

Development big concern

By Joni Scanlon

DEVELOPMENT issues dominated discussions at the Inner South Canberra Community Council's Meet the Candidates night.

Almost 100 residents attended the meeting last week to question candidates on burning issues.

Inner South Canberra Community Council president Gary Kent said he wasn't surprised development issues were the focus of many questions.

"It's a huge issue in the Inner South because it's one of the older areas in Canberra," he said.

"Other areas are facing issues of getting new infrastructure; we're facing issues of getting infrastructure replaced."

With so many larger blocks in the Inner South, Mr Kent said there was increased interest in urban infill and redevelopment.

"These are matters of concern to residents across the Inner South who want to see their neighbourhoods preserved," he said. A lack of community consultation was a hot topic, especially in regard to the future of the Fitter's Workshop.

Liberal member Jeremy Hanson expressed concern the issue had split the arts community. He believed the space should not be given to the Megalo Print Studio.

"No doubt it's a bad decision and it should be changed," he said.

ACT Greens' Shane Rattenbury agreed that Megalo should not move into the Fitter's, and said he

believed they should be given a purpose built facility instead.

"It has been very distressing to see the division in the arts community," Mr Rattenbury said.

Minister Simon Corbell said the space should be utilised on a daily basis and Megalo would make the best use of the space.

"We don't want to see the building sit empty three, four, five days a week," he said.

He wants to see the ACT government's commitment to Megalo honoured.

"We do not believe it is to the detriment of other aspects of the arts community," he said.

Consultation was also a concern for residents in regard to private development in Inner South suburbs. Mr Kent said the region's heritage value should be protected.

"Some parts of the Inner South are almost 100 years old," he said. "If we're not careful we'll end up with another Kingston where most of the old houses are gone."

He wants redevelopments to be done with full consultation and community views to be taken into account.

"I think there's general recognition at the moment the system isn't working," he said.

"There were lots of examples raised by residents very concerned they weren't being consulted at all about big developments in their neighbourhoods."

Shopping centre issues were also a popular topic of questioning, with

Candidates in attendance at the ISCCC meeting

■ ALP: Simon Corbell MLA

Angie Drake

David Mathews

Mark Kulasingham

Meegan Fitzharris

■ Liberal: Jeremy Hanson MLA

Tom Sefton

Murray Gordon

■ Greens: Caroline Le Couteur MLA

Shane Rattenbury MLA

Alan Kerlin

Adriana Siddle

■ Motorist Party: David Cumbers

■ Pirate Party: Stuart Biggs

■ Independent: Philip Pocock

concerns about lack of parking spaces and playground facilities.

Mr Kent said shopping centres were highly valued in the Inner South and residents want to see them maintained.

"All the little shopping centres serve a very valuable purpose ... for the sense of community there," he said. "People want to be able to shop locally for their essentials."

Education, public transport, rates and taxes were also issues at the evening and Mr Kent believed the candidates held their own against some, at times, tough questioning.

"The candidates were very brave in fronting up to people who are very passionate about their neighbourhood," he said. "We think it was a very successful exercise in grassroots politics."