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I strongly believe that Newcastle is already going through a phase of urban renewal. This process is not being driven by Government, Council or Major developers but by local individuals who are seeking to make a living and improve their environment.

The Renew Newcastle project has introduced many interesting and varied shopping experiences into the formerly empty Hunter Mall. New businesses have opened along Hunter St such as The Terrace Bar and Subo Restaurant.

Examples of decay in the CBD are the Civic Hotel which was damaged by fire 4 years ago, allowed to sit and rot and has now been demolished, this building is owned by Newcastle Council. A major portion of the Hunter St Mall is owned by the development group GPT, they have done nothing with their premises and refuse to do anything until the railway line is destroyed (is this development or speculation, particular as they have just sold 66% of their holding in Newcastle's CBD to Landcom) Similarly the old Post Office was sold by State Government to a developer who allowed it to rot for many years and then sold it back to State government (another example of speculation, not development)

The historic theater in theater lane is in a shocking state of repair and the developer owner has stated that he will not do anything to the building until the railway line is removed (more speculation, not development) Newcastle is being held to ransom by developers who hold large tracts of real estate to get rid of their railway line before any work takes place on their derelict buildings. No contracts are in place, there are no formal agreements just some promises, its all taken on trust.

Newcastle, like any city in the world needs its railway lines. To take out a railway line on the half baked promise of a group of developers is insane. We allegedly have a major building project commencing at the Civic precinct in 2014 for a new law court and University buildings with the projected figures of accommodating 3000 people. How will they get there and where will they park?

I propose:

- Do not remove the rail line
- Allow residential zoning at ground level in Hunter St
- Compel Owners to use or lose their commercial buildings.

Thank You for reading my submission

Rob Ward