

URBANIZATION OF AN ALPINE ENVIRONMENT

DINNER PLAIN TOWNSHIP

GREAT ALPINE RD, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA



A SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENT AT THE CROSS ROADS

PROJECT NUMBER 1263

VERITY H. MALE YR 11

CAUFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

GLEN EIRA RD, EAST ST KILDA

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 3183

Malevals@netc.net.au

Executive Summary

This study looks at the development of Dinner Plain an Alpine Township located in North East Victoria in Australia's Alpine Region approximately 10km south east from Mt Hotham Ski Resort.

Development at Dinner Plain commenced in the mid 1980's, on a green field site of Alpine meadow and snow gum copses.

The land had previously been used for the grazing of cattle over summer months.

There are now approximately 250 houses, a Primary School, Alpine Secondary School, Commercial Accommodation Lodges, Supermarket/Bakery, Hotel and ski hire located within the village precinct.

The mapping included in my study shows;

- The location of the Dinner Plain in relation to Mt Hotham and Melbourne, the Capital of Victoria;
- The location of environmental sensitive areas;
- Photo examples of Historic, Residential, Community and Commercial properties;
- Topography and Geology of the land mass surrounding Dinner Plain;
- Real Estate sales activity by year;

Objective

The objective of my project is to analyse Dinner Plain from 1982 to 2002 and future-plans, using mapping to visualise past and present issues. It will include the following important factors:

- Social;
- Historic;
- Environmental;
- Economic;
- Political;

I will describe each of the above factors on the past present and future directions of Dinner Plain.

Background

In 1982 a proposal for a ski village near Mt Hotham arose. The site called Snowgum village and later changed to Dinner Plain was about a 10-minute drive from Mt Hotham Ski Resort.

The village was going to be a \$100 million dollar development. The developers took 7 years to plan and obtain the necessary approvals.

Land parcels were going to be freehold, which meant that the person who bought the land had all rights to the land, compared to Mt Hotham where all land was held by lease from the Crown. This was the only opportunity anyone would have to be able to buy freehold property 2,500 feet above sea level.

Dinner Plain was going to have 2000 beds in the village. It was the only freehold Alpine development in Australia at a time when demand for Alpine properties was quite strong. It was planned also, to supplement accommodation available in Mt Hotham and increase the demand for Nordic Skiing.

The plans included exclusive facilities, which weren't on offer anywhere else. It was going to have infrastructure and services such as electricity, reticulated gas, water, sewerage, and telephone and built-in TV aerials. In addition, the village roads and kerbing would be made of concrete and full drainage from roads.

The standard of architecture of dwellings was to be strictly controlled by the developer.

The sewage treatment plant at Dinner Plain was a physical/chemical treatment system, which enabled the normal biological process, which is subject to inactivity in low temperatures.

The physical/chemical treatment plant had been designed to incorporate the world's most advanced technological processes. There was to be no effluent discharge from Dinner Plain and therefore no chance of pollution.

They didn't have much trouble getting the land because the site was not part of the National Park as it was previously privately owned.

The only big issue which arose, was the heavier traffic in a sensitive alpine environment. To control the traffic the developers proposed that the buses would take downhill skiers to Mt Hotham to prevent parking problems at the top of the mountain. This would help solve the problem Mt Hotham had with parking.

The skiers would also no longer have to park their cars some distance from their accommodation and carry skis, food, clothing and bedding a long distance.

Also the access to Dinner Plain is very good, you can travel the Great Alpine Rd or if that is closed the Princess Highway via Omeo.

Progress report

Over the past 17 years, there had been considerable development and planning at Dinner Plain. In August 2000 a survey of residents was conducted with 65 owners expressing their views on the village.

Results from the survey indicate that;

- Dinner Plain is a family village, which is surrounded by the natural environment of the Alpine National Park. This was the aim in 1982 - a very livable village for families.
- It had a 40% moderate pedestrian movement and 54% moderate car movement through the village so this gives Dinner Plain a community feeling and not just another tourist destination.
- 64 people suggested that the negative part of Dinner Plain is the open area on the west and south where houses are located on alpine meadow, rather than in a treed environment.
- Utility services & equipment are in open view of the small ski and snow play area.

Future development

In reviewing the current plans for a future direction, residents at Dinner Plain have a number of ideas to improve the Village. These include:

Natural Environment contrasts to development;

- Exposed areas of upper constrain development in some northern areas.

- An area of sphagnum moss bed and surrounding catchment of high landscape value in the southwest has been identified that requires protection with buffer areas
- An area of alpine wetland in the north requires restrictions to development
- The landscape character of the area of clustered snow gums and open graded plains is mostly intact and is of a high visual quality

Infrastructure constrains to development;

- The existing capacity of the sewerage system currently constrains development but could be enhanced by repairs and adopting improved processes.
- Water supply constraints include the location of bores and requirements for buffer zones
- Gas supply will need to be supplemented for additional development and will require buffer zones.
- Car parking demand is high near the commercial center and more clearly demand and extra car parking areas required.

Amenity constraints to development;

- Detailed development guide lines for all buildings have been developed for Dinner Plain to retain the architectural integrity and character of the original designs
- Key view lines need protection in the central plains area

They also comment on how the village isn't developed to its full potential and there is more to be recognized like public amenities, and also to central part of Dinner Plain that is relatively under developed. Some recommendations are:

- The future commercial development within the village is concentrated within this commercial core area.
- Strict guidelines are established to regard to building scale, character and signage.
- Reconfigure car-parking area to improve legibility of roadway, to improve the visual quality of the commercial core, and to provide separation of issues within the entrance zone to minimize potential penetration and vehicular conflicts.

There are five main factors to be considered at Dinner Plain during the process of the development. Making sure they all balance out evenly to make the village stable and a good community, they are:

- Social
- Historic
- Economic
- Environmental
- Political

Social

At Dinner Plain they have a very active community, which is close, as there aren't many people who live there. They are very happy with the way Dinner Plain has turned out.

With the future development of Dinner Plain 42% of people from the survey in 2000, say that a 50% increase in the size of Dinner Plain will have a negative affect on the character on of the village.

Facilities which are missing include a Community Hall. A new school is being built for the residents of Mt Hotham and Dinner Plain. Dinner Plain also provides the community with cross-country and downhill skiing, toboggan runs, snow playing areas, horse riding, mountain bike ridding, bush walking, trout/fly fishing, tennis and children's play equipment.

Historic

Dinner Plain as you know is the only free hold land, which makes it a unique resort to Australia, in particular Victorian skiing. All the other resorts are leasehold development.

Environmental

The sensitive areas of Dinner Plain are mainly the moss beds, steep slopes and the effluent disposal areas. The vegetation is not very dense; the trees take a long time to establish, therefore re-vegetation is very difficult to develop. Most of the treed areas have an under cover grassy vegetation.

Economic

A study on the economic significance of Victorian Alpine Areas was completed in 2000.

During the winter season an estimated \$142 a day per person was being spent. This meant they spent on average in the Victorian economy \$70 million and supported 2,219 jobs. This was from the 827,752 visitors in a winter season.

During a summer season, the alpine region had 453,667 visitors. The average spend per day was \$79 per person. This added \$30 million to the Victorian economy and supported 962 jobs.

Political

There has been a number of issues brought up about development at Dinner Plain by the National Parks Association, Native Title issues at the Dinner Plain Airport, environmental issues etc.

All of these issues have been resolved by negotiation and Government Legislation

Conclusion

Over all Dinner Plain is a very successful development in our alpine region. It has all the characteristics of a successful village and has many plans for the future.

Bibliography

Newspaper Articles – ‘The Age’, 1982, 1985

Economic Significance of Alpine Areas 2000 - KPMG

Dinner Plain Village Master Plan – Alpine Shire 2001