Mega project up for vote

THE largest high-density development complex ever to be built in Glen Eira hangs on a crucial rerun of the vote at the council later this month.

Councilors will decide on July 21 whether to remove Bentleigh East’s Virginia Park Estate, allowing developers Gillon Group to buy a shopping mall and an estimated 400-plus dwellings there.

Outraged residents have raised their concerns and almost 100 turned out to a meeting last week to listen to councillors and the developers.

Those opposed said that with the only public transport near the development a single bus line – both the nearest train station at Ormond and nearest tram in Carnegie were more than 2km away – the influx of people would increase traffic.

A Facebook group opposed to the development had 650 members at the time of writing.

“While we’re not against the development, we’re just concerned about the impact on the community around the area,” said resident Rodney Andropoulos.

“They’re really setting this place up to become a ghetto.”

David (last name not given) said the park would be “a city within a city.”

Gillon Group wants Virginia Park rezoned from a mix of Commercial 1 and Commercial 2 zones to just Commercial 1.

Member for Bentleigh Nick Staikos said councilors now had “a very big decision” to make and urged them to “take seriously the complaints and concerns of residents.”

“This decision isn’t only about the borders of Virginia Park, it’s about East Bentleigh and the whole of Glen Eira.”

Mayor Jim Magee said he had taken more than 10 calls from residents, all in opposition.

THE OPTIONS

• Councilors will vote on July 21 on the issue.
• They have two options:
  • Councilors can abandon the development plan.
  • They can send the issue to an independent panel.
• Because of public objection, the matter must be referred to the Minister for approval.
• Commercial 1 allows for a mix of retail and housing without a need for a planning permit.

FOOD FOR FAMILIES

People praised for generosity

The quantity and variety of food were donated by generous Melbourne to the Food for Families Appeal, one of Wesley Mission’s most successful campaigns.

More than 41 tonnes of non-perishable food and toiletries were given to the charity to help people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

Wesley Mission Victoria’s acting manager of Family and Homelessness Services Maddie Graham said the donations in the lead-up to last Christmas not only increased in quantity, but also in variety.

“We stock our pantry from the food collected through Food for Families and over the past six months it’s been a pleasure to make that selection each day,” she said.

“Our clients are telling us that they’re so happy with the choice on offer. I can find many of the elements of a nutritious meal on our shelves. The annual appeal collects food for Wesley Mission’s crisis and homelessness services in Melbourne’s outer east and inner west.

Wesley Mission Victoria relies on the support of 1,500 volunteers. If you’d like to volunteer, visit wesi.

NEWS

BENTLEIGH EAST

Opposition simmers as development crunch time looms

Welcome support for charity

A CHARITY helping struggling families with the cost of school outings has been given a boost with community grants.

The Beside Community Information and Support Services was one of 20 recipients of a Commonwealth Bank Community Grants.

Its Education Support Program, which helps send children of struggling households away on school excursions, will get a share of $2 million of funding.

Anne Coughlin, the charity’s executive officer, pictured below, said it relied totally on donations to run the program and this was a big help. She said it helped about 600 families a year.

“It’s our belief that those kids who can’t afford to go away on these trips are the ones who need it the most,” Ms Coughlin said.

Also awarded a Commonwealth Bank grant was the MonashLink Community Health Service, Clayton.

Kids’ coat drive requires acts of warmth

BRIONY Coccoaro is asking people to dig through their closets for old coats and sweaters to help keep children in need warm over the colder months.

With temperatures diving and everyone in need of a few extra layers, the Highett mum has been working with not-for-profit group St Kilda Mums for their Coats for Kids campaign.

Together they have been looking for donations of new and old clothes for kids from newborns and up.

So far, the Highett mum had a great reaction from local schools which have encouraged students and their parents to look through wardrobes.

Mrs Coccoaro had hoped more would help.

“It’s such a great cause and we just want as many people to get behind it as we can,” she said.

The group is looking for second-hand coats, free of marks and stains, with working zips and hooks.

St Kilda Mums chief Jessi McCubbin estimated they would be delivering coats to about 2000 babies and children across the city in the coming months.

Now that the weather is getting chillier, there are many families not able to keep their children warm, or allow them to play outside,” Ms McCubbin said.

She encouraged schools, kinders, childcare centres and workplaces to hold coat drives, with the appeal to run until July 31.

Go to stkildamums.org for more information.

The Melbourne Leader, Wednesday, July 1, 2015

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