

RHODES

PLANNING REVIEW

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Rhodes: Planning Review

Rhodes: some observations

- Rhodes position at an important road and rail crossing of Parramatta River suggests the location should have considerable metropolitan significance;
- significance not realised due to its 'capture' by a range of industries on both north and south sides of the river;
- industries now mostly obsolete and progressive replacement by residential development is occurring in response to planning policy;
- planning policies have little regard for potential for employment growth or for diverse range of activities that might find the location attractive;
- Homebush, promoted as a 'hi-tech' industrial park, may be an exception. Here, as at Rhodes, employment appears to be mainly 'back of office' rather than leading edge. Some evidence of leading edge employment (eg Consulting Engineers) at Rhodes corporate office park, mostly aiming to capture the exposure to traffic on Metro 3.
- Rhodes West comprises an area approximately 1.6k long on the north-south axis by 0.3/0.4k wide. The ridge line, traversed by the railway, is at about RL 10/15. The land falls fairly steeply, at about 1 in 10 (too steep for the disabled), from the ridge to extensive flat lands, partly reclaimed, with a 1.8k straight-edged frontage to Homebush Bay.
- The western side of Homebush Bay, East Meadowbank (north of the river) and West Rhodes are all being developed with high density residential development up to about 10 storeys maximum height.
- Rhodes enjoys the highest level of accessibility of the three redeveloping locations due to the central location of the railway station and the immediate access off Metro 3.
- Rhodes being on a peninsula, is poorly connected to adjoining areas such as Bicentennial Park;
- Ikea is the only activity that takes advantage of the metropolitan significance of the location;
- SREP 29, made in 1999, set the basic parameters for redevelopment of West Rhodes. These were: a continuous foreshore strip of open space; a southern spine of mixed use located adjacent to the railway (about 13.5ha); and a residential zone located between the foreshore open space and the mixed use zone (about 22ha). The height controls range from 4 storeys at the foreshore edge to 8 storeys along the ridge.

- The area was subdivided into 4 precincts as follows: A (south): 24 ha, B (north-west) 15ha; C (north) 6.5ha; and D (east) 3 ha.;
- The imposed street network comprises: a ridge road struck off Homebush Bay Road at the south connecting to Walker Street (existing) which is aligned adjacent to the railway line; a meandering north-south road named Shoreline Road, purportedly following the original shore line; and a series of east-west roads partly pre-existing, linking the ridge road to the foreshore reserve;
- In my opinion the rationale for this road network is unsound, creating a number of awkward shaped blocks and dead-end cul-de-sacs that should have been avoided.
- Development is now about 75% committed, of which the major part is residential. Non-residential uses only account for about 20% of the site.
- About 50% of West Rhodes is now developed, mostly in Precincts A and B. The extensive works occurring over most of the northern half of the site and elsewhere preclude an assessment of the whole. However there is sufficient development in place to enable an initial assessment to be formulated.
- A more pressing reason is the requirement of the DOP to increase the quantum of development in West Rhodes by 66000m². Precincts B and C provide the most scope for absorbing this additional floor space. There is one small key site in each of Precinct A and D also available for absorbing a component of the additional floor space.

Rhodes: observations on the existing urban form

- There is a lack of variety in the housing types in Rhodes; the population appears to be predominantly young people (20-30 age group), mostly of Asian ethnicity. There is little activity in the streets.
- the retail centre is moderately well patronised (parking is said to be confusing and inconvenient) with Ikea as the main drawcard; there is virtually no other retail outlet in Rhodes – it is not well located in relation to the bulk of the population.
- the public domain is neat but lacks any stimulating element that might attract greater use. The footpaths are empty. The foreshore walkway is unused. The foreshore children's play area is barely used. The small park adjacent to the retail centre is sparsely used, despite being elevated with an attractive outlook over Homebush Bay. The two street cafés are popular, as are the cafés at the Rider Boulevard pedestrian entrance to the retail centre. There are no 'active' outdoor recreation areas.
- I concluded this is one of the most uninteresting areas of Sydney to be in.

- Other than Ikea there is no 'destination' in Rhodes; there is nowhere 'identifiable' to go. Rhodes has no identity.
- The uniformity of the residential development is probably intentional – a function of controlled heights, consistent set-backs and screen walls at ground level. As a consequence the streets are uninteresting to be in and devoid of activity. Greater variation in height and set-back has the potential to create more visual interest in the streets; opening up ground floor uses in selected locations has the potential to create points of activity, and visual attraction;
- views are confined to the mainly orthogonal grid. Water views are aligned with the grid - narrow slots which give little sense of the breadth of Homebush Bay. Opening up diagonal vistas across the water and through the site has the potential to create much more visual interest, particularly from the more elevated parts of the site.
- The curved and bent form of Shoreline Drive has the potential to create interesting vistas. However the completed southern section fails to use the curved form in any positive design sense.
- overall the somewhat excessive 30% + of site area allocated to roads does not yield an adequate public benefit.
- street tree planting is remarkably inconsistent (this may be due to the contaminated ground conditions) with no indication of a positive design intention.
- the bay side reserve is well-planted but it lacks good shade trees and the space is not well articulated to provide more elevated points which might provide more panoramic views over the bay. Specifically the design of the narrow waterfront walkway is quite banal.
- the well-known contamination on the floor of Homebush Bay may preclude its use for fishing and perhaps boating. However recent reports suggest that the impact of contamination is declining and it is possible to visualise a time when there is more boating activity and even recreational fishing in the bay. There does not appear to be any locations set aside for boats to tie-up or for fishing such as jetties or mooring pontoons (or even a marina).
- access to Rhodes could be improved in several ways. Making provision for a river-cat wharf is one easily identifiable improvement that should be promoted immediately. Hanging a combined bicycle/footbridge off John Whitton bridge which would be another relatively affordable improvement. The feasibility of installing low grade board-walk connections to the Bicentennial park pathway system should also be investigated. These options will increase the accessibility of Rhodes, link it better to adjacent areas and help give it a stronger identity.
- the height controls appear to be designed to make Rhodes invisible. Some higher buildings would give Rhodes a visible presence and open-

up some wonderful views up-river, down-harbour and towards the sculptural shapes of the stadia at Sydney Olympic Park. A review of the height controls is desirable, and essential if the increment of floor space proposed by City of Canada Bay Council is to be accommodated.

Some urban design objectives for Rhodes

- more focal points need to be established with different levels of activity, and different activities.
- more 'active' recreation spaces need to be created;
- more visual complexity needs to be introduced;
- streets need to be made more attractive for people to use;
- the waterfront should be more strongly exploited for a range of uses; and made more accessible.
- Rhodes should be given a stronger identity to enable it to achieve its wider metropolitan potential, particularly for employment generating activities.
- views towards and from Rhodes should be given greater emphasis – (consider, for example, the inadequate visual appearance of the development on Homebush Bay West when seen from Rhodes).
- the Rider Boulevard frontage of the shopping centre should be opened up to be more visually interesting and 'active'.
- the curved shape of Shoreline Drive should be exploited by the associated built form to create a visually interesting street.

Recommended design principles to be incorporated in Rhodes urban design strategy

- eliminate proposed northern extension of Marquet Street between Gauthorpe Street and Shoreline Drive (not necessary in traffic terms) and convert to parkland.
- establish waterfront activity centre incorporating community building, cafés and restaurants, a mini-mart, tennis courts, a jetty and an observation tower similar in design and height to the one in Bicentennial Park at 'X'.
- establish street level plaza plus commercial uses adjacent to railway station at 'Y'.
- establish local centre at mid-level to capture views towards the bay at 'Z'.
- establish large 'playing field' at Shoreline Drive level at 'A'.
- explore options for ferry wharf at 'B'.

- generally aim to 'cluster' towers as indicated on plan – towers to be set back from Walker Street with some intervening development to maintain the street wall effect but discontinuous.
- towers to be 'staggered' to avoid any notion of a row of buildings and varied in height – I have allowed for 15, 20 and 25 floors with highest located so as to contain shadows on site.
- could use curved forms as indicated at Precinct D site.
- central park to be defined by buildings as shown; note the curved ends and the diagonal view shaft to the bay (from railway)
- small 'square' lined with shops (north and south side) at bayside end of Gauthorpe Street with 'outlook tower' as per Bicentennial Park on axis of street; this whole complex is modelled on the one on the Newcastle water front.
- note all the diagonal vistas introduced off Walker Street; views from elevated positions in the public domain are very important and should be captured wherever possible and used (eg for cafés).
- railway station is a natural for a few local service shops such as dry-cleaners and snacks (already there); can be reinforced.
- concepts need a lot more work but should be sufficient to provide a 'blueprint' for their designers.
- basic arithmetic is as per attached worksheet.
- for discussion.

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Rough Calculations re Floor Space

Precinct A:

Tower at 'Y': 50×30 ? or $40 \times 20 = 800\text{m}^2 \times 20$ 16000 m²

Precinct B:

Towers	(1)	750 x 15	11250)	
	(2)	750 x 20	15000)	
	(3)	750 x 25	18750)	125000 m ²
Edge of cp		500 x 15 = 7500 x .6(?)	45000)	
Foreshore		350 x 15 x 5250 x 5	20000)	
Other			15000)	

Precinct C:

Towers	(1)	750 x 20	15000)	
	(2)	750 x 25	18750)	63750 m ²
Wall		250 x 15 = 3750 x 8 av	30000)	

Precinct D:

Tower	(1)	750 x 20	15000)	
Wall		150 x 15 x 8	18000)	33000 m ²

237750 m²

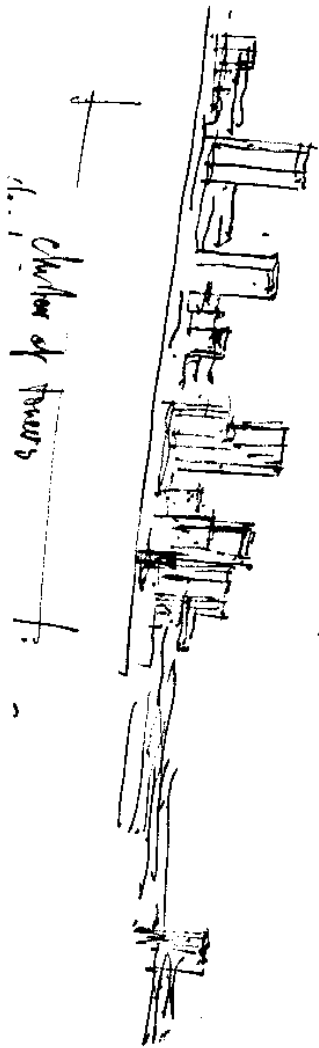
Precinct: A - exceeds required FS

B - unable to assess

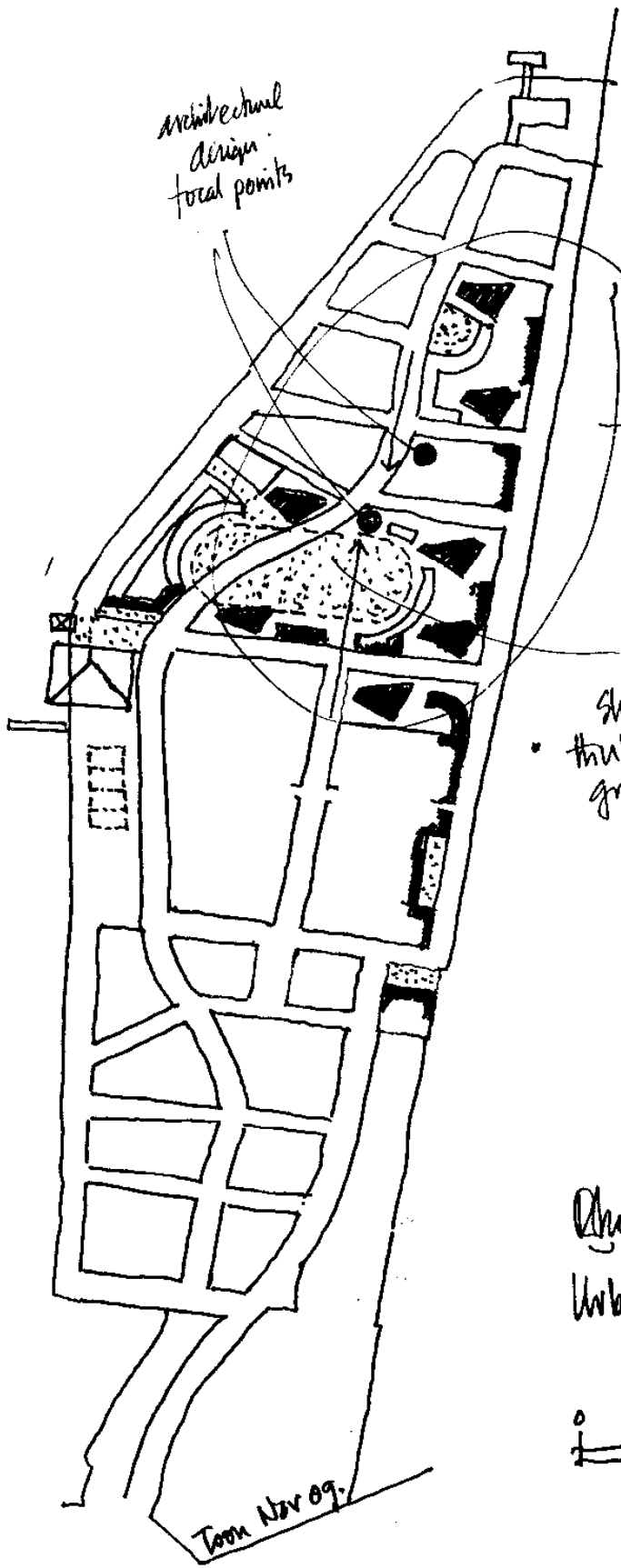
C - exceeds required FS

D - exceeds required FS

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cluster of houses



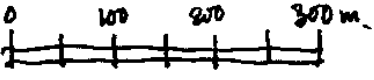
architectural design focal points

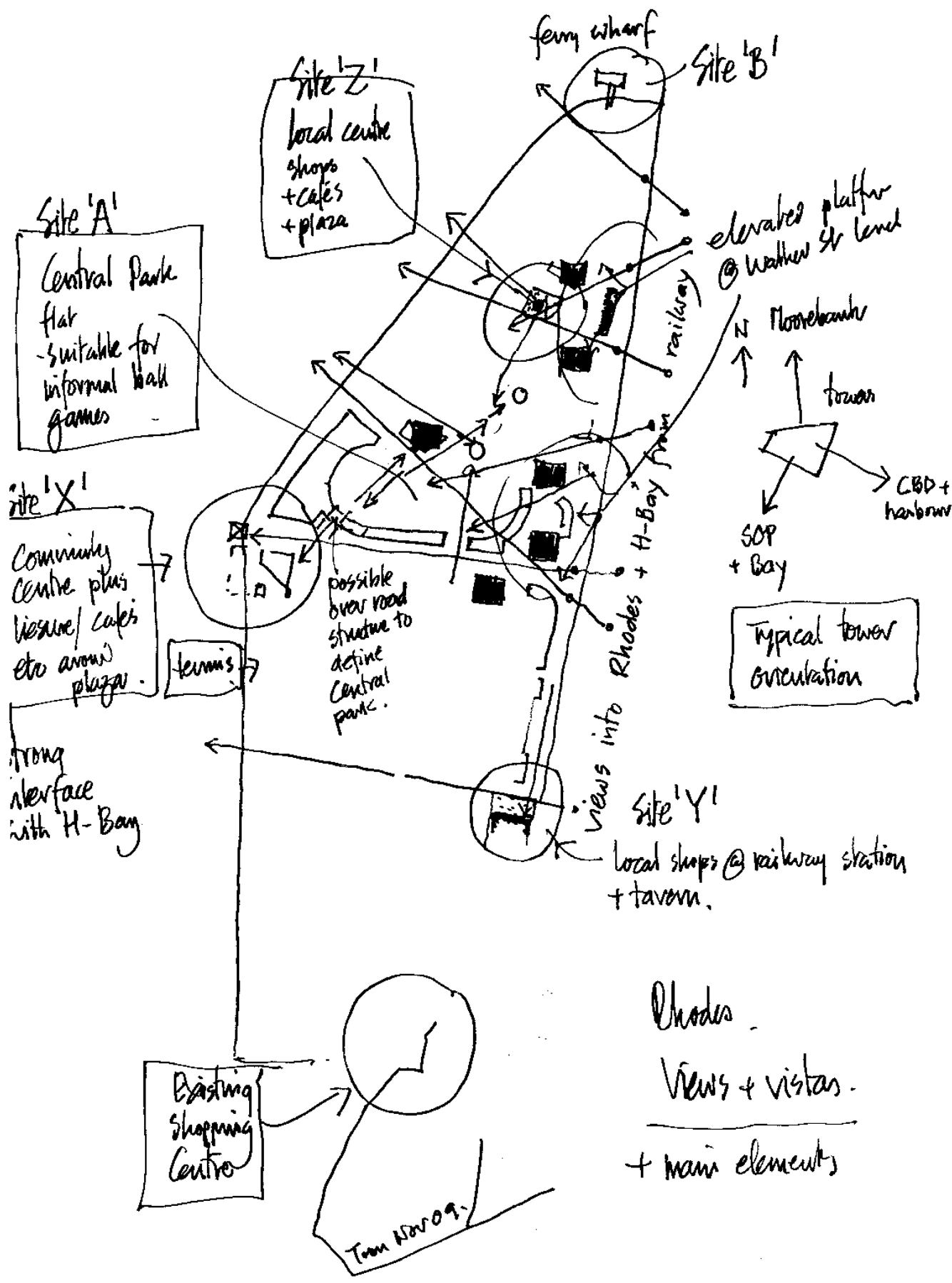
cluster of houses in this area.

Central Park (allow Shoreline Drive to flow thru' the parkland - open grassland for active ball games
hurler regular pitches.



Rhodes Urban forum





Rhodes
Views + vistas
+ main elements