Seidler building.

Enhanced cultural infrastructure

The Business Case for the Monash ICP highlights the strategic significance and pressing need for enhanced cultural infrastructure for Melbourne's rapidly growing South East Region.

The development plans address a range of constraints and issues associated with the two valued but ageing buildings. Resolving these problems will enhance programming capabilities and community engagement, improve operational efficiency, and build greater sustainability for the future. Reshaping the Gallery and Library into an Integrated Cultural Precinct will also result in the creation of a nationally distinctive and regionally vital cultural asset.

Issues, problems – and an exciting solution

A thorough series of Investment Logic Mapping workshops identified key challenges including:

- An inability to deliver cultural and education programming to match current community expectations.
- A failure to leverage a world-class photographic collection, and to preserve and develop this collection – threatening its condition and integrity.
- A dysfunctional configuration of the gallery, library and café – impacting the quality of the visitor experience, and commercial outcomes.

The needs of MGA and WHL have been expressed as a series of problems which require resolution:

- Inability to meet changing expectations and increased demand for community, cultural and education programming inhibits audience growth and diversification.
- Failure to leverage and exhibit a world class photographic collection, undermining its status as a cultural destination and learning and creative centre.
- Inadequate capacity and dysfunctional configuration of gallery, library and café reduces quality of visitor experience and utilisation of services and facilities.
- Failure to preserve and develop a unique, nationally significant collection seriously threatens its condition, integrity and long-term accessibility.

The responses identified to address these issues were focused around the creation of an integrated precinct which could transform the experience of locals and visitors, supported by elevated awareness, capacity building and state of the art storage facilities.

Assessment of options

Analysis identified a range of key responses to the problem and benefit identified in the ILM process. The identified options and interventions are set out following and ROAR analysed:

- Option 1 - Business as usual / do nothing
- Option 2 - Program development, branding and minor refurbishment
- Option 3 - Creating a destination precinct and driving cultural visitation to the south- east corridor
- Option 4 -Refocus the site and services to become a centre of excellence for photography and visual arts
- Option 5 - Create a new visual and performing arts cultural precinct of national and international significance for Victoria.

The preferred solution

Multiple options for addressing the problems identified were assessed. **The preferred solution** focuses on creating an integrated cultural precinct on the current site as an arts, cultural and learning destination.

Improving the flow and amenity across all service areas – Gallery, Library and cafe will enhance visitor experience. The use of multiple channels (online, onsite and touring) to provide a richer and deeper experience will support audience engagement and will build capacity and transform assets to make the precinct a major cultural and learning destination for the south east region. The design interventions address eight linked objectives:

- Support lifelong learning and educational outcomes
- Strengthen connection between MGA and WHL
- Create a world class exhibition environment
- Build a unique brand and offering
- Create a regional destination
- Build the creative economy
- Enhance community value, and
- Establish a new generation library.

The new building is purpose designed for exhibitions, public and private functions, cultural activities and life-long learning, to provide Melbourne, and Victoria, with new opportunities for engagement around arts and culture, particularly in the field of photography and the arts. It delivers enhanced access, exhibition and collection spaces for flexible programming and to meet the needs of this significant collection transforming the precinct into a vital and welcoming new venue for major events and exhibitions focusing on the arts, servicing the community with a cultural facility that is a destination for every day, occasional or special events. This option provides the potential to combine cultural activities with life-long learning, with

generous and flexible exhibition rooms, community lounges and hospitality/event spaces.

The business case Executive Summary and associated preliminary design are attached, noting that they are conceptual at this stage. The full business case is available upon request.

Branding and marketing

The City of Monash currently oversees a cultural precinct that holds precious community assets that are undervalued and unrealised in terms of potential and national scope. The precinct includes MGA, the WHL and a Sculpture Park, all of which present and operate independently and serve different audiences.

The MGA is a national proposition and housed in the only gallery in Australia designed by celebrated modernist architect, Harry Seidler. The Wheelers Hill Library is part of a network of six public libraries of the Monash Public Library Service (MPLS). It has a strong local identity and provides a range of literary and lifelong learning opportunities for all ages and access to the broader MPLS collections.

In the absence of a unifying vision and purpose, these institutions function separately, side by side and are hindered in their scope and reach. There are opportunities to increase their capacity to promote and share remarkable resources and collections, grow and attract new audiences and deliver exceptional and lasting value to the community.

The redevelopment of the site proposes to truly integrate the offering and relaunch the precinct to a national audience as an inspiring photographic destination with a gallery-library at its heart.

The Museum of Australian Photography (MAPh) is the new name proposed for the precinct. The use of the word 'Museum' adds weight and gravitas to the claim that the precinct is a major photography destination and a site for culture and learning. It facilitates the use of a memorable acronym that playfully references photography while making recall easy for potential new audiences. The name will be accompanied by sub branding that will be used to give prominence and wayfinding to services like the library and the café thereby reinforcing this integrated approach. For instance: The library@MAPh, The café@MAPh.

Economic Analysis has highlighted the positive regional and local economic benefit which Monash ICP will generate locally and regionally, in addition to a significant range of non-financial benefits across arts and education, health and well-being, community cohesion and quality of life.

The project delivers a benefit cost ratio of 1.9 and a net present value of \$59.1m. This means for every dollar invested into the project, users are expected to receive \$1.9 in benefits. For a project of this nature, this is a

significantly positive result and justifies a positive investment decision for the project.

The Monash economy is expected to benefit from the construction of the project. Based on the estimated cost of the project, a total of \$59m of output, \$23m in value-add and 277 local jobs will be supported within the Monash City Council region over the period of construction.

On a longer-term basis, visitations associated with the project from those within the Monash region and people from outside the region deliver material ongoing impacts. Attendees spend money in the local economy which helps local businesses. The ongoing spend at the facility itself also has lasting impacts throughout the region. This impact is longer-term in nature as these local jobs are maintained for as long as the project is operational. Importantly, a higher share of output, value-added and local job opportunities are retained in Monash City Council. Unlike with capital spend, almost all job opportunities are retained in the Monash region.

Overall, the project delivers positive results in economic efficiency and in regional economic impacts. The strong CBA results (BCR = 1.9) indicates that the benefits of the project significantly outweigh the costs of provision. Visitors and online users benefit significantly from the development of the project.

Community wellbeing and healthy neighbourhoods

The ICP delivers significant non-monetised benefits. These range from employment creation, enhanced skills and education opportunities locally and quality of life improvements for the Monash community to environmental enhancement, and improved access for visitors with limited mobility. Importantly, it delivers the key cultural outcomes of an enhanced exhibition space to display MGA's unique collection and the complementary book collection, and improved access to one of the City's valued libraries.

Community wellbeing is more important and relevant than ever in light of the impacts of COVID-19. The temporary shutdowns of the economy will have ramifications for years to come, including impacting the way people and communities interact, engage and prosper. The unique ability for arts, culture and creativity to generate social capital and strengthen and reflect a community's character means it will play a key role in the rehabilitation of our communities in the future. Moreover, working patterns may have changed for the long term, with home-based working being far more widespread in the future, emphasising the importance of high quality cultural, recreational and other facilities in each Melbourne neighbourhood.

This reorientation to localised provision is fully aligned with Melbourne's strategy of developing 20-minute neighbourhoods. The growing concept of the 20-minute neighbourhood is focused on self-efficiency and liveability of

local communities – a neighbourhood which gives residents the ability to meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute return walk from home.

High quality cultural and recreational facilities are a vital component in the successful realisation of the 20-minute neighbourhood. Monash ICP will make a valuable contribution towards implementing this vision of a vibrant, self-sufficient, coherent community.

Key dates and deliverables

- Preliminary Business Case (stages 1-2) due: 15 March 2020. Complete.
- Final Business Case (stages 3 – 5) due: 15 March 2021 (extension sought to 1 April 2021)
- Final acquittal to Creative Victoria due: 15 April 2021

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The strategic alignment of this project to the City of Monash adopted plans and strategies is outlined as:

Monash Council Plan 2017-2021: *Council Plan 2017-21* supports the delivery of the MGA Strategic Plan 2018-2022. In particular, it meets the aspiration of:

Strategic Objective - A Liveable & Sustainable City

We value our natural environment and want to preserve and enhance the leafy green character of our city. Monash's desirability as a place to live, learn, work and play needs to be protected

Strategic Objective - Inviting Open & Urban Spaces

We will continue to improve our public infrastructure, meeting places and open spaces, providing inclusive, safe and inviting places for community use

Strategic Objective - An Inclusive Community

We will continue to improve our public infrastructure, meeting places and open spaces, providing inclusive, safe and inviting places for community use

Our people and our communities are healthy, connected and engaged.

Monash Long Term Strategy: Monash 2021 The Monash Long Term Strategy promotes Monash as the City of Choice for residents, business and visitors. Its resulting vision has the following four primary areas of focus: This provides a framework to ensure projects are aligned whilst providing a consistent high level approach to plan, manage and deliver the appropriate capital works projects now and into the future.

- A fair and healthy community
- A planned and connected city
- An inclusive and safe community
- A green and naturally-rich city.

A Healthy and Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan 2017-2021 captures the potential of this project. To be Active and Healthy: A city dedicated to optimal health of its community Engaged, Confident and Connected: A city which actively listens, engages and values community wisdom in shaping its own future. This process will greatly support Council's broader social agenda for creating a healthy and resilient Monash community that is active, healthy and connected through arts and culture.

MGA 2018-2022 Strategic Plan

The project speaks to all four initiatives of MGA 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. It addresses the development and engagement opportunities with the exhibition program, the growth, security and safety of the collection, the need to provide collection access to the public as well as provide programs and engagement opportunities that enrich and grow MGA's audiences, with the capacity to grow commercial and philanthropic income streams.

The MGA vision is to be the Australian home of photography, championing Australian photography and inspiring audiences to embrace, explore and value photography. As Australia's leading public art gallery devoted to the collection and exhibition of photography, we engage local, national and international audiences in arts and cultural experiences.

Monash Public Library Service 2020-21 Action Plan

Purpose: Encourage lifelong learning, increase literacy and build strong resilient communities across Monash.

Vision: Be an integral part of a connected community that is empowered by learning and inspired by information and ideas.

Monash Public Library Service Strategy 2015 – 2018

Our vision: Inspiring strong, vibrant connected communities.

Theme 1: Digital Futures - Encourage digital creativity through the provision of opportunities for shared learning and skill development in the creative arts utilising technologies.

Theme 2: Libraries as Community Lounge Rooms - Promote the role of the library as a gathering space for residents to pursue and share literary and creative interest and activities.

Theme 3: Lifelong Learning and Participation - Promote community interest in cultural diversity through the provision of opportunities for cultural groups to showcase traditions and creative skills.

Monash Arts and Culture Strategy 2015-2018.

The vision for Arts and Culture in Monash is to inspire strong, vibrant, creative, connected communities.

Theme 1: Creative Expression and Participation

- Encourage and support participation in arts and cultural activities at a local level and within communities of interest
- Inspire strong, vibrant, creative and connected communities

- Ensure opportunities to participate in cultural activities that are reflective of the cultural diversity of the Monash community

Theme 3: Partnerships, Collaboration and Networking Facilitate opportunities for networking among practising artists, creative businesses and the broad range of arts and cultural groups.

A new strategy is under development and the MGA/WHL will inform and feed in to its development.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Community wellbeing and heathy neighbourhoods

The ICP delivers significant non-monetised benefits. These range from employment creation, enhanced skills and education opportunities locally and quality of life improvements for the Monash community to environmental enhancement, improved access for visitors with limited mobility – as well as the key cultural outcomes of an enhanced exhibition space to display MGA’s unique collection and the complementary book collection, and improved access to one of the City’s valued libraries.

Monash ICP will make a valuable contribution towards implementing the vision of a vibrant, self-sufficient, coherent community.

This includes:

- (a) sense of community
- (b) community services
- (c) community health and well-being
- (d) education and skills development
- (e) improvement to parking infrastructure and access

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

NA

CONSULTATION

A community consultation plan was been developed. A Public survey was undertaken in February 2020 which received 161 responses. A letter inviting Gallery Place residents to engage in the survey and the project was provided in a letter box drop. A Listening post held at MGA/WHL in March 2020.

Architectural Design focus groups including education, gallery/museum, local artists and creatives, photographers/artists, library and tourism sectors were conducted. Branding: stakeholder engagement focus groups were conducted between July and December 2020.

A Stakeholder engagement plan has been developed as part of the business case which takes into consideration community and key stakeholder groups.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Economic Analysis has highlighted the positive regional and local economic benefit which Monash ICP will generate locally and regionally, in addition to a significant range of non-financial benefits across arts and education, health and well-being, community cohesion and quality of life. Financial operational modelling articulating the uplift in investment has been undertaken and incorporated into the economic analysis.

The project delivers a benefit cost ratio of 1.5 and a net present value of \$44.9m. The Monash economy is expected to benefit from the construction of the project. Based on the estimated cost of the project, a total of \$74m of output, \$23m in value-add and 277 local jobs will be supported within the Monash City Council region over the period of construction.

Overall, the project delivers positive results in economic efficiency and in regional economic impacts. The strong CBA results (BCR = 1.5) indicates that the benefits of the project significantly outweigh the costs of provision. Visitors and online users benefit significantly from the development of the project. This indicates that there is merit on delivering the project as it benefits users more than the initial and ongoing investment at a ratio of almost 2 to 1.

Cost planning: The total anticipated development cost for the preferred option is \$59,796,000 excluding GST. This is based on a single staged project delivery. A comparative cost was prepared for the development with a staged delivery solution. The cost penalty would be \$5,704,000 excluding GST.

CONCLUSION

The funding provided by Creative Victoria indicates the significance of cultural precincts to Victorian communities and has enabled us to explore the feasibility of building on the foundations of Council's commitment to the services already offered at this location in Wheelers Hill.

This paper and attachment provide an overview of the Business Case for the Integrated Cultural Precinct (ICP) Feasibility Study for the Monash Gallery of Art (MGA) and Wheelers Hill Library (WHL) for endorsement for submission to the Victorian State Government.

Attachment 1