

Community OS Roundhouse plans unveiled

Hans Lovejoy

Roundhouse Action Group (RAG)'s plans for a self-funded community and cultural centre have been announced and will be presented to Council this Thursday.

The prime parcel of Council-owned land in Ocean Shores has, for many years, been an underutilised public asset.

Since it was acquired in 1993, the 1.388 hectare site has remained largely unused.

RAG's comprehensive 100-page business plan hopes to persuade Council and staff that its long-term business model would be preferable to selling the land outright; something which *The Echo* undertands councillors and staff are mostly in favour of.

The community group claim that 21 units for short-term accommodation would help pay for capital works and ongoing costs.

Other income streams have also been examined, they say, including a cafe, gallery, auditorium as well as government grants.

'We want to turn the Ocean Shores Roundhouse site into the best innovative, self-powered community cultural facility in the Northern Rivers region – and showcase the Byron creative arts,' RAG spokesperson Ri Fraser says.



Architect Jerry Cook's concept plan, along with a 100-page business plan, will be presented to Council this Thursday.

'Byron Shire Council has a unique opportunity to create a flagship community project – a public gallery for the cultural arts and promote cultural tourism.

'Council and community can work together to achieve a public cultural arts facility for the shire on a unique landmark site.'

Funding

Ms Fraser claims RAG's budget projections show an annual surplus of around \$500,000 and can be achieved with 75 per cent occupancy rates.

'MP Don Page has undertaken to obtain funding for the Roundhouse Project in the range of \$250,000 to \$300,000

for a development application and design work.

'This would be from the State and Regional Development portfolio, perhaps under a new name.

'We have amended our budget for the first full operating year of the 21 motel units to include this funding. The cultural centre will be built as the final stage of the project.'

Community survey

'A survey was conducted on the use of the site last August and September,' she said.

'The Roundhouse Action Group surveyed the local community (coastal north and Mullumbimby), under the auspices of the Ocean Shores Community Association and Ocean Shores Art Expo, and with support from other community organisations.

'This was done in response to a resolution of Council asking for confirmation of community wishes for the land. The result demonstrated an overwhelming support for a multipurpose cultural centre on the site.'

Cultural Centre Facilities

Facilities at the centre include a performance space/community cinema, coffee shop/restaurant, exhibition space/gallery, meeting/conference/office space, tourist information office and shop, archival museum and workshops, sur-

rounding gardens, picnic area and playground.

'We have worked with the local Aboriginal community on this project,' RAG's Jan Mangleson told *The Echo*, 'and representatives have attended our public functions and planning over the past year.

'We are planning for significant Aboriginal cultural input into our art gallery and museum.

'It is planned to run our cinema/theatre as a showcase for the local film industry with shorts, docos, etc, every day. We are in consultation with theatre experts on acoustics, theatre design etc.

'The plan to build 21 units on the northern slope which are for short-term visitor accommodation is of interest to Golf Tourism Australia and Northern Rivers Tourism, who say there is a lack of accommodation for golfers and for visitors generally in the area.

'RAG's financial consultants assessed that there would be \$500,000 per year net income at 75 per cent occupancy rate after interest and running costs. It is likely the occupancy rate would be much higher.'

Architect's vision

'I am using ancient stone-hengey monolithic forms,' says (retired) architect Jerry Cook, 'and then in contrast, more modern forms; a long timeline of creative energy, which is what this project is all about.

'There is also a relationship with the sea, whale forward fins in the stone monolith forms, and Mt Warning, the lifting curve at the entry – Mt warning being an old volcano edge that lifts out of the curve. We also have nearby Mt Chincogan with a similar feel.

'The taller round part is a cafe with amazing 360-degree views of the sea, whale watchers' heaven, and scenic forest view, including Mt Warning in the distance.

'Just below that there is a local arts and crafts shop, and on the lower level there is an historical area and theatre.'

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