

The Mall

When I worked in shopping centre development in Sydney the number one rule of any Master Plan was “*What does the customer want*”. I can, and do, have a lot of opinions on how we can develop the CBD so it generates the optimum income for landlords and retailers, and provides a great experience for shoppers, but at the end of the day it should come back to what these groups want.

I did a lot of work when I was on the Chamber of Commerce as Chair of the Retail Sub-Committee and I think the issue is also way bigger than whether the mall is opened up to traffic or not. Its about where we anchor our events and how each zone, whether its waterfront parkland or high street retail, creates a clear identity and doesn't overshadow or impede other zones.

My vision for the CBD would see really well-defined retail shopping zones and from a heritage perspective I'd also really like to work on a strategy to get the heritage facades restored – they are so unique, and as you can see at the top end of Rooke St, polish up quite well with some attention. When we get to a point where additional retail space is needed, **I think we should look at building a deck over the Formby Road carpark that would link the cinema with the two arcades, perhaps even with some mixed use residential or commercial over the additional retail floorspace. This was apparently the original design intent of the cinema complex on stilts and I think the logic was sound.** Once the waterfront precinct is complete – it needs to be activated with bike hire; ferry trips from the new jetty, and in the very near future, heritage train rides departing from the Roundhouse.

Qualifications

The Council role requires you, in collaboration with fellow councillors, to reflect the views and wishes of the community in setting a strategic direction for the city. To this end, I think I can work collaboratively with most people - as I negotiate for a living, it sort of comes with the territory. My time on the Chamber of Commerce required me to have an in depth understanding of the future plan for Devonport and I worked on a Devonport 2030 Discussion Paper for the Chamber to develop ideas to take to government. I also bring small business skills such as delivering value for money, financial literacy and balancing a budget, understanding the relationship between risk and reward and the importance of innovation, change and great culture in any organisation.

Values and opinions

As per my previous answer, any elected representative needs to speak for their constituents. Id like to think my values in relation to fairness and integrity, collaboration and communication would scaffold my decision making process. For example, I clearly have ties to the business community as I run a business here and I've been a very vocal member of the Chamber of Commerce, but that doesn't preclude me from working hard for community groups.

Affordable housing

As the city grows we need to ensure that we deliver adequate affordable housing for those on low incomes including those in the childcare, health, education, retail and hospitality sectors. Higher rents can force people to move further away but long commutes may lead these workers to move out of the area altogether. I think an increase in affordable housing is best done as a whole of government approach where local, state and federal governments align their policies and to work together eg on the allocation of council and government owned land to building affordable housing, or government capital grants and operating subsidies etc. In summary, its an important issue to solve, but one we cant solve alone at local level.

Three Challenges for the Devonport Region

Devonport like most regions has a shortage of housing, skilled labour and doctors and so on, but these issues are not unique to Devonport. I think for Devonport specifically, our challenge is how do we compete for investment capital against the south and the north. We don't have those big pieces of infrastructure that the bigger population centres have eg major hospital, airport and or university, and these are important if we are to attract skilled professionals in to the area, retain our talent and build our commercial and industrial centres. There is a huge opportunity to link a tertiary institution with our agriculture sector in Devonport, and we must see the delivery of the airport master plan which will bring much needed industrial land into the mix.

I think our second challenge is more of an opportunity, in that we don't have the traffic and congestion gridlock that Hobart and Launceston have, so how do we establish a long-term plan to grow the city in a way that accommodates more traffic, public transport and a variety of housing options, but keeps our liveability ranking high.

The third biggest challenge I see is having the confidence to keep going with the Living City Master Planning. For many who advocated for major change at the time, including myself as President of the Chamber of Commerce, the debates became quite personal and were hard going. There is a small but vocal cohort who don't like change, and almost will new projects to fail. I think the city should be really proud of how the thousands of hours of hard work by everyone have delivered a great city precinct that is now connected to the river but our challenge now is to keep going, and not be deterred by the risk of failure or criticism.

Free Parking to help business survive

I think if a business needs free CBD parking to survive, they probably are in the wrong location. I don't have any objection to free parking, but there would need to be a plan to replace the lost income – it's a significant part of Councils budget, which in turn pays for our roads and other council services. Do these services get cut, or do we borrow more to pay for free parking? To address the problem of retail profitability more broadly, I think Council can do more to promote the city retail. There is a great website <https://www.visitdevonport.com.au/> which was developed after consultation with the Retail Sub-Committee of the Chamber but its not high enough up on the Google search. It needs to be promoted and better utilised – for example a quick search of accommodation for December doesn't include the Novotel. Digital marketing is a great source of income for the city's retail and we aren't utilising it anywhere near its capacity – for example, when passengers arrive at the Melbourne airport or seaport, how are we marketing Devonport at that point? On arrival, what visitor / customer experience do they get?

In summary, I think Council is way more proactive than it has been in terms of city promotions, but more can always be done. There is also a responsibility on retailers to ensure they work refurbishments into their lease renewals, keep investing in their own marketing, and ensuring their product meets the market.

Small Business Growth

NZ has done some interesting work in the hospitality and restaurant space where they set up small precincts after the earthquakes in Christchurch out of converted shipping containers. I always thought this would be something we could test in our wharf precinct, either west or east devonport, to give start ups some affordable space to grow. Equally, Sydney did some great work with laneways while I was there and found ways to open up parts of the city that weren't being fully utilised to create interesting temporary or permanent spaces for live music or small pop ups. At the end of the day, if there are the creative businesses willing to give things a go, Council should be able to assist with a policy framework – there's a whole night time economy we're missing out on and I would see start ups as an integral part of creating an ambience and vibe unique to Devonport, in addition to traditional bricks and mortar venues.

Professionals Status

I don't necessarily think professional qualifications determine whether you're a good councillor. You can certainly draw on that professional experience to do a good job, but as anyone who has been on a committee knows, it's the people willing to roll their sleeves up and do the work that provide the most value. I think Devonport Council has done a great job recruiting skilled professionals that are proactively improving systems and procedures and working on master planning for the future - this is really key because they support the elected councillors who are tapped into community expectations and help with good decision making.

Council as a Stepping Stone

Im very happy if my four year term on council is the sum total of my political involvement. Its been something I've been thinking of doing since I stood down from the Chamber four years ago, but I don't necessarily think that political aspirations are a bad thing. I would rather someone wanting to make a good name for themselves in a council role working really hard, than someone without aspiration being there for years and never doing anything. Its only when people are there to tick a box on their resume and not put the effort in that I would have an issue.

East Devonport Marine Precinct

I strongly support the marine precinct. Our waterways are an underutilised asset and having been over at the old yacht club many times its in need of an update. Combined with the ferry terminal upgrade I think this will be great for East Devonport, both for the commercial sector and also the residents.

Community Wellbeing

I have been workshopping ideas with professionals in the wellness sector for a while and if I am elected I would like to develop an wellness centre concept where a bunch of holistic wellness businesses can co-locate. I have been part of a yoga group in Devonport for the last 10 years and its constantly moving around, even though the participants are all regulars. Having a community wellness centre that has things like yoga, chiropractic, naturopathy, functional medicine all under the one roof would provide the community with a health and wellness facility that can prevent or delay serious illness. As an aging

population we need to ensure people are given every opportunity. I see this as a concept that would need to be co-funded by state or federal levels of government and the businesses that participate. In addition to trialling a community wellness centre I would also like to see community wellbeing flow through the design and review criteria for all public assets. For example, our bus stops around the city could have public messaging incorporated in the design relating to health and wellbeing.

In terms of the natural environment I worked hard as a member of the Cradle Coast Authority Regional Economic Development Group to highlight the importance of funding for the Dulverton Waste facility up at Railton. I would strongly support FOGO bins, and also a recycling service for commercial premises.

Australia Day

The date we celebrate Australia Day has changed before and I would be happy to change the date. I would not actively lobby for this if elected, my focus will be more on economic development but I appreciate other elected members will have different emphasis on key things they want to achieve during their term.

Creating a viable retail precinct

Talking to commercial leasing agents, rents have never been higher in the CBD. In my opinion this is inextricably linked to the success of the Living City master plan because its opened up the city to the waterfront and given business and industry a clear strategic plan, which encourages investment. One of the main reasons I'm running is to keep community engagement in the Living City Master Plan – the viability of so many local businesses depends on it.

For the retail precinct to remain viable it also needs to be constantly evolving and keeping pace with market trends. City promotions and events play a key part, but so do retailers - they invest in their shopfronts, train their staff and meet customer expectations. I believe Devonport retailers are really strong in this area – we have a higher proportion of independent retailers, often working in this space over several generations, and they are very skilled at evolving their businesses and I hope, if I'm elected, I can support them as they grow as much as possible.