

National News

Theo Maras shares the changes he'd make if he had unconditional charge of the city for a day

- by: Tim Williams The City
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Developer and landlord Theo Maras enjoying a coffee in The Tasting Room with reporter Tim Williams, who asked him how he'd rule the city if he was in charge for the day. Picture: Keryn Stevens
Source: News Limited

THE City asked property developer, East End landlord and Rundle Mall Management Authority chairman Theo Maras how he would rule the city if he was dictator for a day.

This is what he said:

BOOST the city's population through large scale, mixed-use developments enabled by government land purchases.

Maras says the State Government and Adelaide City Council should buy and amalgamate neighbouring properties, then sell them to developers and collaborate with them on "masterplanned" developments such as the East End residential and retail precinct.

TELL US BELOW: What changes would you make if you were "dictator for a day"?

That would overcome the problem of "inappropriate" developments being scattered on small sites

across the CBD, he says.

“The city needs to have residential development and much, much more of it,” Maras says.

“Individual developers can’t buy a piece of land here and a piece of land there and wait 10 years to put them together.

“That is the role of the state and the city. “The East End worked because it was a large tract of land and a holistic development approach. You don’t have to have one developer, it can be three or four.

“That way you get some diversification (in housing) and variation in price.”

The result would be higher quality, more appealing midrise developments with their own self-sustaining economies, Maras says.

“The East End works because it doesn’t rely on everyone coming in from outside.

“It has the catalyst of success — people living here harmoniously in the city.”

BAN new “mega” shopping centres in the suburbs to draw people to the city.

Maras has no problem with the likes of Westfield centres in the outer suburbs but says nothing of that scale should ever be allowed within 10km of the city.

He worries that another large scale centre could be allowed on Adelaide Airport land or through multistorey redevelopments of Unley Shopping Centre or on The Parade, though he does not oppose Coles’ proposed \$50 million expansion of Norwood Village.

“If you take away the hierarchy of the CBD over the suburbs and put everything the CBD has at Norwood or Northpark (shopping centre) or Unley, you are going to rip the heart out of the city and have an economically unviable city,” Maras says. “Retail is not a bad thing if it serves the immediate needs of the locality.

“But don’t allow another (Westfield) Marion.”

SCAP plans for a new high school on the Royal Adelaide Hospital site and keep part of it as a hospital.

“It would be a criminal act to destroy some of the world class infrastructure that is already sitting on that site.

“Let’s not play politics, let’s look for the benefit of the state,” says Maras, adding the RAH should site should also be used for medical research and university expansions.

“The best place to have a school is on the (Renewal SA) land at Bowden.”

Alternatively, Adelaide High School could easily build up, not out, he says.

DIG a multi-level carpark under the Torrens Parade Ground and ditch the carpark tax.

“Why wouldn’t you go down two levels underground and up one level and use the space on top of the parade ground for a carpark too when you need it?” Maras says. “Having a carpark tax is like putting a ticket on everyone’s window and saying: ‘You are not wanted’.”

EUDCATE the public about the need to remove the trees for the Rundle Mall upgrade.

The trees had to go to allow for underground works and to put an end to their roots pushing up pavers, Maras says.

Their replacements are in concrete tubs to stop that happening again.

“We are sorry we had to get rid of the trees as well but let’s have common sense and economics be part of the argument, not just nostalgia for the trees,” he says.

“It’s important to also note that there are people in Adelaide who want to bring attention to things like trees and so-called historic buildings without taking in any consideration of any long-term viability.”

TELL US BELOW: What changes would you make if you were “dictator for a day”?

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George

5 hours ago

Theo, we had multiple days over 40C and benches were put on the boring and unpractical Rundle Mall upgrade without any shade. Unexcusable, unbelievable a total lack of foresite and one could say one is protecting ones own nest, building up the city whilst owning more properties. The world is a large wonderful place, many ideas can be gained simply by opening up ones eyes. You have created a big grey boring mess.

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Barrie

6 hours ago

If we put Theo in charge for a year ? thoughts please.

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