



Subiaco
Redevelopment
Authority



subi centro

A CASE STUDY IN
URBAN REVITALISATION



This retrospect on Subi Centro is the culmination of many people's time and effort. The SRA wishes to acknowledge the generosity and time of all who participated and to thank them, most sincerely, for their involvement.

In particular independent interviews were held with key stakeholders namely government figures, industry experts, project consultants, community groups and key personnel of the Redevelopment Authority (past and present). All were unfailingly expansive in their responses, patient in their explanations and very generous with their time.

Views expressed throughout this document are those of the key stakeholders who participated in the independent interviews.



subi centro

A CASE STUDY IN URBAN REVITALISATION

To transform a disconnected railway and industrial area into a liveable and vibrant community while maintaining the heritage feel and enhancing connectivity.

spoilt
@subi

Area (ha)	80
New Homes	800-900
Social / Affordable Homes	33
New population	1,500
Commercial / Retail Space (m ²)	90,000
New Workers	3,200
Government Investment	\$130 million
Investment Attraction	\$500 million



purpose

This case study follows the evolution of the built environment in Subiaco, on the back of a major State infrastructure project to create Subi Centro.

Reflecting back on sinking Subiaco Train Station and subsequent redevelopment of the area provides a unique opportunity for experience-based learning. It is a vital part to understanding the effectiveness of the Subiaco Redevelopment Authority (the Authority) as well as to inform and improve future policies, processes and direction by:

1. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of project delivery.
2. Measuring outcomes against original project objectives.
3. Addressing lessons learnt.

The study openly compares the original project objectives with what was actually delivered through the redevelopment by evaluating physical provision and reporting on the commentary of key stakeholders. It is a historical record of not only *what* was delivered but also *how* and *why*.

Most importantly the pages that follow identify the overall project learnings from the redevelopment of industrial Subiaco into an urban village. Recognising and documenting these lessons is vital to the continued betterment of the Redevelopment Authority model.

This retrospect has been informed by key planning, development and decision-making records from the Authority as well as 2006 census data, annual reports, and a commission to interview key stakeholders. The Authority has made every effort to ensure the integrity of these findings by presenting facts and drawing on stakeholder opinions.

The lessons learnt from Western Australia's second major inner city redevelopment project have been shared here in order to inform and inspire future projects.



spc

understanding the place

Throughout its history, Subiaco has developed a strong sense of place and character. The inner city suburb was named after its first European residents; a group of Benedictine monks whose order was founded in Subiaco, Italy and came to the area in 1851.

In 1881, the Perth to Fremantle railway line was opened. It was the first suburban railway in Perth and encouraged working class residents to settle around Subiaco as land prices were lower than in Perth or West Perth. During the 1890s the population of Subiaco increased dramatically as a result of the depression in the eastern states and the Western Australian gold rush.

Industrial tenancies were introduced on the land adjacent to the railway line as early as 1921. It was around this time that Calyx Porcelain and Paint Company, later renamed Australian Fine China (AFC), was founded. The local authority leased this land directly from State Government and set up long term sub-leases with companies such as AFC and CGI Gases to enable its occupation. Other activities around the railway line included a small airstrip and marshalling yards. AFC continued to operate in Subiaco until 2006 when the company relocated to Welshpool.

Up until the 1980s Subiaco Station included a freight receiving depot and a third platform. On September 1, 1979 all railway services on the Fremantle line were suspended by the Court Liberal Government. The line was then re-opened on 29 July 1983 by the newly elected Labor Government led by Brian Burke.

As Perth grew throughout the 1980s it became clear that greater Subiaco suffered as a result of difficult access across the railway. The neighbouring suburbs of Daglish and Jolimont were isolated from Subiaco Town Centre and the retail strip along Rokeby Road began to decline. The retail tenancy rate dropped and the area was beginning to stagnate due to a lack of overall vision.

Sinking Subiaco Train Station was the first step towards reconnecting Subiaco with the northern suburbs. The project delivered the first underground railway station on the Transperth network and the opportunity for new connections and inner city redevelopment on the vacant land created above. The vision for Subi Centro centred on transit-oriented design principles and new developments that would meld with the existing fabric of Subiaco.

“It was a largely disused light industrial site. There is always the question – what will the market bear”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

“You couldn’t get from one side to the other, Daglish was isolated, (it was) neither Subiaco nor Floreat”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



Subi Centro was to become a vibrant sustainable community offering residents a diversity of lifestyle options, the ability to work, recreate and shop close to home, and the opportunity to decrease their reliance on private vehicles.

As a former industrial site, environmental remediation was necessary to clean up the area and facilitate the redevelopment. Significant heritage aspects have been retained through public art, design and deliberate preservation works. Today, Subi Centro integrates residential housing, shopping and commercial aspects into a community that has been reconnected with its neighbours. A green spine runs the length of the redevelopment offering a place for people to relax, play and interact. In most cases the built form is considered to be beautiful, at worst a little bland.

Subi Centro is now more than 85 per cent complete. Planning powers for most of the area have been handed back to the local authority with only a few redevelopment sites remaining. Though opinions are divided as to whether Subi Centro qualifies as a vibrant urban village, there is little doubt that the redevelopment has reconnected Subiaco, revitalised Rokeby Road and boosted the local resident population.

In 2004, Subi Centro was awarded the Urban Development Institute of Australia National Award for Excellence in Urban Renewal.

“The vision was to do away with the railway line and the separation”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



the delivery model

Subi Centro was a major benefactor of the Hawke Government's *Building Better Cities* program (1991-1996). The program sought to promote and demonstrate efficient, equitable and sustainable city development and increase the capacity of Australian cities to meet a range of social, economic and environmental objectives. As State-owned inner city land that was largely underutilised, the proposed Subi Centro redevelopment became a strong candidate for Commonwealth funding.

The initial works to sink the railway line and clean up the area required substantial upfront investment and carried a significant amount of risk. It was a job that only Government could do as failure to deliver would mean bankruptcy for the private sector. Consequently the *Subiaco Redevelopment Authority* was formed by an Act of Parliament in 1994.

The Authority was responsible for all aspects of the redevelopment from concept planning to development and investment attraction. The first Redevelopment Scheme was introduced in 1996 setting out an innovative planning framework that aimed to deliver a sustainable urban village.

At the time the Redevelopment Authority model was still new, but less startling. Claisebrook Village (in East Perth) had paved the way for Subi Centro, resulting in less perceptual risk and greater market certainty. Claisebrook Village had already pioneered mixed-use medium density development and Perth builders and developers had learned how to respond. The location of Subi Centro within the 'golden triangle' of Perth real estate also improved confidence.

Over time the scope of the challenges faced by the Authority have appeared less dramatic. In order to reconnect communities, roads needed to be realigned, the railway station sunk and the industrial activities relocated. Stakeholder engagement also proved challenging and a lack of careful management lead to difficult relationships with local authorities and residents.

“It’s a unique experiment – to pass law which for a period of time places in the hands of board members the power to reinvent space”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



“You need a body with appropriate authority and legislative backing and then you can move... [without that] they'd still only be talking”

PROJECT CONSULTANT

“We put in people who could think. This was important to success as was board competency”

GOVERNMENT

“We have learned so much about ourselves, pushed boundaries as far as we could go... If you push too hard, the risk is that all the cards would come down”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Notwithstanding there is broad support for the Redevelopment Authority model and a strong belief that it ‘gets the job done’. The centralised planning and development control helped to keep focus and drive project delivery, however at the same time, it raised questions over the appropriate exercise of power and required a delicate balancing act.

The Redevelopment Authority model used for Subi Centro was similar to that used in the redevelopment of East Perth - a unified and small management team supported by external consultants and a dedicated Board. The Authority used only a small number of consultants and was considered to be nimble and characterised by good governance, great management and excellent leadership. This model was perceived to have worked well and developed a clear vision for Subi Centro.

To some degree, comparisons between Claisebrook Village and Subi Centro are inevitable. The redevelopment of Subi Centro demonstrated a significant growth in local expertise from the redevelopment of Claisebrook Village. The redevelopment projects were seen by many to be the expressions of a maturing idea - a growing vision about what Perth is and how it should look into the future. The redevelopments are viewed as successful enterprises in their own right that pushed a series of boundaries in the development industry and generated new lifestyle options for Perth.



promoting revitalisation

To put the delivery of the Subi Centro redevelopment into perspective, reflection on the outcomes and achievements have been made against the original project objectives.



01

Create a safe and comfortable environment for people.



02

Encourage protection of place by preserving cultural heritage.



03

Provide a greenway which will be safe and offers a variety of experiences to meet the recreation and leisure needs of the community.



04

Encourage protection of place by conserving energy.



05

Demonstrate innovative environmental remediation techniques for environmentally degraded areas.



09

Encourage energy efficient land development.



10

Encourage investment opportunities, growth and revitalisation.



06

Reduce traffic by making better use of public transport and placing residents within walking distance of employment.



11

Make provisions for disabled access.



07

Increase public access to the area by developing a new train station and integrating public transport links



08

Deliver housing innovation, choice and affordability.

SINCE THE ORIGINAL PROJECT OBJECTIVES WERE SPECIFIC TO SUBI CENTRO THE DISCUSSION THAT FOLLOWS HAS BEEN STRUCTURED IN ACCORDANCE WITH CURRENT DAY REDEVELOPMENT THEMES, TO ENSURE PROJECT LEARNINGS ARE DIRECTLY TRANSFERABLE TO CONTEMPORARY DELIVERY PRACTICES.

sense of place

Build a sense of place by supporting unique and high quality design, heritage protection, public art, and cultural activities that respond to Perth's environment, climate and lifestyle.

A sense of place can be said to be embodied by the overlay of human engagement on the natural and built environment. It can be fostered, but not imposed, and takes time to develop. Overall Subi Centro was felt to be quite rapidly developing a sense of place although to some it felt 'bland'.

The redevelopment was careful to preserve local heritage through design and art. A heritage study completed in 1995 identified key sites of cultural significance. In addition a photographic record, kept with the local authority, documents the industrial and working-class roots of Subiaco. Other examples reflect on the past in subtle and unexpected ways. For example, local streets are named after the Sisters of St. John of God who nursed victims of the typhoid epidemic in the area during the late 19th century.

A heritage conservation plan protects the porcelain manufacturing legacy of AFC. Prepared in collaboration with the Heritage Council of WA, the plan safeguards the preservation of the kiln and allows for interpretation spaces to display machinery, products and moulds from manufacturing.

Public art throughout Subi Centro preserves and reflects local heritage through the re-use and integration of industrial form and materials. *The Watershed* located in the central green spine was fabricated using recycled materials from the former Humes pipe factory. The art piece symbolises and reminds us of the industrial history of the area.

The public art program was considered to have a positive impact on the local community and helped to foster a sense of place within the redevelopment. A total of eight artworks were commissioned by the Authority, two more were installed as part of the State Government's *Percent for Art* program and seven pieces were provided by private developers. Local awareness of the public art in Subi Centro appears to be low but as it grows so too will the knowledge and appreciation of Subiaco's rich history.

The Subi Centro redevelopment aimed to be respectful to the existing character of Subiaco. Streetscapes were carefully planned to ensure that the green and leafy atmosphere of Subiaco was echoed within Subi Centro. As a result the residential streets have been described as lovely places to be with touches of real art. The lemon trees, for example, were well known and often described.

"It's principally qualified by being a 'new place'. It's not yet settled into itself... such exquisite newness"

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

"I think the heritage of the area has been very thoughtfully integrated into Subi Centro"

INDUSTRY EXPERT

"Art does help with a sense of identity – it's a way of making an area personal and relevant to the community"

PROJECT CONSULTANT

"It has managed to integrate with the existing community, instead of looking like the pimple on the pumpkin"

INDUSTRY EXPERT

“... it is the attention to detail that’s exceptional. The streetscapes, trees, the front of streets reclaimed for pedestrians”

PROJECT CONSULTANT



Subi Centro is viewed as having beautiful built form as it is built to human scale and there is an abundance of shady areas and pathways that meander through the area, inviting people to walk around. While the majority of Subi Centro is thought to demonstrate harmony and cohesion, the retail area of Subiaco Square, which was created on the land above and adjacent to the new underground railway station, was considered to have a sort of banality.

Subiaco Square has not evolved into the vibrant urban space that was hoped. The station canopy was designed to protect the platforms below but was felt to be problematic, interfering with views across the square and giving people less reason to linger. The open air station was designed for natural ventilation but the great voids restrict use of the square. Train noise coming from the tunnel was also described as disruptive to the alfresco dining experience.

The redevelopment paid close attention to fostering a sense of safety and comfort. Principles to design out crime were integral to the planning. Parks and gardens used low planting for good lines of sight, residential housing overlooked public spaces, streets and laneways were well lit and public and private spaces were clearly defined.

Still some areas are considered to warrant revisiting. Roberts Road was not designed to human scale and as such was not perceived to be pedestrian-friendly and the corner of Juniper Bank Way and Centro Avenue was described as being difficult to navigate. The planned completion of the green spine should rectify the lack of a footpath along the western edge.

Removing the rail barrier between communities was a major driver for Subi Centro. Sinking the railway line allowed for Subiaco Square and formed a strong connection to Rokeby Road and the surrounding suburbs. However, the redevelopment appears to have created more vibrancy wider than within Subi Centro itself. It was considered that successful activation of streets within the redevelopment required much higher densities than were planned.

The centrepiece of Subi Centro is the green spine which was considered to be a fantastic concept that significantly contributed to the sense of place and social cohesion. It is a stretch of parks designed as a shared garden to balance the higher densities. A children’s play area was included and very well received as a significant community asset. The ‘wonderful’ quality of the public open spaces fostered active recreation and integrated well with what the community liked to do; walk the dog, run, cycle and barbecue.

“They need to be careful that it doesn’t become too sanitised”

PROJECT CONSULTANT

“There are some people who say [the Green Spine] is under activated but when I see it, there are people everywhere out walking”

PROJECT CONSULTANT



enhance environmental integrity

Enhance environmental integrity by supporting ecologically sustainable design, resource efficiency, recycling, renewable energy and protection of the local ecology.

Enhancing the environmental integrity of Subi Centro occurred across the entire redevelopment process. Environmental remediation was carried out prior to redevelopment, sustainable design and building practices were incorporated, and recycling services were supplied by the local authority.

The previous industrial uses left behind some contamination from the manufacturing processes and gas storage. There was lime and lead to be removed as well as tracks of rubbish under the ground. Although the remediation exercise was viewed as being of less technical complexity than East Perth, it was nevertheless a significant undertaking in its own right, with a huge volume that contained some nasty surprises. Environmental remediation was undertaken to ensure these areas were suitable for redevelopment and was considered to be first-class.

“[SRA has] done an outstanding job of environmental remediation”

PROJECT CONSULTANT


The way we live and the resources we use affect the sustainability of our communities. Energy efficient building design was incorporated into Subi Centro to reduce the resource use of businesses and residents. The majority considered that Subi Centro invested well in design innovation and pushed the boundaries of sustainable development. Solar access, natural ventilation and summer shading were carefully considered through building design and street alignment. Water sensitive urban design principles were also incorporated. Rainwater was designed to be collected in water features throughout the green spine and used for irrigation.

The redevelopment also incorporated the State's first environmentally friendly home built specifically for educating the community through the demonstration of environmentally friendly and energy efficient practices. The *Subiaco Sustainable Demonstration Home* shows that an environmentally friendly and energy efficient home can also be architecturally impressive, aesthetically pleasing and functional. Subi Centro was awarded the Housing Institute of Australia's GreenSmart Award in 2004 for facilitating the development.

The redevelopment continues to promote sustainable development as a means of improving resource efficiency. The Authority has planned for the installation of cutting edge clean technologies at AFC. Subi Centro will play host to the first precinct wide passive geothermal heat pump system in Western Australia, which will help to regulate building temperatures within the precinct without mechanical intervention.

“... people living there [AFC] will use 50% less water and 50% less energy than people across the road”

PROJECT CONSULTANT



Rainwater collection off roofs and streets will also be recycled and reused within the precinct. These technologies will help to reduce the use of resources both within AFC and throughout the redevelopment as a whole.

Subi Centro was designed around transit-oriented development principles with pedestrian and public transport connections a key focus for the redevelopment. Planning provided for a mixed-use community designed to maximise access and use of public transport and other sustainable forms of travel such as walking and cycling. These principles are no more apparent than in Subiaco Square. The square was designed to accommodate higher density than elsewhere in the redevelopment and has been framed around public transport to promote its use.

While the private car remains the dominant mode of transport, residents have begun to reduce their car use. As of 2006 car ownership in Subi Centro was 10 per cent lower than the Perth average. The shift towards using alternative modes of transport has reduced the carbon footprint of the redevelopment. Subi Centro was seen to have successfully broadened social ambitions to build sustainable communities within Western Australia.

Subi Centro also improved pedestrian connections allowing residents to walk more within the community and use cars less for local trips. The streets were designed to encourage low speed traffic and safe, convenient access for all users. These design elements of Subi Centro did result in some travel behaviour changes and, as of 2006, walking was shown to be the second most frequent form of transport utilised by residents.

“Sustainability, density, transit oriented, mixing of land uses by Perth standards our ‘model’ ... has moved a series of envelopes and boundaries”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

“[the residents] are walking much more than ever outside work hours”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



enhance connectivity

Enhance connectivity by providing well designed places that support walking, cycling, and public transit so that residents and visitors can easily access services, activities and employment without sole reliance on the private motor vehicle.

Subi Centro was designed to encourage public transport use and decrease car use. Transit-oriented development principles formed the basis of the master planning and ensured a mix of uses within the community, easy access to public transport, higher densities, comfortable walking environments and less car dependence.

The new community has the Subiaco Train Station at its centre surrounded by a square of higher density housing allowing for the greatest number of people to have access to the station. The AFC and Centro North precincts will add yet more density to the heart of the redevelopment, broadening the opportunity for people to live in easy reach of the station. For this reason, Subi Centro was viewed as the best example of transit-oriented development in Perth, if not nationally.

Direct pedestrian connections help to maintain a reasonable walking distance to the station from much of the redevelopment. The continuous walking and cycle paths and the permeable street network were achieved by retaining control over the public realm. In 2005, His Royal Highness Prince Charles visited Western Australia and toured Subi Centro to view the sustainable travel initiatives.

The mix of uses within the redevelopment has placed parks, shops and businesses within close proximity to people's homes. The pedestrian network is viewed as high quality and safe, providing for easy local transport. Consequently Subi Centro residents are walking much more outside of office hours.

The new station was felt to be beautifully designed, clean and comfortable and that it contributed to promoting public transport use in Subi Centro. As a commuter station it proved a remarkable success. The design quality offered a level of convenience, comfort and safety to commuters while still being able to cater for large crowds heading to Subiaco Oval.

While it is not broadly acknowledged, Subi Centro has delivered a modal shift away from car use. The average number of people catching the train per week at Subiaco Station nearly doubled from 1996 to 2006. The number of residents walking to work increased by almost 10 per cent, while the number of residents driving to work decreased by 10 per cent.

“Subi Centro has been a wonderful success - a case study in how well urban planning and public transport can work... certainly there is a lot more activity than there used to be”

GOVERNMENT

“You don't get sustainability without density”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

“The station has been fantastic in terms of a being a commuter station, it certainly helps with major events”

INDUSTRY EXPERT



Commuters have been known to walk up to 800 metres to access the station, often stopping at the supermarket on the way home from work. These behavioural changes demonstrate how Subi Centro has driven a cultural shift in Perth, albeit slowly, away from car use.

One of the main focuses of the redevelopment was to improve connections between Subiaco and the surrounding suburbs. Initially the railway was a significant barrier to movement. Sinking the railway created strong connections between neighbouring communities. Movement through the area was viewed to have improved significantly and it is now much easier to get from Daglish to Subiaco via Subi Centro. Access to St John of God Hospital was also greatly enhanced. Subi Centro was considered to have 'absolutely' enhanced connectivity in the local area.

In 2006, car ownership in Subi Centro was recorded as being lower than the Perth average. Although sustainable travel formed an integral part of the redevelopment design principles, a clear parking management strategy was also needed. There was a view that the redevelopment sent mixed messages to residents as providing garages and street parking permits was perceived to encourage people to use their cars. While Perth requires a cultural step-change to fully embrace alternative modes of travel, more could have been done in Subi Centro to discourage car use. With the benefit of hindsight a closer working relationship with the local authority and a robust parking strategy may have prompted further reductions in car ownership.

The dominant car culture in Perth was exacerbated in Subi Centro by the affluence of the resultant new community. People could afford to own their own cars and enjoyed using them. This has led to the view that a wider, richer demographic mix may have hastened the change away from the car. Others feel that it may be that the cultural change needed to radically reduce car use will take a generation. Still the local authority continues to promote public transport use within the area most recently through the introduction of a Subi Central Area Transit bus service. Some Subiaco businesses are also offering financial incentives for employees to car pool providing proof that the message of sustainable transport is slowly spreading.

“You could see what was happening with cars, we wanted a community using the trains”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

“There are still lots of people using cars... The market dynamic of the time means we didn't get the commuters out but over time the choice is there”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



Urban efficiency

Promote urban efficiency in the design and construction of infrastructure and buildings and through facilitating a critical mass of population and employment.

Subi Centro sought to revitalise an underutilised industrial area in Subiaco, the heart of Perth's real estate "golden triangle". The area had very little diversity, limited public access and no quality open space. But there was potential with the train station, Rokeby Road retail strip and Subiaco Oval on the doorstep. The redevelopment presented a unique opportunity to enhance the urban efficiency of an inner city suburb with excellent transport connections.

A greater diversity of housing options was provided in Subi Centro than is evident across Perth. The redevelopment comprises a mix of housing styles including single homes, townhouses and terraces, and apartments. It was considered to have been innovative in approach and to have delivered something new on very small lots and at multiple levels. The redevelopment of East Perth had established the market for higher density living and Subi Centro was able to build on this new housing trend. Although the housing styles were diverse, some views indicated that adaptable and accessible housing could have been explored to enhance social diversity.

There has been a slight increase in social diversity over the years. The majority of residents are still home owners but from 2006 the numbers had dropped below the Perth average. At the same time people renting in Subi Centro increased to be approximately five per cent higher than the Perth average. The level of other tenure types like aged care was almost 10 per cent higher than the Perth average, due to the St Ives retirement village.

Subiaco Square delivered an area of higher density apartments, increasing availability and acceptance of this housing type which was not common in Perth at that time. By 2006, more than 1,500 people were living in Subi Centro and the redevelopment was on track to meeting its population target of 2,000. As a result of the redevelopment the area was experiencing some of the highest housing growth rates in Perth. A main drawcard of the housing was the close proximity to cafes, supermarkets and retail shopping. People moved to Subi Centro to enjoy the ease and amenity of urban living.

For its time Subi Centro pushed the boundaries of what was considered appropriate density for the inner city living. Despite meeting the objective to create medium density development Subi Centro was perceived in hindsight to be under-populated.

"Subi [Centro] was pioneering ... architects and building designers joining in designing housing of the next type"

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

"We had to take account of government policy, particularly as we were within walking distance of the train station"

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Plans for more intense development had to be tempered as at the time community and local political opposition to higher densities was strong. The concern was that the higher densities were not in keeping with the existing character of Subiaco. Poor relations with local stakeholders have continued to hamper the effective delivery of higher densities in Subi Centro.

Prior to redevelopment, the majority of the businesses were industrial and only 1,700 people were employed in the area. The redevelopment had delivered an extra 90,000 square metres of commercial floor space by 2002 and more than doubled the number of businesses. As a result, the primary employment base shifted to office and small business including niche retail, cafes and design firms. The employment base is now more conducive to the inner city location and more respectful of residential amenity. As of 2006 more than 3,000 people were employed in Subi Centro.

The mixed-use community created by the redevelopment included commercial, retail and residential. Securing Woolworths as an anchor tenant in Subiaco Square provided an immediate level of urban amenity and an appropriate bookend to the specialty retail along Rokeby Road. Still some people felt that the redevelopment did not achieve the best mix of uses, particularly those that encourage evening activity.

Centro Avenue was raised as an area that warranted more retail and business diversity. It was not considered to work very well as it is disjointed and off the beaten track. Subiaco Square was also seen as an awkward space due to the station voids. More active ground floor retail along Centro Avenue and even Roberts Road was thought to be an option for increasing activation levels. Overall the mix and density of retail throughout Subi Centro was not considered sufficient enough to activate the streets.

“The conflict with the [local government] and community hampered progress to an extent. It’s a pity we didn’t achieve more density”

PROJECT CONSULTANT

“I’d like to see small bars... that people could walk to that would act as... reasons for the community to get together”

COMMUNITY

“Centro Avenue doesn’t really encourage people to walk along it... all those commercial shop fronts are closed at night and they’re not really interesting to look at during the day.”

INDUSTRY EXPERT



economic well-being

Promote economic well-being by meeting market demand projections, providing opportunities for local business and emerging industries and general employment opportunities.

To deliver a viable urban village the redevelopment needed to provide a variety of economic opportunities and community services. Overall, Subi Centro was viewed as having done well in this regard. Most significantly Subi Centro managed to counter the decline of Subiaco's local economy. The decline was evident in the early 1990s and characterised by a fall in employment levels in the area. Between 1990 and 1997 employment in Subiaco halved from 2,000 to 1,000. Over this same period, the number of businesses decreased from around 2,200 to only 1,700.

The Redevelopment Authority model gave the market surety and government investment provided the confidence needed to attract significant private investment. Developers were given certainty over what and how much they could build. Density requirements, building heights and plot ratios were clearly set out in design guidelines which also, and most importantly, defined the expected development yield.

Office and retail locations were carefully considered and commercial floor space and employment targets were set. The high demand for office space across Perth and the competitive commercial leases offered saw a quick uptake of the floor space provided within the redevelopment area. The offer encouraged new businesses to locate to Subiaco, revitalising the wider business district. By 2006, all commercial units were fully tenanted increasing office floor space by 90,000 square metres and doubling employment levels with over 3,000 employees working in the area. Subi Centro was seen to provide an alternative to working in West Perth or the city.

Similarly there was a high demand for residential accommodation in Subi Centro. Close proximity to the city pushed house prices above the Perth average. Today, Subi Centro remains popular with professionals wanting easy access to the CBD, representing over 90 per cent of residents. Consequently local land values have continued to grow.

At the local level severance caused by the railway isolated neighbouring suburbs from Subiaco's retail precinct. Sinking the railway created a vital north-south link that was later credited with the revitalisation of Rokeby Road. Shop owners were initially uneasy with the proposed retail, fearing the influx would negatively impact existing retail businesses. In actual fact the redevelopment sparked a retail renaissance at the northern end of Rokeby Road.

"The whole of Subiaco [before the redevelopment] was going downhill, there was no further development occurring... it had a limited amount to offer besides the pub"

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

"There was no more growth possible in Subiaco"

GOVERNMENT

“Local economic well-being has been an interesting struggle, the location of commercial offices impacts on the success of retail and retail survives with higher density”

COMMUNITY

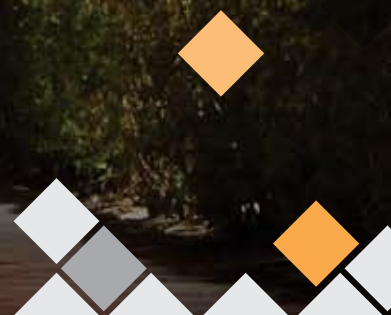
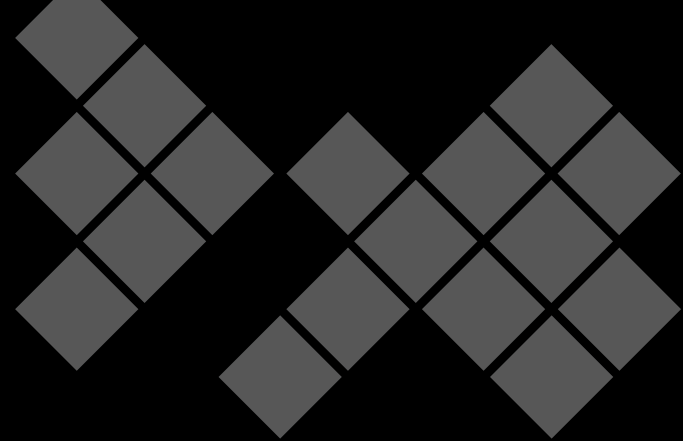
“[Subiaco Square] is not a great urban space”

INDUSTRY EXPERT

Conversely there was less consensus over whether a thriving business community was created within the redevelopment. Low residential densities and an awkward mix of retail were said to be contributing factors. The thought was that Subi Centro would have been more vibrant with more people and more retail. The redevelopment may also have benefited from having flexible spaces, say on the ground floor of office buildings, to foster small galleries and specialty retail.

There are mixed opinions about how well Subiaco Square worked. Despite the presence of anchor tenants like Woolworths and Cafe Café, retail in the precinct has struggled. The existing niche retail and the lack of a bustling night economy has hampered activity within Subiaco Square and resulted in a high turnover of businesses. The configuration of the station itself also causes problems. The ventilation holes prevent the square from being used for community events and the trains can be noisy, which interferes with the amenity of the area. There was always going to be a trade off between having a naturally ventilated station and a fully functioning public square.

The retail arcade off Subiaco Square is not considered to be properly activated. The arcade currently leads to a dead end so people are not drawn through. This presents a difficult environment for retailers beyond the anchor stores to thrive. The build out of Centro North at the other end of the arcade should help improve the situation. The development will create a connection between the station and St John of God Hospital, acting as a prominent thoroughfare and attracting people to the arcade.



social inclusion

Promote social inclusion by requiring diverse and affordable housing and by supporting community infrastructure, activities and opportunities for visitors to socialise.

Allowing for all people to access and feel comfortable in a place means universal access, social and affordable housing and stakeholder engagement. In delivery, however, there was some thought that the redevelopment fostered a monoculture. The majority of residents were professionals with high incomes and there were low numbers of families with children living in the area. However, Subi Centro was not entirely homogenous. The proportion of households who speak a language other than English at home was almost double the Perth average.

Subi Centro boasted greater housing choice than was generally seen throughout Perth, however, the success of the redevelopment was not without consequence and high house prices resulted. The challenge then faced was how to make Subi Centro accessible to all when house prices made it unaffordable to lower income groups. To combat this, and as the redevelopment was partly funded by the *Building Better Cities* program, Subi Centro had a remit to provide social and affordable housing. The redevelopment sought to achieve this through specific government housing projects, joint ventures and developer bonuses.

Delivery of affordable housing in Subi Centro was initially hampered by a lack of clarity in the planning framework. While affordable and social housing was a planning concern, at the time there was very little knowledge about how to implement it and a policy outlining mandatory targets was not adopted until 2010. So far, 33 affordable and social housing projects have been delivered across Subi Centro including shared equity housing, aged care and special needs developments. A large portion of the affordable and social housing in Subi Centro was delivered before mandatory targets were set.

A reasonable amount of social or affordable housing was considered to have been delivered in Subi Centro. The redevelopment was viewed to have done no worse than most and better than some in provision of affordable and social housing. Subi Centro was by and large viewed as having delivered a credible effort against a backdrop of considerable community opposition. The affordable and social housing that was delivered gave Subi Centro a richer demographic mix, however, the provision of more social and affordable housing should be an area of future focus.

“It is a bit of a myth that there’s no affordable housing in Subi ...it’s there – it should be promoted more extensively”

PROJECT CONSULTANT

“There is a little bit of affordable housing there ...but having a diverse offer for residents is really important”

INDUSTRY EXPERT



“It’s about bringing the community forward with the vision and explaining why this is not threatening”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Ensuring Subi Centro was universally accessible was a key aspect of social inclusion and Subi Centro was awarded a Commendation in the Accessible Communities Awards in 2004. Public spaces were designed according to the Australian standards for disability access and the Disability Services Community Reference Group from the local authority also had input. Universal access within Subi Centro was considered to be highly exceptional. The ability of the redevelopment to sustain focus and pay attention to detail was clearly expressed through the universal access initiatives integrated into Subi Centro. Details including the set of the curbing against the roadway, colour coded and textured road and footpath surfaces, level access crossings and voice activated lifts brought Subi Centro above national standards for universal access.

The local authority originally agreed to the formation of a redevelopment authority because it was regarded at the time as the most effective means to redevelopment. The redevelopment authority model allowed decisions to be made without the need to consult and hence potentially speeding up the process. However, the freedom to act came at the cost of support from local stakeholders. The relationships between the Authority, the local government and the community were described as compromising ambitions of the project. The burden of these relationships caused the Authority a loss of early momentum and energy. Stakeholder acceptance of public art was also contentious. The implementation of the public art program was thought to be rushed and some felt that the suitability of works to the public realm and ongoing cost were not always well considered. A longer term view that considers the handover of responsibilities to the local government is necessary to ensure support.

Problems with stakeholders might have been fewer if the Authority had been better at sharing the vision. Community opposition to increased densities is a good example. The Authority didn’t give the community ownership or understanding of the vision and as a result the community did not accept the proposal. Social inclusion should extend to repeat involvement of community to help them own the vision. Local representation is critical to success and should be a founding principle. The Authority made many efforts at mending those relationships with varying degrees of success. Improved relationships between all parties, with shared ambitions for the project, was found to be essential in urban redevelopment.

“In a genteel community, we are not amenable to the exercise of despotic powers – (we see it) as the job of the planners to develop vision sensitively, a vision shared by the community”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

“I don’t think the SRA was disingenuous about telling the community what was going to happen and it is unfortunate that it has gotten to this low level of debate”

INDUSTRY EXPERT



project learnings

You have to do the planning hard yards

Subi Centro was designed as a medium-density mixed-use community offering a good standard of living and urban amenity, the opportunity to work within walking distance of home and ready access to public transport. Redevelopment success stemmed partly from the Authority having done the planning hard yards and taking a multi-disciplinary approach that really thought about how people would live in the new community.

“Subi Centro learned from East Perth but has done it much better”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Despite suggestions that the redevelopment did not quite evolve into the urban village initially envisaged, the Authority did deliver on its vision of reconnecting Subiaco. Subi Centro was seen as having built on the lessons learnt at Claisebrook Village, particularly around revitalised local economy. Subi Centro provides a good model of medium-density living, beautiful public spaces, greater diversity and choice. Overall, there was broad support for the existence and abilities of redevelopment authorities and a strong belief that they get the job done.

Sense of Place

“It does need time to settle in – such exquisite newness”

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The redevelopment created a picturesque and comfortable environment, with a beautiful built form and exceptional open spaces, which feels safe. Industrial heritage has been preserved through aspects including thoughtfully integrated public artworks, street names and a photographic history of the area.

Subi Centro still lacks the required activation levels to be described as vibrant, yet is seen by many to be developing an individual sense of place. However, the redevelopment is young and still settling into its new identity. Subi Centro has done reasonably well in fostering a sense of place. The key lesson here was the need for greater density and place management to ensure activation.





Environmental Integrity

“(SRA has) done an outstanding job of environmental remediation”

PROJECT CONSULTANT

There’s a widely held perception that the redevelopment performed exceptionally well at enhancing environmental integrity. Subi Centro achieved very high environmental standards for urban redevelopment through its remediation activities, master planning and building practices. Energy efficient building design, incorporation of water sensitive urban design principles and the planned application of cutting edge clean technologies have all enhanced the environmental integrity of the redevelopment.

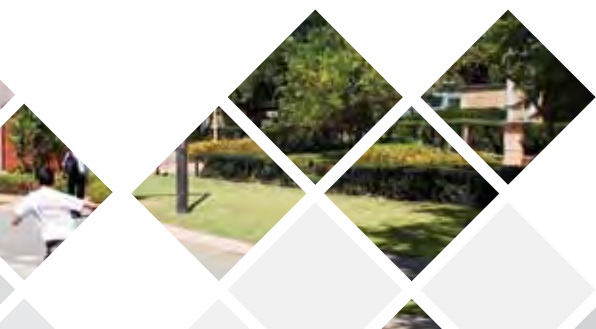
Enhanced Connectivity

“Providing parking for two cars... encourages people to use their cars”

INDUSTRY EXPERT

Subi Centro performed exceptionally well in enhancing the connectivity throughout Subi Centro and creating a transit-oriented development. The redevelopment enhanced connectivity both on a very local, near local and metropolitan scale. On the very local scale connectivity is assisted by the green spine – a high quality pedestrian environment that feels safe to be in and encourages residents (and visitors) to actively use the space. Locally the improved north-south connections revitalised Rokeby Road and provided connections between Subiaco and the neighbouring suburbs of Daglish, Jolimont, Leederville and Wembley. At the metropolitan scale the redevelopment resulted in many more people catching the train into Fremantle and Perth. While cars were still dominant in Subi Centro their use had decreased and use of alternative transport had increased.

The key lesson is that a comprehensive strategy is needed to reduce car use. Benchmark developments around the world are beginning to unbundle parking from housing, providing for the car free household. Removing minimum residential parking requirements may finally encourage Perth residents to more fully adopt alternative transport and drop the car.



project learnings

Urban Efficiency

“If it is an urban village, then it needs to be a very crowded place”

COMMUNITY

The Authority performed reasonably well in promoting urban efficiency, successfully transforming a light industrial estate into a medium-density mixed-use development. Subi Centro was under-populated and this hampered the delivery of urban efficiency. Subi Centro’s performance in delivering greater density must be considered against a backdrop of entrenched, well-organised, community opposition. The key lesson here is that greater density is needed to promote vibrancy.

Economic Well-being

“Local economic well-being has been an interesting struggle”

COMMUNITY

Overall, Subi Centro was viewed as having done reasonably well at promoting local economic well-being. The level of economic well-being that was achieved varied at different scales. At the macro scale, Subi Centro was a financially successful project, attracting significant private sector investment with local land values continuing to grow. The redevelopment has shown a good return on investment for both public and private investors.

At the local level redevelopment of Subi Centro has revitalised Rokeby Road and increased business diversity in the area. At the micro level, however, the vibrancy of Subiaco Square was considered to be lacking and economic well-being within the redevelopment struggled.

The key lessons here were that greater local densities, a better mix of retail and office space and a more vibrant mix of business types were necessary to promote economic well-being. Ongoing place management over some retail spaces could have allowed delivery of retail businesses with a broader appeal, helping to foster vitality.



Social Inclusion

Subi Centro delivered a diverse range of housing types and public spaces and buildings were thoughtfully designed to ensure universal access. However, affordable and social housing delivery and stakeholder management have not yet reached their full potential. Overall Subi Centro did less well at promoting social inclusion, and this is where the biggest lessons of the redevelopment can be drawn.

A diversity of housing groups

Some affordable and social housing was achieved, however, delivery was hampered by a lack of clarity in the planning framework. The experience fed into creating the Authority's Affordable and Diverse Housing Policy in 2010. A key lesson was the need to involve diversity of housing groups and for different models of affordable housing to be fully explored to add robustness to the delivery of affordable and social housing.

We should promote it more

There was a view that the Authority's efforts in delivering social and affordable housing were not well-recognised, nor all the difficulties in delivery well-understood. The key lesson was that, as part of its marketing efforts, the social and affordable components of the project should be better promoted.

You've got to bring your stakeholders along with you

Subi Centro was characterised by difficult relationships with the local government and community. This outlined the need for more effective stakeholder engagement. Stakeholders were only engaged at the beginning of the project and in some respects were excluded from the vision as the redevelopment moved forward. The key lesson is that achieving social inclusion in future redevelopments may need repeat engagement of stakeholders in the redevelopment vision.

Don't lose momentum

Difficult stakeholder relationships hampered delivery of the vision and caused the Authority to lose some momentum towards the final stages of the redevelopment. The example of AFC was given, which was felt should have been delivered three years ago. The key lesson here was that successful stakeholder engagement would have helped the Authority to 'not lose momentum'.

You have to include local representation

A lesson was also drawn from the range of stakeholders engaged during redevelopment. Local representation is a necessary element of achieving good outcomes, and there is a strong need for the local government specifically to be repeatedly involved in the redevelopment vision. The key lesson is that better inclusion of local representation may have avoided the difficult relationships which hampered delivery of the Subi Centro vision.

A small and nimble management team

The Authority's management and delivery team was considered to be more streamlined than the EPRA model. The SRA was felt to be highly successful and positively lacking in bureaucracy. The main lesson drawn from the overall redevelopment process was that a nimble management team and an organisation without too many layers was integral to a successful redevelopment.

Overall, Subi Centro has shown that creating a vibrant urban village with a sense of place, which utilises urban land efficiently, is well connected, and healthy in terms of its environment economy and community takes time, dedication, and healthy stakeholder relationship management. While the redevelopment goals were not met overnight the Authority has placed the building blocks that will allow Subi Centro to achieve them over time.



Subiaco
Redevelopment
Authority