

# Rokeby Road South Masterplan

## Summary of the Community Workshop held on Wednesday 29 November 2017

A total of seven community members participated in the Community Workshop, which was organised by the City of Subiaco and facilitated by Place Laboratory. Shane Asmus, Manager Transport and Infrastructure Development of the City of Subiaco, gave an introduction on the history and objectives of the project. After that, the participants worked in two groups on two tasks: first to define the character that Rokeby Road should have, and secondly how the street can be improved to slow down traffic and create a better place for pedestrians and cyclists.

### City's resolution for Rokeby Road South

That the *city develop an integrated streetscape design for Rokeby Road South of Bagot Road* that would enable the city to incorporate speed reducing practices, such as street narrowing, median placement, street trees placement, and realignment of the kerb, similar to the northern end section of Rokeby Road and investigate opportunities to implement pedestrian priority initiatives through pavement marking and signage, along with other alternative traffic treatments to improve delineation for pedestrians and motorists that accord to current design standards and subject to MRWA approval.

### What should the Rokeby Road's character be? Impressive

Before the groups started, some of the participants commented that Rokeby Road South should not become like Rokeby Road North, because in their eyes Rokeby Road North does not truly reflect the character of Subiaco. The existing style and character of Rokeby Road South should be the cornerstone of project

The groups each received a plan of the suburbs around the Perth CBD showing the locations of competing main streets, such as Leederville, Beaufort Street, Claremont and Albany Highway in Victoria Park. Streetviews of these streets show how similar they look. The groups also received cards of different street characters and were asked to define the characters of the various main streets as they perceive them.

It is striking that both groups used the same character image for several of the streets: Rokeby Road as 'Parisian feel', Claremont as 'Chic & Modern', William Street in Northbridge as 'Multicultural' and Oxford and Beaufort Street as a combination of 'Grungy, Bohemian and Nightlife'. 'Historical Australian' was used by one group for Albany Hwy in Victoria Park.

In the discussions, participants used words as 'classic', 'timeless', and 'patina' to describe the atmosphere that Rokeby Road should have. That should be the difference with several of the other main streets. In comparison with Claremont, the argument came up that where Claremont is completely repaved and upgraded, making it 'cold' and 'over manufactured', Rokeby Road South does not need and should not have a complete make-over. The feel of history, with all the quirky bits that add to the character would be lost. This reflected the comment several participants had on Rokeby Road North: the historical elements were disappearing and made way for aesthetics that are more in line with other main streets.

Another aspect that participants mentioned was the heritage houses directly around the corner of Rokeby Road. The character of these streets should be brought into Rokeby Road, for instance with heritage type elements such as 'gas lamps'.

The bones of Rokeby Road are good, even though the traffic speed doesn't always make pedestrians feel safe. The liveliness could also be improved. It would be great to get a bit more life in the evenings in the street.

### **How should Rokeby Road be improved for pedestrians and traffic safety?**

In the second activity, both groups received a plan of Rokeby Road between Hamersley and Heytesbury, and on the same scale a variety of street sections that could be used to slow down traffic and improve the streetscape for pedestrians and cyclists. The groups were given this section of Rokeby Road because of the two black-spot intersections that will need to be addressed first because of traffic safety. They were also asked to regard this as a representative for the rest of Rokeby Road South and think of principles they would like to see used along the whole section of Rokeby Road from Bagot Road to Thomas Street.

One group argued that a complete makeover of the street was not desirable and there would be not enough money for it anyway. Keep it simple and clean, "less is more". They therefore focussed on improving the intersections with minimal means, expressing the importance to use timeless classic materials and furniture that tell the Subiaco story, such as bricks, bronze, reused timber (Whittakers), cobble stones, gas lights and bollards similar to the ones in front of the Regal Theatre.

They used elements such as hedges on the corners to create a barrier to cars to improve pedestrian and patron perception of safety, and road surface textual changes such as rumble strips of cobble stones, possibly combined with paved zebras in a contrasting stone. The group expressed that the Hamersley and Heytesbury intersections had priority. Secondly the connection with Thomas Street could be improved to create an inviting entrance to Subiaco.

A group conclusion wasn't reached about what to do between the intersections to slow down traffic and improve the street for pedestrians and cyclists, arguing that there is no money for it and that 'paint' solutions – such as painting cycle lanes - would not fit the aspired timeless and classic character and would rather reduce traffic speed to create a safer cycling environment. Two suggestions were discussed: fenced hedge blocks in the median and cobble stone rumble strips with paved zebras. The last seemed to have the preference. Part of the group was convinced that reducing parking bays would be problematic, while others thought that widening the footpath for alfresco or crossing would be a good thing. All agreed that timber deck parklets were not appropriate. Alfresco should be on permanent footpath pavement in bricks. The group proposed to keep the road surface flat, rather than speed bumps, and instead reduce traffic speed through textual changes in the surface.

The second group choose for a long-term perspective and discussed all the options to slow down traffic on Rokeby Road. The group begins with considering cyclists. Cycling is growing in popularity and should be facilitated. The group stated that Rokeby Road is for skilled cyclists, not for children. They concluded that a significant reduction of the asphalt width would be the best way to go. They reduced the road to a dual carriageway without median to slow down traffic to 30 km/hour and make it safe for cyclists to cycle on the road. Reducing the amount of asphalt will give a visual cue to work towards reducing traffic speed

The brick paving of the sidewalks was widened considerably, with parking on the bricks and space for alfresco of a high standard on the pavement instead of on cheap parklets. It was also regarded more flexible and help to encourage future developments to address the street. Ideally the road would be in the same material as the sidewalks, potentially even as a shared space environment. This group saw this principle relevant for Rokeby Road between Nicholson and Hamersley. At both ends outside this stretch, they thought activation of the street would be unlikely. At the intersections the group decided for speed bumps and paved zebras, important to slow down cars and give official priority to pedestrians.

In the presentation of the outcomes and the following discussion, it became clear that both groups had several elements in common:

- They both added trees to the street, to fill in the gaps, whereby one participant noted the potential for the new trees to be a different species, due to the health irritations the London Planes cause with some people.
- Another similarity was that alfresco should be on permanent bricks and not on timber parklets, and that both groups were divided whether parking should be sacrificed to alfresco.
- The importance of the bicycle connection with Kings Park was another point the groups agree on, although not everybody agreed what would be the best way to improve this connection.
- All agreed that the connection with Thomas Street should be more inviting and better representing the Subiaco character.
- All participants tended to like the historical materials that the first group had discussed.
- Both groups agreed that businesses should be stimulated to further activate or improve their connections with the street. More uniformity in signage, for instance all on black backgrounds would also help. Additionally better lighting in the evening would make the area more appealing. Not cold bright lights, but soft lighting that says "we're open for business".

The way the groups looked at the intersections was quite different: one with, one without speedbumps; one with median islands for crossing pedestrians and wide vehicle radii, the other with tight radii, reduced carriageway widths and without median islands. During the discussion most agreed that the deviations and median islands in the blocks were less favourable.

The second group was well-aware that their outcome was expensive and could not be realised in the short term. Both groups tended to agree that the first group's outcome could represent the first steps in the improvement of Rokeby Road South, while the second group's outcome could be the long-term aspiration.

*Please note:* this summary is not all inclusive. More notes were made, and aspects were discussed during the workshop. These will all be used in developing the Masterplan.