



12 November 2015

The Municipal Manager  
Overstrand Municipality  
P O Box 20  
Hermanus  
7200

**Attention:** Mr Riaan Kuchar

cc Kari Brice

Dear Riaan,

#### **COMMENTS ON HERMANUS CBD REGENERATION FRAMEWORK**

Thank you for having afforded us, as part of the public comment process, the opportunity to comment on the current proposals emanating from the CBD Revitalisation Project that appear in the final draft of the CBD Regeneration Report.

We have worked together with the Hermanus Business Chamber in interrogating the final draft report and our comments are the same as those that they are submitting, which are as follows, namely;

1. **High Street:** We note with thanks that High street pedestrian prioritization and eventual conversion to probably Hermanus' best shopping precinct has been included as a priority project in the regeneration framework. The full weight of the CBD revitalization project should be carefully focused on High street in order to help the CBD compete for tenants and shoppers against an imminent mall. Nothing could be more important than retaining people in the CBD as without people any revitalization becomes meaningless. Delaying the initiation of the High street project by five to ten years as suggested in the draft regeneration projects matrix is considered by the Hermanus Business Chamber and the Hermanus Ratepayers Association to be unwise. The project was identified some thirteen years ago and should be implemented as soon as possible.

The upgrading of High street is a long and very complex process involving numerous private land owners to upgrade their properties in order to provide better quality retail spaces for tenants and shoppers. This process will not begin until the municipal portion of the project is initiated. Secondly municipal land holdings will also take several years to



finally deliver commercial space on High street. Animal Welfare and surrounding vacant land holdings of the municipality adjacent to High street need to be looked at as a second Mitchell Street Precinct type development where new tenants and shop fronts can be built in the soonest future. Since it will take long to upgrade the private buildings and vacant lands on High street we feel delaying the initiation of the project could lead to the CBD not being ready to defend itself against external competition in time. Effectively external competition may well reduce the CBD's local shoppers by a large percentage pushing the CBD further into decline which may well affect its ability to attract tourists in future thus affecting the core of the local economy negatively. Once begun, urban decay is very difficult or expensive to halt. Further the municipal land holdings adjacent to High street that will and/or should be sold for development will gain value after the High street project is initiated. This gained value will subsidize the cost of the project while giving the CBD more time to develop a defensive strategy which will hopefully allow it to avoid going further into urban decay. The traffic movement in High street in the future needs to be carefully considered to create the most space and least conflict with pedestrians. In a best case perhaps only one lane of vehicular traffic could be achieved throughout the length of High street. It may further be possible to avoid traffic entering High street from Dirkie Uys Street in either direction.

We believe the High street project is critical to the best case future of the Hermanus CBD under conditions of serious external competition. We further believe the project is long and complex and delays cannot be afforded if the best case socio-economic future for the CBD is to be attained. Please reconsider the delaying of the project for five to ten years and rather do everything possible to begin the project as soon as possible.

2. **The Old Harbour, the Museum area and Lemm's Corner** require special urban design attention in keeping with the historical fishing village character of that area – including re-introduction of a specialist local market, such as a local fish and food market. We believe a Sunday market incorporating many of the art, artisanal food and local craft traders from the outlying Saturday market would significantly increase the attractiveness of the CBD on a Sunday to both locals and tourists and would thus boost economic activity in the CBD over the weekends and the local economy with it. Further the whale museum should be encouraged to upgrade and seriously consider removing the fake whale lying outside.
3. **Mitchell Street Precinct** needs to be looked at again as to how it can best benefit the CBD, its parking and shoppers in the future. The Bakery building in its current location is seen to have few benefits and several problems. Leaving it where it is will substantially reduce the potential of the Mitchell Street Precinct for retail and parking. It is recommended that the building gets moved as the precinct develops. We understand its historical character is important and agree it must be retained which is why we suggest moving the building. This will allow both the retention of a character building while also



allowing Mitchell Street Precinct to attain far more commercial weight and particularly far more potential to provide critically needed parking.

Moving the old bakery building will allow the precinct to be less complicated as it can exist on only the three primary erven which will hugely simplify the currently very complex planning problems it has which are in fact so great that the project is effectively stalled. The precinct is required for the future growth and success of the CBD (and High Street in particular) and having it stalled, as it is now, is detrimental to the survival of the CBD once competition arrives in Sandbaai. The easiest way to make the project proceed again is to simplify it, avoiding the necessity to involve the three neighbouring erven to such an extreme extent. Moving the old bakery building will open up the potential for parking in the precinct which will remove most of the need to involve structured parking on neighbouring erven thus simplifying the project and hopefully getting it to move forward.

4. All **sidewalks** need best practice high quality design and implementation on all primary pedestrian routes within and to and from the CBD. Pedestrian ramp treatments are required at all intersections and crossings in order to make them safe for use by people with disabilities. There needs to be a particular focus on High Street and pedestrian crossings across the “Checkers Bypass” and Main Road, which not all seem to have been identified in the Draft Final Report.
5. Demarcated **cycling routes and cycle parking** need best practice high quality design and implementation- both within and on routes to and from the CBD. (See recent Cape Town & Johannesburg lane colouration/demarcation treatments). The CBD Landscape Palette (chapter 6 of the Draft Final Report) should include recommendations for current best practice bicycle parking racks. If examples are required, please feel free to contact the HRA.
6. **Parking** needs a holistic investigation to quantify demand, supply, duration and accumulation– including forecasts into the future. Recommendations should include revised pricing and management arrangements for off- and on-street parking. The specific parking access/egress mess around Woolworths and Carriages parking garages also needs urgent redesign.
7. **Tour buses** need detailed investigation to determine where best to offload/load and park. Our combined recommendation is to have the main drop-off node (with information and ablution facilities) close to Gearings Point, and the main pick-up node near the Information Bureau (on even the United Church/Hoy’s Koppie parking area) so as to encourage tourists to walk across town. The current proposal in the Draft Final Report of



having a tour bus drop off point near the taxi rank is not supported. Tour bus parking, holding, washing and toilet-emptying, etc. should be kept entirely out of the CBD.

8. The **taxi rank** needs to be redesigned and completely upgraded to bring it up to the standard of a modern and attractive public transport interchange suitable for tour bus loading, off-loading and parking - including high quality public toilets, waiting areas and a tourist information kiosk. More detail on the proposed development of the tennis court area described in the Draft Final Report would be appreciated. At this time the public has no idea of what the intention is and therefore cannot make sensible comment however much it might like to.
9. **Uniform signage** with an appropriate Hermanus identity needs designing and implementation throughout the CBD – possible based on internationally recognised pictograms to cater for our multi-lingual population and international tourists.
10. Modern, well-designed and managed **public toilets** are required at strategic locations in the CBD – provided by the Municipality but possibly managed by a City Improvement District. (CID)
11. High quality **urban management** of the CBD by a City Improvement District (CID) needs to be introduced, as occurs in other prestige urban areas in South Africa. HPP could possibly be transformed to take on additional functions or alternatively a Special Rating Area (SRA) could be created in terms of the new Municipal By Laws for the formation and operation of SRAs that are being developed by the Municipality
12. The HRA would like to thank the municipality, GAPP and the other professionals involved for all the good work on this vitally important project. We jointly appreciate the opportunities for public participation and are pleased to see some of our ideas being properly considered. We have not commented on all aspects of the framework instead focussing on the projects we feel are the most critical for the economy and ratepayers in the long-term. Those items we have not commented on can be considered to have strong support from both our community service organisations. Please consider our above inputs very seriously and we will be happy to hold a small focus group meeting with the parties involved should further discussion be necessary.

Kind regards,

Bob Stanway  
**CHAIRMAN**