

# RAILWAY NORTH

An opportunity to create an inner-city, urban community space

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## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

During 2001 and 2002, a number of reports into the future of the Ballarat Railway Station were commissioned and developed by some of the biggest names in Australian architecture, planning and building construction.

Daryl Jackson Pty Ltd – the architect behind the Docklands Stadium (formerly known as the Telstra Dome) – developed the comprehensive *Ballarat Railway Station Precinct Master Plan* in 2002.

Reports developed prior and subsequent to the *Master Plan* – reports produced by Sinclair Knight Merz, Essential Economics, Maunsell Australia Pty Ltd and SGS Economics & Planning – came to many of the same conclusions and recommendations.

The area to the north of the Ballarat Railway Station precinct was identified by the reports as an ideal location for new homes as well community facilities and spaces. The reports recommended that the freight hub be relocated, followed by an assessment and then rehabilitation of the land.

This document summarises these common conclusions and recommendations, as well as the some of the gaps and issues identified by the five reports.

With new freight hub sites currently in consideration, there is now opportunity to further explore the advice and recommendations of these reports developed to make the most of this prime inner-city land.

## OVERVIEW – AN INNER-CITY URBAN SPACE FOR ALL

Ballarat is one of the nation's fastest growing regional cities. Over the next couple of decades, Ballarat's population is forecast to grow from 88,437 (2006) to 120,803 by 2031. Many of these people will commute to Melbourne for work.

### **Ballarat Railway Station precinct today**

The Ballarat Railway Station precinct sits on around 11,000 square metres of prime land on the city edge between the Ballarat CBD and the north-side residential precinct, stretching from Lydiard, Nolan, Scott, Peel and Mair streets.

The south side currently services rail travellers through the historic South Station Building and bus travellers through the purpose-built bus shelter in the precinct's west. The 40,000 square metres of land on north side is occupied by the intermodal freight hub and is largely unused.

### **Redevelopment research and evaluation**

In 2002, a number of reports were released which addressed the need to relocate freight operations and outlined redevelopment opportunities to re-use the land for residential, commercial and community purposes.

Furthermore, a report outline in 2006 outlined the feasibility of relocating freight operations to a new site adjoining the Walsh industrial estate to meet increased freight volume and growing demand. The current tracks are in poor condition and can not be viably rehabilitated to meet future demand.

### **Report recommendations and suggestions**

There is an opportunity to not only create housing for residents in the northern section of Ballarat Railway Station precinct, but an inner-city, urban space for all of the Ballarat community to use and share.

The *Ballarat Railway Station Precinct, Master Plan 2002* identified opportunities for both the south and north land areas. Recommendations for the north included 90-100 three-storey units (potentially more), car parking and urban space planning. *Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub Feasibility* focused on land use possibilities for the northern area following relocation of the freight operations.

The *Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub – Local and Regional Economic Benefits* report looked at the costs associated with relocating freight operations as well as the potential economic outcomes for the redeveloped freight hub site. The *Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub Relocation/Redevelopment Cost Benefit Analysis & Economic Assessment* looked further at the cost benefits of redeveloping the site.

The benefits of redeveloping and reusing the 'Railway North' space are many. Not only will the area look better, but it will be a safer and cleaner environment due to the reduced freight traffic. The broader community will benefit from the redevelopment for years to come.

## **BALLARAT RAILWAY STATION PRECINCT MASTER PLAN 2002**

**Date** June 2002

**By** Daryl Jackson Pty Ltd Architects for VicTrack

### **About the report**

Commissioned by government rail agency VicTrack, the *Ballarat Railway Station Precinct Master Plan 2002* was developed by the Department of Infrastructure's (DOI) Transit Cities Program, Office of the Director of Public Transport and western region office in collaboration with the City of Ballarat.

The report provided development recommendations to support forecast increased commuter use prior to the launch of the Regional Fast Rail service. The report consulted a range of groups and stakeholders.

### **Summary**

The *Ballarat Railway Station Precinct Master Plan 2002* identified a range of redevelopment options to better connect railway functions and the values of the city. The flow-on benefits from a revitalised railway precinct were determined to be high.

Referring to the area of land adjacent to the Goods Shed and facing Nolan Street, the report proposed the introduction of a medium density residential zone (with potential to set new contemporary design standards). The possibility for residential development to extend along the northern edge was also noted.

Existing buildings such as the Goods Shed and Carriage Shed could be used for future retail or commercial opportunities. The report also recommended the exploration of re-use opportunities for the North Station Building and the under-utilised space in the South Station Building.

Re-zoned land for more than 90 residential buildings could be sold by public tender. Funds from the sale of land could go towards the development of the site as a community public space.

The precinct accommodates around 200 free car parks, mostly located in the area between the North Station Building and the Goods Shed. The report also identified areas for car parking development for up to 450 cars, including potential multi-level car parking. A staged and managed car parking strategy is recommended.

There is opportunity to further promote the area as a transport hub, through measures such as linking commercial bus routes with the Ballarat Railway Station.

The Ballarat Railway Station precinct is regarded as an important heritage site and therefore all development and redevelopment should be sensitively designed to minimise the impact on the site's heritage values.

## **FUTURE OF THE BALLARAT RAILWAY STATION COMPLEX FINAL REPORT**

**Date** October 2001

**By** Sinclair Knight Merz

### **About the report**

The *Future of the Ballarat Railway Station Complex* report was developed by Sinclair Knight Merz (now known as SKM Consulting), a engineering and project management consultancy with offices across Australia, New Zealand, Europe, the Middle East, South America and Asia.

Commissioned by the Ballarat Rail Promotion Group in conjunction with the City of Ballarat and the Department of Infrastructure, the study was led by a team at Sinclair Knight Merz with assistance from Applied Development Research, Look Ear Pty Ltd, Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken Architects and Professor Peter Spearritt, Director of the National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University.

### **Summary**

One of the first reports commissioned to look at the future of the Ballarat Railway Station precinct, the *Future of the Ballarat Railway Station Complex* report stated that the site is “not ideal for freight operations as it does not allow for efficient road or rail-based vehicle movements”.

A greenfields site with improved accessibility for road vehicles was deemed preferable.

The report also suggested that the lack of available car parking space would impede eventual development of the precinct for increased commuter traffic. Relocation of the freight yards to a greenfields site would enable parking to be made available on the north side, as well as the need for a bus interchange for commuters requiring further transport home.

Recognising the need for community facilities – such as shops, restaurants, cafes and a fairly ambitious ‘Rail Interpretative Centre’ idea – the report proposed a five stage development program to redevelop the area and maximise tourism visitation.

Acknowledging that Ballarat Railway Station is among the most important railway station precincts in Australia – the precinct and buildings are included in the Victorian Heritage Register and the Ballarat Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay – the report’s redevelopment recommendations were therefore mindful of the site’s heritage significance.

## **BALLARAT INTERMODAL FREIGHT HUB FEASIBILITY STUDY**

**Date** February 2002  
**By** Maunsell Australia Pty Ltd

### **About the report**

The *Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub Feasibility Study* was completed in February 2002 by Maunsell Australia Pty Ltd. Part of the global AECOM group, Maunsell provides design, project and facilities management services for building and construction projects.

The report was commissioned by the City of Ballarat to outline the issues surrounding the existing freight hub and present the redevelopment and land use possibilities should the freight hub be relocated.

### **Summary**

The *Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub Feasibility Study* recognised that there are limited opportunities to make significant alterations to the existing freight terminal for continued use as a freight hub.

In anticipation of the Regional Fast Rail service, as well as the relocation of the intermodal freight hub to a more suitable location, the report identified the site's potential to include an 'integrated public transport hub' for commuters and visitors to Melbourne.

The land is currently occupied by the freight yard and sidings. The report stated: "The actual economic value of the land could be determined during a tender process."

The report also recognised that relocation of the existing freight hub would help increase surrounding residential property prices, as well as significantly increase residential living conditions through minimised noise (and pollution) from the reduced train shunting and truck movements.

There are around 25 residential properties facing the existing freight terminal. The report indicated that these properties, as well as any new buildings on the freight terminal site, would experience significant increases in property value should the site be redeveloped.

## **BALLARAT INTERMODAL FREIGHT HUB LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS**

**Date** June 2002  
**By** Essential Economics

### **About the report**

The *Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub – Local and Regional Economic Benefits* report was completed in June 2002 by Essential Economics, a Melbourne-based urban economics consultancy. The company provides economic impact assessments, policy development and research for both the public and private sectors.

The report was prepared for the City of Ballarat to look at the costs associated with relocating the intermodal freight operations to a new site adjoining the Walsh Street industrial estate. The report also briefly discussed the potential economic outcomes if the existing freight hub site were to be redeveloped following the relocation.

### **Summary**

In reference to *Ballarat Railway Station Precinct Master Plan 2002*, the *Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub – Local and Regional Economic Benefits* report stated: “The transfer of freight operations away from the Ballarat Station precinct creates opportunities for redevelopment of the Ballarat Station precinct to higher value uses such as residential, retail and commercial.”

The 90 residential units proposed by the Master Plan would accommodate 190 people (estimated 2.1 people per household). The new residents would contribute approximately \$3 million a year through spending in local shops, entertainment and business services - around \$1.5 million of which in retail spending.

As a retail space, the Station North Building (800 square metres) could generate approximately 20-25 direct jobs, and 10-15 indirect jobs. If used as a market space, the Goods Shed (3,600sqm) could create up to 50 jobs/stall holders, and a further 25 indirect jobs.

The report suggested that redevelopment would return significant returns. For example, the redevelopment could potentially attract rates income of around \$175,000 annually.

# **BALLARAT INTERMODAL FREIGHT HUB RELOCATION/REDEVELOPMENT COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT**

**Date** September 2002

**By** SGS Economics & Planning

## **About the report**

The *Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub Relocation/Redevelopment Cost Benefit Analysis & Economic Assessment* was completed in September 2002 by SGS Economics & Planning, an economics and planning company with offices around Australia.

The report was commissioned by the City of Ballarat to review existing information concerning the relocation of the Ballarat intermodal freight hub and to add to this work where necessary. SGS completed a cost benefit analysis and an economic impact assessment regarding the relocation, as well as cost benefits of redeveloping the existing freight hub site.

## **Summary**

The report stated that the relocation of the intermodal freight hub will enable the northern area of the Ballarat Railway Station precinct to align with State Government initiatives, including creating new housing and retail opportunities around public transport hubs.

Summarising previous documents, the report outlined the following development recommendations for the northern railway area:

- 100 medium density residences along the northern boundary.
- 225 additional commuter car parks.
- Open space/landscaping on the north eastern embankment.

SGS was advised that the site would require decontamination, and that a detailed site assessment would be required. Decontamination costs incurred by other freight terminals have been high in some instances. Based on past clean-up experiences, VicTrack estimates that decontamination costs will range from \$250,000 to \$500,000.

SGS recommended that an allowance of \$375,000 should be made for decontamination costs during the first year of redevelopment. Car park development costs were also considered, estimated by to be \$2,200 per individual car park.

## REPORTS: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Developed by well-regarded and experienced architectural, construction and planning consultancies, the 2002 reports were all released during a time of opportunity for Victoria's rail centres.

The Regional Fast Rail Program (completed in 2005) recognised the increased demand for efficient commuter services. The State Government's Transit Cities Program encouraged the identification of new housing and retail opportunities in and around station precincts, as well as improved public transport networks that support the Regional Fast Rail initiatives.

The northern precinct along Lower Nolan Street and Scott Parade area was identified as ideal for residential, retail/commercial and community redevelopment.

Recommendations include:

### **Residential**

- Potential for 90-100 medium density units in the Nolan and Lydiard streets area.
- Unit design should be compatible with neighbouring elements.
- The design should demonstrate innovative and contemporary design.
- Units should be scaled to the height of the Goods Shed.
- Units should also be developed in accordance to heritage guidelines.
- Residences should be maximum three levels high, with car parking on the lower level.
- Residential building size is envisioned as 100 to 150 square metres.
- Residential vehicle access would be from Nolan and Lydiard streets.
- North Railway could accommodate 190 people (estimated 2.1 people per household).
- Potential additional rates income of \$175,000 per year.
- Residential development could extend along the northern edge.

### **Retail**

- The Master Plan identified the potential for the Station North building (800sqm) and the Goods Shed (3,600sqm) to be used as retail space.
- New residents would contribute approximately \$3 million a year through spending.
- Approximately \$1.5 million in spending would be on retail.
- The Station North Building could create 20-25 direct jobs, and 10-15 indirect jobs.
- The Goods Shed could create up to 50 jobs/stall holders, and a further 25 indirect jobs.

### **Community**

- The Master Plan noted that there is a requirement for sufficient car parking on the site.
- Six potential on-site car parking areas were identified.
- There is potential to develop up to 250-450 on-site car spaces.
- Future car parking could include a scaled structure or multi-deck car parking.
- The introduction of suitable controlled car parking may attract a fee into the future.
- There is a need to develop a management plan for future car parking use.
- Commuter parking needs to be supported by bus public transport options.
- Better linkages to the bus systems and tourist bus routes would be an advantage.
- Establishment of a new bus interchange.
- Landscaped open space.

## REPORTS: SUMMARY OF CONSIDERATIONS

The reports identified a number of existing site/land issues and development implications which may need to be addressed before and during the redevelopment process.

The Ballarat Railway Station precinct is currently managed by VicTrack on behalf of the State Government and leased to rail operators and third parties. The northern and eastern parts of the station area and all of the rail tracks are leased to Freight Australia (under its formal name Freight Victoria). It is then up to VicTrack to maximise the value of the vacated land.

Considerations include:

### **General**

- A phase 2 environmental audit of the site to determine the extent of any contamination.
- The audit is needed to determine the estimated cost of moving any decontamination.
- Demolition/remediation costs to bring the northern railway area to development stage.
- Investigate to see if the land needs to be re-zoned for redevelopment.
- There is a need to investigate town planning issues further.
- A railway is a Section 1 – an application for a Planning Permit is not required.
- A transport terminal is an unspecified Section 2 – an application for a Planning Permit is required.

### **Residential**

- The east-side embankment presents physical building limitations.
- Residences can be build into the embankment (at a higher cost) or on the upper level of the rail precinct (which is viewed as unsuitable for residential development).
- The inner city location may limit redevelopment opportunities.
- The station itself is included in a heritage overlay.

### **Retail**

- There are a number of buildings of heritage significance that will impact planning.

### **Community**

- Additional 225 commuter car park development costs.
- It is estimated that each car park costs \$2,200 to construct.
- Car parking security and access issues need to be resolved.

## REPORTS: HERITAGE BUILDING CONSIDERATIONS

The Ballarat Railway Station precinct is regarded as an important heritage site and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. The Ballarat Railway Station Precinct, Master Plan 2002 recommends that residential buildings should demonstrate innovative and contemporary design, but be developed in accordance to heritage guidelines.

Heritage buildings in the Railway North area includes:

- **The North Station Building (1862) and the north platform:** The North Station Building (800 square metres) and the north platform are not used. All areas of the North Station Building, except for the main entry lobby, may be adapted for new uses, such as retail and food, even office space. The lobby and access to the Train Hall footbridge are to be maintained for railway purposes.
- **The Goods Shed (1862):** A minimum curtilage of 10 metres from the Goods Shed's loading platform is to be maintained. The original sidings are not of particular significance but should be identified and recorded before being removed.
- **The Victorian Railways Institute Building (1926):** The Victorian Railways Institute Building has been identified as having a 'contributory level of significant so may be refurbished internally and incorporated into the residential precinct when the current use expires. The building is currently leased by VicTrack.
- **The Messenger Hall (1959):** Located on the east side of the Victorian Railways Institute Building, the Messenger Hall is regarded as having 'little or no significance' and it is therefore recommended it be demolished.
- **The Carrier's Office (1880s):** Based on Lydiard Street near the Goods Shed, the Carrier's Office is leased by VicTrack. Allom Lovell & Associates has recommended retaining the Carrier's Office, as well as structures such as the weighbridge, the weighbridge hut, embankment tunnels, signal boxes and some railway equipment.

Reference: Ballarat Railway Station Precinct, Master Plan 2002

Note: The removal of the freight yards is likely to deliver maintenance costs savings as the heritage buildings will be exposed to fewer vibrations. (SBS Economics and Planning did not estimate this cost as part of the Ballarat Intermodal Freight Hub Relocation/Redevelopment Cost Benefit Analysis & Economic Assessment.

## RAILWAY NORTH – TODAY / TOMORROW

There is an opportunity to rehabilitate and redevelop the northern Ballarat Railway Station precinct from a disused wasteland of tracks and empty heritage buildings into an attractive residential and urban community space for all of the Ballarat community to share.

TODAY



TOMORROW



## RAILWAY NORTH – TOMORROW

'Railway North' could feasibly incorporate many of the recommendations made by four reports released in 2002, including apartments, community space, playground facilities, safe and convenient parking for commuters and cafes and shops.

Complementing the use of bluestone and granite sane paving, many of the existing heritage buildings and design should take into account the precinct's heritage and history.



### Residential

Contemporary apartments could be built facing onto Nolan Street to take advantage of the views and the proximity to the city and public transport.

Native trees could be used as a visual buffer between the apartments and the nearby urban plaza. An entrance to the underground car park could be established near the apartments.

### Retail / commercial

Cafes and shops – as well as the Visitor Location Centre - could be established in unused space within the North Station Building to capitalise on the position and access to visitors.

There are a number of options for the re-use to Goods Shed at the centre of the Railway North area – an art gallery, a museum, a performing art-space, a teaching space – as long as design is sympathetic to the residential area.

While the shell remains heritage protected, the Goods Shed could be refurbished inside.

### Community

Following rehabilitation and the removal of unattractive vegetation, open space around the Goods Shed could be landscaped to include an inner-city playground, 'urban plaza' space and outdoor performance areas.

The Victorian Railways Institute Building on the upper north-east corner could be integrated into a new grassed public landscaped space which could be used as an outdoor amphitheatre. The nearby Messenger Hall on Lydiard Street also needs to be retained, but could be used for other purposes such as a ticketing office.

A secure car park could be built into the escarpment below the Victorian Railways Institute Building, taking advantage of the natural land level changes. Importantly, Railway North could public transport access area for bicycles and car/caravan parking – and a possible location for the local bus interchange.

## RAILWAY NORTH – SNAPSHOT 1

### A Railway North resident

The 5.49pm fast train from Melbourne pulls into Ballarat Railway Station at 6.57pm on a mild Friday night. The commuter walks over the well-maintained pedestrian footbridge from the South Station Building to the refurbished North Station Building.

The commuter walks past the new Visitor Information Centre in the North Station Building, taking note from the events board of an up-coming exhibition at Ballarat Art Gallery.

Past the outdoor space where a local jazz band plays to a small crowd, over the North Station Building bluestone forecourt and the paved granite sand concourse, the commuter arrives at one of the 100 Railway North units and switches on the 7pm news.

### Image: impression of the North Station Building forecourt



## RAILWAY NORTH – SNAPSHOT 2

### Commuter parking

It is dark. The commuter arrives later than usual at the Ballarat Railway Station. The commuter crosses the well-lit pedestrian footbridge to the North Station Building, past the Visitor Information Centre and over to the integrated public transport hub.

Another commuter unlocks a bike, straps on a helmet and rides off. A group walks to the local bus interchange and boards home-bound buses. Returning from dinner in the city centre, two ‘grey nomads’ enter the on-site car park, get into their car, and leave with their caravan in tow.

Noises sound from inside the Good Shed – gallery staff are preparing for opening night of a new exhibition of local art.

It is just a short walk across the bluestone paving outside the Goods Shed and up the Lydiard Street footpath to the entrance of the underground car park. The commuter adjusts eyes to the brighter indoor lights and looks up at the security camera above. It is just a short walk down the stairs to the next level and to the commuter’s car.

### Image: impression of the integrated public transport hub



## RAILWAY NORTH – SNAPSHOT 3

### Saturday morning at Railway North

It is a sunny Saturday morning. A family of four arrives by bus to the local bus interchange. On their way to the market in the Goods Shed, they pass a group of friends arriving by bike. After the bikes are stored and locked, they all walk across the bluestone paving to the Goods Shed front door.

Inside the Goods Shed, the family and friends walk around stalls selling local produce and other items. Some stalls are permanent shops with lock-away doors and windows, others are there each Saturday. The family of four pay for a bag of potatoes and place it into a market trolley.

After 15 minutes the fidgety kids ask to go to the nearby playground. The father walks the eight and seven year-olds around the east side of the Goods Shed, past the wine bar, over the paved granite sand concourse and towards the kid-safe inner-city playground. A number of parents watch kids playing from the grass or picnic blankets nearby.

### Image: impression of the market area and playground



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