

Wider interest in Main St plan

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TRADERS in Heathmont, Burnt Bridge and North Ringwood shopping centres have expressed interest in joining central Ringwood traders in a proposal to revitalise their shopping centres. Ringwood Council this month is expected to support a Ringwood Chamber of Commerce proposal to set up a "Main St" shopping centre promotion program in central Ringwood, including a special charge levied on traders outside of Eastland, Ringwood

Square and Ringwood Market regional shopping centres. Council chief executive, Mr John Paech, said there was "great interest from other areas" after Mr Louis Blank, chairman of the chamber's Main St subcommittee, outlined the proposed program to a council policy and resources committee last month. Mr Paech said some Heathmont, Burnt Bridge and North Ringwood traders had indicated they might like to follow central Ringwood traders with a Main St program for

their shopping centres to also help them compete against the three regional shopping centres in central Ringwood and large shopping complexes in neighboring municipalities." They (strip shopping centre traders) see it (Main St program) as an attempt to create the same sort of competitive advantages for themselves that centre-based traders have," Mr Paech said. Mayor, Cr Greg Adkins, said he believed all but one of the Burnt Bridge shopkeepers at a

recent traders meeting expressed interest in a Main St proposal. "There are some self-help groups springing up because strip centre traders now recognise the viability of one business can effect the viability of the rest," Cr Adkins said. In its budget for the current municipal year council allocated \$25,000 for a revitalisation program for "non-centre based traders" and council's business and development committee has been meeting with the chamber's Main St sub-

by Mal Gill

committee to discuss the proposed project. Under the proposal outlined by Mr Blank, a special charge based on nett annual value or commercial rental value of each shop or business in the central Ringwood area - generally between New St and Warrandyte Rd - could raise another \$110,000 to help promote central Ringwood to both local shoppers and visitors.

The proposed special charge would be about \$200 a year on a small shop. Mr Blank has described the charge as an "investment in survival."

The money raised by the charge is proposed to fund employment of a Main St project officer to co-ordinate activities, produce a traders' and property owners' newsletter to encourage a feeling of "unity" among traders, promotion of special events and the range and diversity of shops and businesses in central Ringwood to complement the district centre's regional focus and improvements to shopper facilities and street signage.

The Main St program proposes central Ringwood traders band together to try to match the promotional expertise of Eastland, Ringwood

Bid to woo shoppers

'Mail 23/2/93

By JANINE JONES

STRIP traders in central Ringwood will be asked to finance an ambitious \$110,000 project to revitalise shopping along the Maroondah Highway.

A meeting of more than 60 traders last week unanimously supported a proposal to pay a two-cent in the dollar levy on the annual rent value of their businesses to finance a Main Street program for the Maroondah Highway.

The proposal, put forward by the Ringwood Chamber of Commerce and Industry, aims to transform shopping along the Maroondah Highway to make street traders more competitive against large shopping centres.

The Main Street concept, developed in North America, addresses issues such as marketing, promotions, design, heritage preservation and business development of a shopping precinct. In Victoria, it has been adopted by Richmond, Kew and Camberwell councils.

A committee of chamber members and councillors is now preparing a submission on the Main Street proposal to present to Ringwood Council late next month.

A member of the Main Street project team, Mr Gary Biram, said traders would need to raise at least \$110,000 a year to finance the program.

He said this would cover expenses such as executive officer's wages, administration, promotional activities, newsletters and signage. Ringwood Council has allocated \$35,000, subject to approval, to the project.

The Main Street concept would first be implemented between New St and Warrandyte Rd and extended along the highway as the project grew, he said.

Unite and support

Chamber member Bernie Robertson urged traders to unite and support the Main Street project or face financial ruin.

Maroondah Highway businesses had lost a great deal of trade to centres in Knox, Chadstone and Doncaster, all of which targeted Ringwood for shoppers.

Coles Myer had decided to fight back with a \$120 million redevelopment of Eastland, it was now up to street traders to revitalise their shopping precinct, Mr Robertson said.

"I believe that if we don't look after the Main Street of Ringwood before Eastland gets too strong, we will have serious problems," he said.

"Every city has a heart. Eastland may be bigger, but the Maroondah Highway is the heart of Ringwood and many of you are suffering from heart disease."

Mr Robertson said Ringwood should use its number of peripheral and strip shopping areas to draw shoppers away from other districts.

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Square, Ringwood Market and other competing regional shopping centres by promoting their businesses as vibrant, interesting and price competitive places to shop.

Last month 68 central Ringwood traders at a public meeting called by the chamber of commerce, endorsed the idea of a Main St project, including a special charge, to revitalise Ringwood.

Council last year undertook street tree planting along Maroondah

Hwy to improve the appearance of the strip shopping centre and further works are planned under its endorsed urban design plan.

Later this month council is expected to authorise its business and economic development committee to negotiate the establishment of a central Ringwood Main St program with the chamber of commerce provided council's liability is limited to \$25,000 this year and the program aims to become self funding by 1994/95.

Richmond, Footscray, Moonee Ponds and Haw-

thorn strip shopping centres are investigating Main St programs.

Croydon Council and a traders group called Croydon Means Business are also investigating the possibility of a special rate on shops and businesses in Croydon's central business district, apart from the Croydon Market and Armdale shopping centres which have their own promotional activities, to be used to promote the Croydon strip shopping centre.

A report on the proposal is due to be considered by Croydon Council later this month.

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Cuts affect pay

RINGWOOD's Merit/Skillshare office manager will take a pay cut to ward off possible closure forced by Federal Government funding cuts.

Mr Robert Menzies said an administrative staff member would also be paid less.

Mr Menzies said staff would do what they could to save the training centre.

The Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Senator Amanda Vanstone, announced several weeks ago Skillshare projects would receive two-thirds of the funds they received the previous year.

Since then, the cut has been reduced from 33 per cent to 20 per cent.

"We have patched the program together, which will mean we can survive for another three months — our aim is to maintain the integrity of the service," he said.

The government was keeping Skillshare employees in the dark about the funding cuts, Mr Menzies said.

"At the moment we are not sure what it is going to do, we all just want an answer from the minister," he said.

At least 400 people were helped by the Ringwood Skillshare office, he said.

"The people who need this service should not be allowed to suffer and we will do everything to ensure they don't," Mr Menzies said.

Skillshare was a non-profit organisation with all money made going back into programs, he said.

Projects affected

Australian Services Union spokesman Brian Sullivan said about 400 Skillshare projects across Australia would be affected by the cuts.

He said the 13 per cent funding reduction was cold comfort.

"I think the centres will tell you that it will be death by strangulation rather than immediate with the slight funding cut," he said.

"The programs are run on an oily rag anyway so a 20 per cent funding

cut instead of a 33 per cent cut will still be devastating."

The government was slashing from areas which were against the nation's best interest Mr Sullivan said.

Skillshare was established under the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), superseding the Community Youth Support Scheme of the late 1970s.

Mr Sullivan said many centres would be forced to close because the money would have to be spent on paying staff redundancy packages.

Every Skillshare across Australia would be affected he said.

Skillshare constituted 25 per cent of all labor market programs, Mr Sullivan said.

"Attacking one of the best performers in this field reveals the Federal Government's true approach to the unemployed," Mr Sullivan said.

The Federal Member for Deakin, Phillip Barresi, said the 20 per cent funding cut was good news for Ringwood Skillshare, guaranteeing its survival.

Commerce

Funding increase for Skillshare program

Post 10-3-93 P7

RINGWOOD-Croydon Skillshare will receive an additional \$12,000 in 1993 from the Commonwealth Government if Labor win the Federal Election, according to ALP candidate for Deakin, Greg Adkins.

Mr Adkin has been advised by the Minister for Higher Education and Employment Services, Peter Baldwin, that the initial 1993 Skillshare allocations last November, which saw an increased funding base for Ringwood-Croydon Skillshare, did not fully allocate all available funds.

"This additional funding would have been de-

termined by the Government but for the calling of the election," Mr Adkin said.

"Under the election conventions, the Government cannot take decisions during the election period that would commit an incoming Government.

"However, the Government has indicated that the \$12,000 for the Ringwood-Croydon Skillshare project is available, and will be approved as soon as the Government is returned to office.

"As the new Member for Deakin, one of my first priorities will be to fast-track this funding approval so Ringwood

Youth and Community Network can continue to expand their fine work.

"Project co-ordinator, Rob Menzies, has been advised that additional funding is for literacy and numeracy projects and the upgrading of facilities.

"Skillshare is one of the most successful examples of Government-community co-operation in Australian history.

"This year, the Commonwealth Government is providing \$175.9 million for the program, in order to assist 110,000 unemployed people in training, open access, enterprise development and other activities," Mr Adkin said.