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Woollahra Council releases updated Double Bay cinema plan

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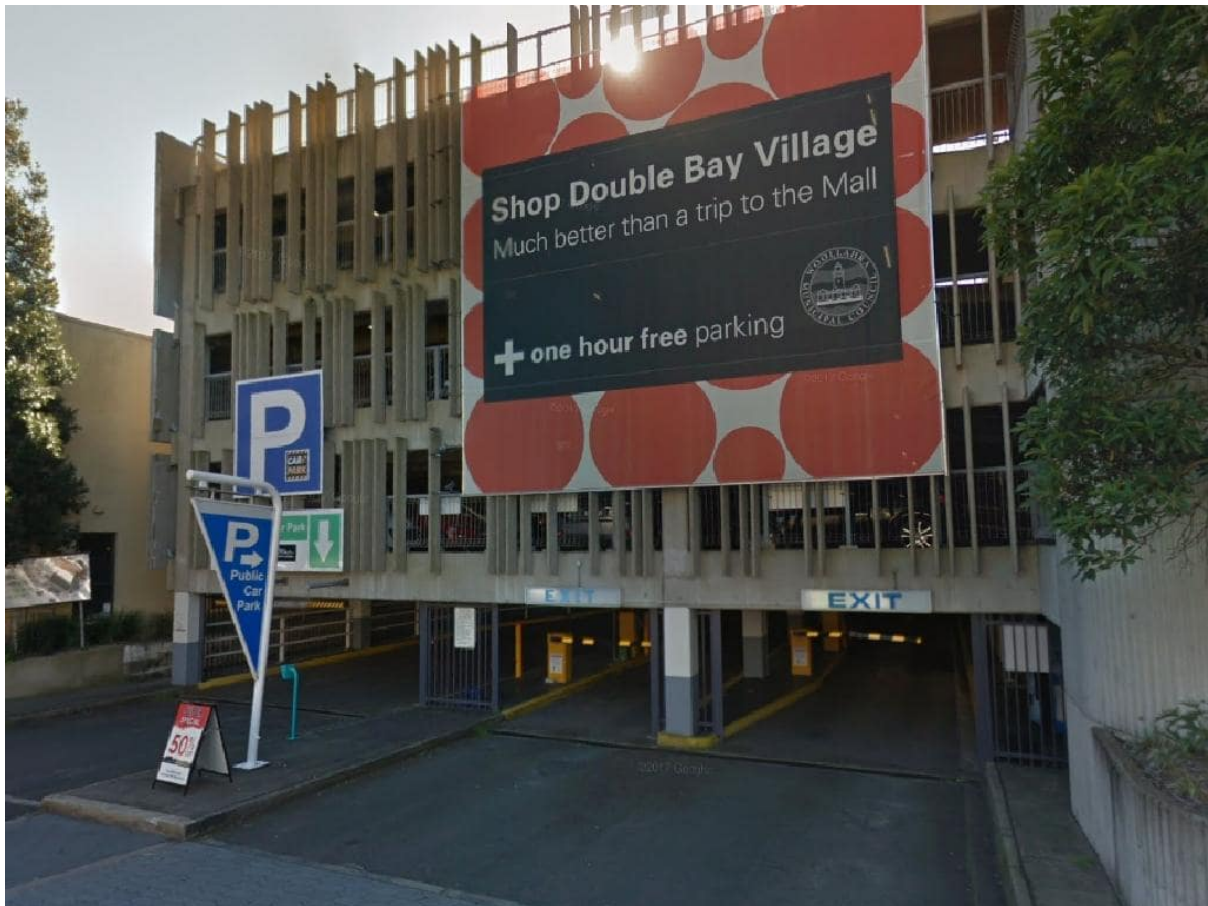
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Woollahra Council has unveiled new details of its plan to redevelop Cross St carpark into a boutique cinema and apartment complex, and set a 2023 target for its completion.

The council on Tuesday announced its proposal to replace the “outdated” 380-space carpark with a 10-screen theatre with 644 seats, 668sq m of ground floor retail or community space and 86 residential apartments.

There would be five levels of basement carparking comprising 372 public spots, and 90 residential car spaces.

The project, to be built in partnership with Built Development Group and Axiom Properties, would be delivered at no cost to ratepayers.



The carpark as it stands today. Picture: Google Earth

The cinema would be owned by the council and run by Palace Cinemas.

Council would retain ownership of the site, with the Built and Axiom consortium to manage the apartments and private parking via a 99-year lease.

Mayor Peter Cavanagh said the community had been “crying out” for a cinema since the old Double Bay Greater Union complex closed in 2004.

“This project will continue the successful revitalisation of Double Bay and significantly enhance the area’s social, cultural and commercial life,” he said.



Woollahra Mayor Peter Cavanagh. Picture: AAP IMAGE / Chris Pavlich

The council said the planning process would involve “extensive” community consultation at both planning proposal and subsequent development application stage.

It is hoped construction would begin in August 2021 and end in December 2023.

The carpark has been earmarked as an ideal location for a proposed cinema for several years.

Controversy erupted last year about the council’s proposal to create a temporary carpark to accommodate the redevelopment in Steyne Park, next door to Double Bay Public School.

However, a council spokesman said all public parks had now been ruled out as potential sites to offset parking lost during construction.

“Our staff are investigating alternative parking arrangements to offset the loss of spaces during the construction phase and report will be provided to council later this year,” he said.

Cr Cavanagh pointed to the successful delivery of Kiaora Place as evidence of a “strong record of using its property assets to provide valuable community facilities at minimal cost to our community”.

“It delivered a state of the art library at no net cost to ratepayers and importantly, also provides a significant ongoing revenue stream which we have used to provide community facilities throughout our municipality,” he said.

The council is also investigating an upgrade of public space at the adjacent Cross St and Jamberoo Lane site, plans of which would be informed by public consultation.