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Social Inclusion and Planning Greater Adelaide

This submission is a response from UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide to the

Draft Plan for Greater Adelaide.

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide is an agency of the Uniting Church and is a South Australian community service organisation with over 100 years experience in providing services to assist low income and disadvantaged people. We work with individuals, families and communities to break the cycle of disadvantage, in a range of settings across South Australia.

Our vision is for a compassionate, respectful and just community in which all people participate and flourish.

Based on Christian ethics our values are:

Respect and compassion for all people
Belief in the innate worth of all people
Justice, particularly for those disadvantaged in our society
Being a service to others
Restlessness for what could be
Non-violence and peace

SUBMISSION OVERVIEW

This submission is focused on the needs of families and individuals on low incomes in planning Adelaide's future. We believe that Transit-Oriented Development offers wonderful new possibilities for the social inclusion of families who will otherwise continue to be socially and economically excluded.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made which will ensure that the implementation of the 30 year plan will benefit families on low incomes.

1. The proportion of urban infill and consolidation development in the plan be increased by 10-15% in order to limit urban sprawl.
2. Transit Oriented Development ideas be more clearly translated into policy guidance for planners and developers.

3. That TOD be viewed broadly as an integrated concept that seeks to promote multiple environmental, health, community, transport, and economic benefits.
4. That TOD be consciously implemented in ways that promote the social inclusion of individuals and families on low incomes.
5. That in addition to targets around high needs housing and 'affordable' housing, all future urban developments include a requirement for an additional 10% community rental housing tenure.
6. That the plan include an increase in affordable housing targets for people on low incomes
7. That the affordable housing targets be refined to include targets by area and by household type.
8. That the plan ensure the increase over time of the proportion of dwellings held in community tenure, particularly in high-value neighbourhoods.
9. That the plan ensure that new construction, and where ever possible, renovation of housing stock, include Universal Design and promote Aging in Place

Signed.....

Date: 24 September 2009

Sue Park

Chief Executive Officer

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide

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Introduction

UnitingCare Wesley Adelaide commends the State Government for developing a plan for the next 30 year development of greater Adelaide.

The city is facing many challenges between now and 2040. These challenges relate to demographic change, serious environmental challenges, an aging infrastructure and a large amount of poorly designed housing stock, and the need to innovate and support a vibrant economy in a fast growing and changing region of the world.

There are many relevant issues that could be addressed, but the main focus of this submission is on issues that require attention in meeting the needs of families and individuals on low incomes, and why this needs to be a central consideration of the 30 year plan.

The focus of this submission is on Transit-Oriented Development and the Social Inclusion of people who are at risk of marginalisation in the process of future metropolitan development.

Adelaide currently has a substantial undersupply of available accommodation as is evidenced by the number of homeless families. Currently, the state as a whole has an undersupply of around 7,000 dwellings and it is predicted that on current trends the undersupply of new construction will continue until around 2025. The people most effected by this market failure are families and individuals on low incomes. Furthermore, the cost of housing for people on low to moderate incomes is increasing. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute predicts that the number of low income households experiencing housing stress due to unaffordable housing will double between now and 2025.

The provision of affordable housing and the future targets for the development of affordable housing are grossly inadequate and need to be substantially increased. Additionally, the targets for affordable housing need to be refined

to include targets that relate to local areas and by various household types to ensure greater equity.

In-Fill Development vs Urban Sprawl

Our overall observation is that the proportion of the current metropolitan boundaries which will be targeted for in-fill or consolidated development is too low, and should be increased by at least another 10-15 percent. This could be achieved by ensuring a greater focus on low-medium and medium density residential development.

There are many reasons for our view that the growth of urban boundaries should be limited. Chief among them are that all steps should be taken to limit urban spread in order to reduce the energy and infrastructure development demands, that agricultural and bush land need to be preserved where ever possible, and that growth needs to be limited to help to reduce the tendency for people on low incomes to be pushed to the urban fringes.

We have particular concern about some of the nominated growth areas around Virginia, Roseworthy, Murray Bridge, Goolwa, Macclesfield, and South of Willunga.

Social Housing Tenure

Social Housing provides a secure basis for family life.

Social Housing provides a level of certainty and predictability for families, a basis for developing friendships and network, and a buffer against the negative impacts of low income and income that fluctuates over time. This latter advantage offered by social housing is particularly important for families who's principle wage earner is in casualised industry sectors, unskilled positions that are subject to redundancy during economic downturns, and industries that pay low wages

However, security of tenure and the amelioration of the impact of income fluctuations over time are only some aspects of the impact of social housing upon the life chances of people.

It has become clear over recent decades that the geographic concentration of people on low incomes has a strong tendency to reinforce exclusionary processes in society, and these processes have undermined the undoubted benefits that public housing can bring.

Consequence of Poorly Designed Urban Development

The operation of housing markets tend to push people on low incomes into physically, socially, and economically excluded neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods reinforce the exclusion of people on low incomes from community life, from equitable opportunity, and from access to community resources.

Unfortunately this has been the result of both the development of private housing markets and the way in which public housing has tended to be delivered.

Traditionally a significant proportion of social housing has been provided by public housing providers in large estates. These estates and areas quickly develop negative reputations. Negative reputations reinforce the stereotypes held about public housing and impede the life chances of people who live in these areas.

The move from public housing to welfare housing has further reinforced these tendencies by concentrating people with poor employment prospects into particular geographic areas, and then heightening community disadvantage by ensuring a higher proportion of people with high support needs gain priority access to the available housing in these areas.

Further reinforcing the negative image of these areas is that they are easily identifiable from a physical design point of view and in many cases are run down and unattractive.

The outcomes of this range of processes is a heightened negative reputational impact upon residents life chances, particularly upon children and young people through poorer educational and child care access, and poor access to jobs and community services. Specific policy interventions targeting these areas which seek to ameliorate disadvantage is often unable to overcome the general exclusionary processes that operate upon disadvantage families.

It is our contention that the best form of social housing is community-based tenure in housing which is stylistically and physically integrated with owner-occupier and private rental tenure, and which is delivered in combination with community support services where these are required to gain and maintain occupancy. This form of housing needs to be a central concern in the development of the 30 year plan.

Transit-Oriented Development

In the final development of the thirty year plan, greater detail and clarity are required to give guidance to planners and developers regarding TOD's.

We strongly support the development of transport corridors which improve access to public transport but this is only one aspect of Transit Oriented Development. However, TOD should not be viewed narrowly as simply urban development which includes greater access to transport corridors linking areas of the city, nor as simply developments which encourage a greater social mix, as important as these goals are.

TOD and Social Inclusion

Social mix is a vitally important goal for future urban development.

A high degree of social mix has benefits for all citizens, but particularly for those on low incomes, who are at risk of being physically, economically, and socially excluded.

However, TOD's must be created in ways that promote the social inclusion of people on low incomes, through policy processes that promote and ensure a range of benefits which enhance the overall life-chances of those individuals and families who are at risk of social exclusion.

Consequently, TOD's require a thoughtful approach to recreation, environmental, economic, community amenity, shopping, transport, educational and employment aspects of their residents lives.

TOD should provide a range of opportunities to low income residents, and not be places where people on low incomes will experience new processes of marginalisation and exclusion from important aspects of social life. In order to ensure this, the broader elements of social inclusion need to be considered in specific TOD projects. From the point of view of people on low incomes, chief among these elements are health, recreation, cost-of-living, employment and transit broadly understood.

Health considerations are particularly important for people on low incomes. Health relates to good housing and environmental design and the opportunity to gain access to high quality food and general community services. TOD must be undertaken with these benefits in mind.

The primacy of the pedestrian is an important TOD principle that should be at the heart of all development. Physical exercise is an important health benefit of TOD for people on low incomes. Furthermore, the ability to walk or cycle within the local community and to be linked to the wider community through good public transport has multiple health-economic benefits such as the reduced need for private motor vehicles, reduced exposure to pollutants, and the need to pay a much lower proportion of income on transport costs.

TOD should ensure the provision of open space for recreation. This will be a particularly important consideration where developments incorporate low-medium and medium density housing. The provision of open space

recreation areas, children's play areas, cycle tracks, and other features will have many social, educational, and health benefits for low income families.

Good housing design will also reduce the energy costs of people on low incomes, a particularly important outcome in light of the predicted rises to energy costs in future decades. Universal design principles should be incorporated into planning and approval processes in TOD's to provide continuity and connection to community for low income families.

The provision of open space should be supplemented particularly in medium density developments with the creation of community gardens and allotments to enable people who do not have gardens to grow vegetables etc and engage in social networks.

Creating TOD's which benefit people on Low Incomes

Transit-oriented development is an ideal basis for the expansion of social housing that addresses the social inclusion aspects of life and not simply the provision of shelter. TOD's have the triple advantage of enabling the social mix of people on varying incomes, enabling the construction of environmentally efficient and cost-effective housing, and environments that address the transport needs of low income families through providing good public transport access. These qualities provide substantial benefits for people on low incomes and are far superior to the historical organization of public housing into particular neighbourhoods.

Currently the South Australian government requires that new developments provide 5% high needs housing and a further 10% 'affordable' housing.

High needs housing is only accessible to people with substantial personal and social barriers to community living.

'Affordable' housing however, is only affordable for people on incomes which are both above those of many poorer families, and who anticipate long term employment and rising incomes over time. They are a potential poverty trap

for those who manage to borrow sufficient funds to purchase a home but whose incomes are low and do not rise over time, and/or whose employment fluctuates.

As a minimum the current state government requirement for new developments should be applied to all new developments and the redevelopment of existing residential or industrial areas. In addition to these targets, there should be a requirement for the creation of 10% social housing units which are reserved for people on low incomes through community housing rental tenure. There are a variety of ways in which this could be funded through new blended-financing models, including the use of private/institutional capital, small resident equity (eg., 10-25%) and superannuation funds, combined with public grants.

Over time, through the operation of housing markets, history has shown that people on low incomes tend to be gradually excluded from high-value neighbourhoods. Historically, gentrification of neighbourhoods has been one of the driving forces behind the increasing disparities of wealth and income in Australia. The South Australian government should therefore take steps to ensure the long-term continued proportion of social housing stock in TOD sites, particularly given that with increasing energy costs, the properties in TOD's are likely to appreciate in value to a greater extent than other housing.