



Main Street/Small Towns Program

Mayfield – success story

Challenges and opportunities

Mayfield is one of the oldest suburbs in Newcastle, Australia's sixth largest city. Once a place for the social elite, Mayfield has buildings and heritage houses dating back to the 1860s. There have been significant social shifts since that time. By 1999, Mayfield had become a predominantly blue collar area and when the nearby BHP steel plant closed the result was local unemployment, a downturn in business confidence and static commercial property values.

Today, there is a noticeable change in the general appearance of Mayfield, with an increase in houses being renovated and commercial space along the once partly-empty Maitland Road corridor now near capacity.

Critical to this change is the Mayfield Mainstreet Committee, which was formed in 1998. It is funded by Mayfield property owners and businesses through a special rates levy, and is highly pro-active. The Committee's aim is to effect a turnaround for Mayfield and create a bright, exciting, new and friendly feel to the area which would capture local spending and community loyalty.

Positives for Mayfield are its proximity to the centre of Newcastle, the University of Newcastle and the Hunter Institute of Technology (TAFE), relatively affordable housing, a strong sense of a diverse community, and the distinctive, traditional character of both commercial buildings and houses.

A program for change

Supported by the NSW Government's Main Street/Small Towns Program, the Mayfield Mainstreet Committee first conducted a number of community strategic planning workshops, and then, in 2001, commissioned a Business Retention and Expansion Survey. The survey report recommended the development of an action plan to improve infrastructure and create a safe, clean commercial environment which would attract new business, encourage business growth, and increase commercial property occupancy rates.

The report also noted that Mayfield's profile needed lifting and a brand identity created. A marketing strategy was recommended to increase trade within the local area through cross referral.

Targeted marketing seminars would help local business people to enhance their business skills and property owners could be encouraged to become more proactive.

A good working partnership with local, State and federal governments and other related services would also be important for improving social services and cultural facilities for the area.

Goals

The action plan listed six critical steps:

- clean up Mayfield
- create a brand identity
- target retail tenancy shortfall
- look into planning and infrastructure issues
- improve business skills
- implement an advertising and promotional campaign
- hold events which celebrate Mayfield.

The first three parts of the program have already been successfully achieved with great response from the local community. The Clean Up program, which took place in 2003, included graffiti removal and streetscape improvements including installation of new lighting and 170 large terracotta pots with ficus trees along either side of the retail strip.

Projects

In 2003, the committee developed the Mayfield Marketing Plan, which initiated several community focused schemes, as well as ongoing improvements to the appearance of the Mayfield commercial area. The plan has produced excellent results with more than 200 businesses in the area now working together to develop Mayfield into a progressive hub.

Over the past 18 months local businesses and the community have embraced the new identity of Mayfield – a specially designed logo and the tag line 'Rich Heritage + Exciting Future'. Some 10 businesses located in the area have invested in improvement through external and internal fit-outs. Two large businesses have opened or are about to open providing 150 new jobs, there have been 15 new business start-ups, and retail occupancy is now at 90 per cent.

There has been renewed interest in Mayfield as a place to live, and the prospect of good shopping. This enthusiasm is reflected in property prices, which have increased by 30 per cent over the past two years.

How the Main Street/Small Towns Program has helped

In June 2005, the Mayfield Mainstreet Committee applied for a further grant through the NSW Government's Main Street/Small Towns Program to implement the Mayfield on the Map project, an extension of the Mayfield Marketing Plan.

Mayfield is now into the second stage of the Mayfield Marketing Plan, which builds on the successes of the first. This second stage plan, with achievable outcomes, began in June 2005 and will continue until June 2006.

Funding has been received by the Mayfield Mainstreet Committee through the Main Street/Small Towns Program to assist with implementation of Mayfield on the Map projects which include retail make-over and customer service workshops, co-operative advertising campaigns, business awards, business and community events and a youth skills development project. The funds will allow the committee to hire professional assistance and a project manager to oversee the work.

Ongoing activities

The specific projects which make up Mayfield on the Map need to be achieved in conjunction with each other to ensure the overall objective of makeover, promotion and marketing reaches all levels of the community. All stakeholder groups, such as local businesses, property owners, and the wider community, are being targeted by a campaign of newsletters, a dedicated web site, training, accreditation and recognition, and a calendar of events and opportunities to involve local schools and youth groups. There is also a program of good news stories for the media to ensure that Mayfield is viewed in a positive light.



The youth of Mayfield are of special importance. After consistent lobbying for the past three years, a skate park will be installed in the Mayfield east section of the main street district. The Mayfield Mainstreet Committee has designated this area as a Youth Precinct and a skate shop has just opened up for business nearby.

The Mayfield Mainstreet Committee is promoting the history of Mayfield through heritage walks. Local residents and community members are being urged to come and tell their stories and discuss the highlights of Mayfield's colourful history. The walks will identify social, cultural and environmental points of interest in the landscape and build on consultation already undertaken with local schools and groups.

The Mayfield Mainstreet Committee, in collaboration with the University of Newcastle, has recently received funding from the Australian Research Council Collaborative Grant to support a PhD scholarship over four years to develop a case study of cultural planning in an Australian city, focusing on Mayfield.

More information about Mayfield and its unusual history and unique stories can be found at: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/collections/archives/int/mayfield.html or Mayfield Mainstreet at: www.mayfield.asn.au.

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Community name: Mayfield
LGA: Newcastle
Location: suburb, 6 km west of Newcastle city centre
Region: Hunter
Population: 14,262
Main industries: Retail