

# Planning Strategy Refresh

## Planning in the Pub conversations



### REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

#### PLANNING STRATEGY REFRESH

**The 2012 Planning Strategy is being refreshed to better reflect and plan for the contemporary landscape of our city, including light rail, urban renewal and a growing population.**

The new strategy will also incorporate progress made on key Government priorities, such as achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT by 2045, providing increased housing choice and affordability, and delivering improved and integrated public transport and active travel.



#### THE CONVERSATION

**Planning in the Pub conversations were held from 6.00-7.30pm in Gungahlin on Thursday 6 September and Weston on Tuesday 11 September 2018.**

The events concluded 13 weeks of engagement activities, including an online poll, Speaker Series, workshops, stakeholder meetings and written submissions. These events were an opportunity for Government Ministers, MLAs, planners and policy makers, and the community to come together and reflect on what was heard in previous years and throughout the engagement and discuss how it could inform the new strategy.

#### WHO ENGAGED

**The Planning in the Pub conversations were co-hosted with the Young Planners Network, which offered valuable insight into how the direction of the strategy could respond to the needs of our future residents, businesses and visitors.**

Approximately 50 people attended the Planning in the Pub sessions, spanning many demographic groups, industry sectors, community groups, planners and Canberra residents.

The events were also attended by ACT Planning Minister Mick Gentleman MLA, Minister Chris Steel MLA, Suzanne Orr MLA and Bec Cody MLA. As observed at each of the engagements, the conversation was dynamic and respectfully represented a diverse set of views among participants about what the future of Canberra should and could look like in the future.

#### WHAT'S NEXT?

**Community engagement on the Planning Strategy Refresh closed on Friday 14 September 2018.**

The ACT Government is considering the outcomes from the engagement along with outcomes of other key government consultations, such as housing choices, climate change and transport, combined with ongoing research and analysis, to inform the new strategy.

To stay informed on the progress of the Planning Strategy Refresh, register your details by emailing [planningrefresh@act.gov.au](mailto:planningrefresh@act.gov.au).

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#### Key insights from the community

The Planning in the Pub conversations spanned many issues around sustainability, growth, density and liveability, with general observations made about the planning system and community engagement. Key discussion points are listed under each topic heading.

#### Sustainability

Sustainability featured across all conversations and on all themes, including design, the environment and how adaptable the ACT is to change. **Conversation points included:**

- A need to design the city and neighbourhoods for easy walkability, but also a need to plan for those who choose to travel by car.
- Support for Canberra to be an early adopter of technologies and incorporate innovative waste management solutions for apartments as standard practice. i.e. 'smart' public garbage compactors with wireless capability.
- Planning should cater for all stages in life, including raising children through to empty nesters and the stages in between when children move out and find their own independent accommodation.
- Gungahlin needs employment so that it doesn't become simply a commuter satellite.
- We need to look at international best practice, for example Barcelona's shared zones.

#### Growth and density

The groups discussed how creating vibrant town centres through increased density would be supported only when done well and where amenities, walkability, character and greenspace are fully integrated. **Conversation points included:**

- Well-designed and maintained open space and green areas are essential. Canberra needs spaces that cater for everybody, with the flexibility to adapt to change.
- Not everyone wants to live in the same type of property. Some people want to live an apartment lifestyle, while others prefer living in suburbs with single detached housing on large blocks or townhouses with gardens. We need lots of diversity in places, houses and neighbourhood design.
- Plot ratios are a big issue, in both single residential and high density, with many new developments seeming to be 'overbuilt'.
- Low density living is no longer sustainable, in terms of both land use and cost of infrastructure. Medium density should be scattered through suburbs with available blocks or space (Lawson is a good example). High density is not opposed in all areas but must be designed well and be of high quality and close to amenities.
- Peak industry bodies play a key role in lifting the building standards and promoting what is acceptable and educating industry members about best practice.
- We are already seeing increased density around town centres, reflecting an understanding that people need to be close to services and facilities.
- There aren't many options to downsize in your current suburb.
- Balancing growth is an ongoing challenge and will change over time.
- Local shops should have uses that support the needs of the local community i.e. childcare facilities and can be revitalised by pop-up or temporary uses i.e. art galleries, shops, cafes.



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#### Liveability

There was a strong emphasis on the quality of the city and Canberra's character as a bush capital. A key focal point is that it is critical to plan for and provide spaces for people that retain what the community values. **Conversation points included:**

- There is very strong community support to retain Canberra's identity as a bush capital.
- Increased density in suburbs that are well connected to jobs, transport, shops and open space will reduce urban sprawl and loss of natural areas that we value.
- Planning needs to consider that different generations want and value different things.
- Lifestyles are changing, work location doesn't necessarily dictate where people live anymore. Work habits are changing and people don't necessarily stay in the same job in the same location for decade. Housing choices are more about accessibility to the places we want to be outside work.
- Our urban landscape needs spaces that allow for spontaneity, like temporary events that unite the community. We also need to plan for lifestyle and co-locate amenities, for example coffee shops near schools.
- New suburbs might be well-planned and well-engineered, but also need to plan for social activities and provide places to meet and interact.

#### Planning System

General comments were made about the current planning system, including how it can be presented to reflect community views and values, and also about whether the current system is delivering good quality outcomes on the ground.

**Conversation points included:**

- Planning needs to respect community values and the character of local areas.
- Developers appear to build to the maximum allowance under the Territory Plan, rather than using outcomes-based planning that reflects the local character and individuality of places and neighbourhoods.
- There is community concern about the quality of new developments, privately-certified construction and high body corporate fees, which are not just for upkeep of amenities but also to rectify defects after the liability period ends.
- The planning system needs to deliver a mix of land uses and densities which must be designed and delivered to a high standard.
- Planning and building regulations should require new buildings in Canberra to achieve environmental best practice.



#### Engagement

General comments were made throughout the conversations about how government can better engage the community on the projects that matter, while also avoiding 'over-consulting'. **Conversation points included:**

- The government needs to offer more choice in how to engage, including different times and locations and use different media channels. Community Councils are one voice in the mix but there are other voices that needs to be heard in planning conversations.
- There is community support for the government to co-design in both established and greenfield suburbs. Engagement needs to be sustained throughout the project lifecycle, not just at one point, and must include feedback loops.
- The government should only consult on the big issues; there is too much consultation on things that don't need to be consulted on.
- Many people in Canberra buy off-the-plan and have no voice when their development/future community is going through its approval processes.