

Public Forum—New rules for green space and trees for residential blocks/update on light rail
Tuesday 11 February 2020, 7-9pm
Eastlake Football Club, 3 Oxley Street, Griffith (Duffy Room)

Record

Attendees

48 people signed the attendance record.

Welcome and introduction

Ms Fatseas welcomed special guests including Elizabeth Lee MLA, Mark Parton MLA and Shane Rattenbury MLA.

The scene for the meeting was set by summarizing some relevant findings of the ISCCC online survey to date (**survey still open**). Main Points include:

What people most value where they live (top 4)

1. Streetscape (street trees, vegetation, gardens, width of streets) – 71%
2. Open space (parks, ovals, bushland for recreation) – 68%
3. Character (well planned, peaceful, safe, community feeling) – 62%
4. Environment (reserves, trees, vegetation, wildlife, flora and fauna) – 60%

Having a say if a house/building is to be built, knocked down and rebuilt, or extended significantly next door or nearby

85 percent of respondents said they would like to have a say, and the issues on which they would like to have a say are:

1. Impact on access to sunlight/natural light – 83%
2. Building height – 75%
3. Zoning change leading to change in building type or purpose – 70%
4. Amount of green space on the block – 64%
5. Protection of the character of heritage precincts – 59%
6. Impact on views – 58%
7. Building setback from the boundary – 55%
8. Amount of parking provided – 51%
9. Number of trees on the block – 50%
10. Design and orientation of the building – 47%

Transport

What kind of transport do inner south residents use most?

75% of respondents use their own vehicle, 8% use bikes or other non-motorised transport, 7.6% use the bus, and 7.2% walk, run or jog.

About 39 % were dissatisfied with the availability and accessibility of public transport

Those who were dissatisfied had these views about what would satisfy their public transport needs in future:

1. Expanded provision of bus transport – 44%
2. Combination of expanded provision of bus transport and light rail – 31%
3. Light rail stage 2 link between Civic and Woden – 19%
4. Other – 27%

If people travel by bus, how does current door to door travel time compare with travel time before changes to the bus network in April 2019?

1. Less travel time – 7%
2. About same travel time – 30%
3. 20-50% longer travel time – 14%
4. More than 50% longer travel time – 7%
5. No longer use bus transport – 30%
6. Only started travelling by bus after changes to bus network in April 2019 – 5%

Q. A question was asked about the validity of the survey

A. Over 500 people had responded to the survey. This compared favourably with other similar surveys.

Some key questions have been drawn from previous ACT Government commissioned surveys which allows for some analysis over time.

New rules for green space and trees (living infrastructure) on residential blocks: Lesley Cameron, Executive Branch Manager, Planning Land and Building Division, and Alix Kaucz, Senior Director Territory Plan in the ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

Ms Cameron provided a general introduction and expressed interest in the ISCCC online survey.

Ms Kaucz spoke to a slide presentation entitled Territory Plan changes to make Canberra Greener (a copy will be placed on the ISCCC website)

DV369 is the key emphasis. The proposed change to the Territory Plan will require new residential developments to have more trees, planting areas and soft landscaping than is the current case.

This will apply to all future urban renewal/redevelopment and greenfield development areas. The technical requirements can be found in the draft variation.

Q. What is a canopy tree?

A. It has a woody trunk and a crown of 8 metres

Q. How are rules enforced

A. Audits can be conducted, but of some, not all developments.

Q. How do rules compare to other jurisdictions?

A. It was acknowledged that what suits one jurisdiction does not necessarily suit all jurisdictions. Some similar planning provisions in Sydney and Melbourne were reviewed.

Q. What compensations are in place to make up for the effect of multi unit developments only being required to have 15% canopy cover?

A. The 30% canopy cover goal is for the whole of the urban area of Canberra not the whole of the ACT. Existing trees can count towards canopy cover. New requirements may encourage developers to keep existing trees. It is not about locking people into keeping trees but an education process.

Q. Are there any rules about basements under homes?

A Yes, not allowed to have basement and two storeys

Q. Is the National Capital Authority covered by the proposed changes?

A. No, however, they have been consulted.

A residents' group perspective on the proposed new rules

David Denham, President, Griffith Narrabundah Community Association

It was noted that the proposed change was very important and had the potential to have an impact on Canberra's character.

Current examples were provided that do not comply with the proposed planning rules including part of Ngunnawal.

The rules have been very well crafted but they could go further.

Issues needed in DV369 include

1. % of block to be canopy covered

2. Simple rules
3. Mandatory rules
4. Rhetorical question-why has 30% canopy cover been adopted and not 40%?
5. There is a need for an algorithm for calculating the canopy cover in each zone.
Rhetorical Question: How will we know we have met the 2045 target if we don't have an agreed way of measuring it?
6. The plot ratio rule doesn't make sense in the context of the proposed changes and height rules. Removing it is suggested.

Climate Change and Sustainability Minister's perspective on the proposed new rules: Shane Rattenbury MLA

Key points:

- Best chance for change in 20 years
- Why-trees keep our city cool in summer
- Good for biodiversity
- Trees are in decline
- Canberra is experiencing both redevelopment and new suburbs
- Existing trees are dying
- There is a need to fix the planning rules
- There is a need to increase tree canopy by 50%
- DV369 is a good start but falls short
- It is suggested that it will not achieve the 30% target
- Some parts of Canberra have higher canopy cover than others. Turner is about 33% but Gungahlin drops to 4%.
- Each block should have 30% canopy cover including multi-unit developments

Question and answer

Q. Has any research been conducted into the best types of trees?

A. Yes. The ACT government commissioned ANU to undertake research against the backdrop of temperatures in Canberra expected to rise in future. In simple terms Canberra's climate would become more like Dubbo or Adelaide. The report referred to can be found at the following web link.

https://www.environment.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1437047/urban-forest-tree-species-research-for-the-act-consultants-report-2019.pdf

Q. The new suburbs of Molonglo were supposed to be a good example of urban planning with provision for canopy cover. It seems that this has not been achieved.

A. The Greens have tried to influence change, and there is a current review of Molonglo development.

Q. Is there conflict in the older areas with the twin targets of infill and achieving 30% canopy cover?

A. Infill doesn't have to be in conflict with green cover. Denmark is an example.

Q. Huge number of canopy trees dying early. Government assets are not being looked after.

A. Mature trees are dying. Some of this is attributable to a change in temperature.

Q. How do we improve trust in the system achieving intended results?

A. Need to put more resources into enforcement. If people wish to make complaints reports can be made to Access Canberra

Q. If 30% canopy cover can't be achieved it needs to be articulated how this will be compensated

A. The 15% target for Multi-Unit developments only looks at the block and not street trees.

Q Should create a price incentive for people to comply---an increase in rates if you don't and decrease if you do

A. Suggestion from floor - if could backfire with some happy to pay.

Update on Light Rail Stage 2a from Civic to Commonwealth Park: Marcus Sainsbury, Director of Planning, Major Projects Canberra

- The patronage from Gungahlin to the City has exceeded expectations
- With the business case for Stage 2A endorsed, work has commenced on extending light rail to Commonwealth Park
- This 1.7km extension is expected to commence operations in 2024
- The 2B Commonwealth to Woden stage is very complex. The first hurdle is getting through an Environmental Impact Statement process which will be managed by the responsible Commonwealth Department (EPBC). ACT government officials will be consulted. The National Capital Authority then needs to approve and the proposal needs to go through both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament.
- The Commonwealth Department is unable to give a timeframe or outline next steps at this time
- Stage 2B is complex from both planning and engineering perspectives
- Stage 2A is more complex than Stage 1 due to its proximity to stakeholders, construction within the roadway (London Circuit) and the raising of London Circuit to meet Commonwealth Avenue

Process for assessing the environmental and heritage impact of light rail stage 2b from Commonwealth Park to Woden: Gary Kent, ACT President National Trust, and Deputy Chair ISCCC

- The Heritage Trust and the ISCCC asked for an Independent Public Inquiry. This was not agreed to by officials.
- Consultation will proceed with the involvement of the community.
- The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act (under which the light rail and other key projects is assessed), is currently being reviewed.
- The deadline has been extended until 17 April 2020. Please put in submissions.

Question and Answer

Some points arising included:

- Roads are not going to get less busy. There is a need to manage transport options for a larger population.
- The National Capital Authority (NCA) can't approve anything that is not consistent with the National Capital Plan
- There has been a commitment by the government to have a wireless free system. This has only become a viable option due to advances in battery technology and subsequent reduction in cost
- The ACT government advised the meeting that the Commonwealth Department was responsible and carried most weight in the outcome of the Environmental Impact Statement process
- The specific details of the future light rail have not yet been determined.

9.00pm - Close