

A warm welcome...

Welcome to edition No.3 of 'Planning Matters', the newsletter of URPS. We have tried to include information and articles that you will find interesting, while keeping it short and easy to read. Also included are some highlights of the work we've been doing with many of you over recent months.

'Planning Matters' is produced twice a year. We welcome feedback or suggestions on what you would like to see in future issues – please email us at mail@urps.com.au

Residential Neighbourhood Character Analysis – Who and What Determines Character?



Typical suburban street in Adelaide, viewed by many as having desirable character worth retaining

Following the release of the Residential Development Code and 'Stage 1' amendments to the Development Regulations affecting alterations and additions to dwellings, many Councils have been busy **identifying areas where the Code's complying criteria should not apply**. Here are some of our observations and questions arising from our initial 'Part A – desktop analysis' of potential character areas for a number of Councils:

- **It is not a level playing field for all Councils** – some are yet to undertake a comprehensive residential policy review to determine, in consultation with the community, what level of change can be managed or is appropriate in different areas. The tight time-frame for the Part A analysis was a significant obstacle to consulting with the community.
- **An area's valued characteristics should not be confused with heritage character**, but radical change in built form adjacent to heritage areas might be a factor that requires careful consideration and management.
- **The age of a dwelling may be a relevant criteria** that influences character, but limiting the criteria to pre-1940s construction is problematic – the prevailing character that is the desired character could be dwelling type (e.g. detached dwellings), the number of storeys (e.g. single storey), or even roof pitch and building materials.
- Is it reasonable to assume that **no more than 30% of any Council area** should be exempt from detached and semi-detached dwellings as complying development where there is limited control over their appearance?

We look forward to our continuing involvement in this significant area of planning reform in South Australia and helping both State and Local Government achieve the appropriate balance between character preservation and development innovation.

inside

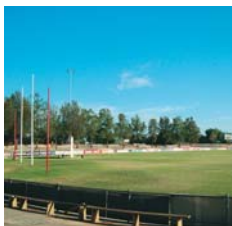
- Residential Neighbourhood Character Analysis – Who and What Determines Character?
- Different ways of approaching Section 30 Reviews
- Getting the right help with ERD Court Appeals
- Social Determinants of Health – The Importance of Community Profiles
- Planning for Ageing
- Development and Car Parking – Are we 'Fair Dinkum' about Sustainability?
- Achieving a Work-Life Balance?

Different ways of approaching Section 30 Reviews



A Section 30 Review is intended to be a periodic review of the Development Plan and its consistency with both the Planning Strategy and the community's vision for its local area. While some Councils view them as a 'necessary evil', **we believe that they are an important element of Council's strategic planning activities**. Section 30 Reviews provide an opportunity to examine and prioritise the delivery of new Development Plan policy in a way that best suits that area and the priorities of that community.

URPS has prepared a number of Section 30 Reviews from 'go to wo' over the past 18 months for Councils as varied as Tea Tree Gully and Port Augusta.



The City of Prospect has engaged our services in a different way for the preparation of its Section 30 Review. Prospect has preserved primary carriage of the Section 30 review 'in house', but has called on us at key points in the process to provide strategic advice and to facilitate consultation with broader Council Staff and Elected Members. This has helped to **blend local knowledge with fresh ideas** and procedural experience. The result is a **Section 30 Review that is carefully tailored to the community's desires** while also challenging some conventional wisdom regarding how such a document should be structured.

The Salisbury Section 30 Review benefitted from having us work 'in-house' at Salisbury Council. This promoted regular and direct interaction with Council Officers and **delivered important synergies with other Council strategic planning projects**. The Section 30 Review (currently on public consultation), is also notable for the incorporation of urban growth strategies that will reshape the northern region of Adelaide (e.g. development of the Penrice salt fields). We welcome these types of innovative approaches to using our services to get the best results for your organisation.

Getting the right help with ERD Court Appeals



Many Councils approach us on a regular basis to **act as expert witnesses in ERD Court appeals**. An essential first step for us is to determine whether we can support the Council's decision. This involves an inspection of the site and locality, a review of the background material and relevant Development Plan, and the preparation of a letter summarising our assessment of the proposal against the Development Plan guidelines. This work usually takes between 4 and 6 hours, depending upon the location of the site and the complexity of the Application. Over the past 18 months, we have agreed with the decision of Council DAPs on 18 occasions (75%), and disagreed on 6 occasions (25%). In other words, we support about three quarters of the ERD Court appeals we are invited to provide an opinion on.

Even when we are unable to support Council's refusal of an Application, we have found that **Council staff find our initial written opinion useful** in presenting to their DAP in preparation for an appeal (i.e. the DAP may be convinced that without the support of an expert planning witness such as URPS in Court, then it may be prudent to revisit their decision). We encourage Councils to allocate adequate time for such preparatory work to be undertaken in the lead-up to any ERD Court appeal.

Social Determinants of Health – The Importance of Community Profiles



There is increasing understanding that **our health and well-being is closely linked to the social environment**, and that it is not simply a product of accessible medical care. Social determinants of health such as stress, access to housing, unemployment, experiences in early life, social exclusion, transport, food and addiction can all have significant impacts on the health and well-being of our community. Our work undertaking social impact assessments for a number of councils has highlighted significant linkages between the health and well-being of a community and its socio-economic status.

The City of Onkaparinga is one such Council that recognises the important role social services and infrastructure play in the establishment of healthy and resilient communities, engaging URPS to prepare social impact assessments for developing areas such as Seaford, Moana and Aldinga. **A critical component of these social impact assessments is the preparation of a community profile** which helps develop a picture of who is living in the area, who is likely to move into the area and what services they need now and into the future.

In the Seaford and Moana areas, we identified significantly more people per household compared to metropolitan Adelaide. This larger household size is the result of the significant number of families with younger children who live in the area. Our research and consultation in these areas shows that there is already pressure on existing child-care facilities, out-of-hours school care and specialist medical services. This pressure will be exacerbated by the projected influx of more families with children into the area.

This information influences a range of Council business, including the creation of flexible Development Plan policy around the location of child-care centres and consulting rooms outside traditional centre or community service facilities zones. It also influences Council's economic development initiatives promoting the establishment of social services targeted at the needs of each community.

Broken Hill
Community Centre
mural images
by Geoff Demain



Planning for Ageing

URPS has recently completed Ageing Strategies for the Cities of Port Augusta and Broken Hill – local councils that are facing significant challenges associated with increasing proportions of older people in their communities. These projects have revealed that an **ageing population impacts on every aspect of a council's operations** from infrastructure provision, asset maintenance, customer service, and information services through to community development and planning.

The State Government's policies **encourage people to 'age in place'**, but what if the house you live in cannot easily be adapted to meet your changing needs? Two emerging strategic responses to this are the introduction of planning policies and incentives for developers to include a proportion of adaptable housing that meet accessibility criteria in new development. There is also increased focus on the provision of a range of smaller dwellings and group housing in established areas so that, **if older people are unable to age in place, they can at least age in their neighbourhood** and so retain access to familiar services and support networks.

We are currently working with the City of Onkaparinga to prepare a Positive Ageing Strategy for this large and rapidly growing area. While planning for ageing has its challenges, as one 80 year old recently told us during consultation on the State Strategy "it sure beats the hell out of the alternative".

Development and Car Parking – Are we 'Fair Dinkum' about Sustainability?

We have been pleased to assist Phillips Pilkington Architects over the past 18 months in gaining approval for a new Research Building on the Magill Campus of the University of SA, as well as a new motel attached to the renovated Robin Hood Hotel in Strathalbyn. A key element in the assessment of both development proposals was the consideration of on-site parking.

At the Magill Campus, the application of traditional car parking rates appears to be somewhat unresponsive to the location of the campus on significant bus routes. It might be argued that Universities should be institutions that embrace social reform, requiring students to think differently about unsustainable modes of transport rather than just encouraging them. In the case of the Robin Hood Hotel, the provision of on-site parking comes at the expense of additional built form that would help to



'complete' a historic high-street. Also, it is probably not a bad idea to have fewer parking spaces associated with hotels so that there is less temptation to drink and drive.



These development examples emphasise the challenge planners' face in striking the right balance between sufficient on-site parking and encouraging people to use alternative, more sustainable means of transport. It also requires us to consider whether we are willing to accept car parking to continue being such a visually dominant element of our urban environment.

In a similar vein, having three of our staff commuting to work by bicycle sharpens our focus on the need for convenient and appropriately designed bicycle parking and associated shower/change room facilities in any new development we are involved in.

Achieving a Work-Life Balance?



Keeping up 'appearances'

Here at URPS, we understand that it is not only planning that matters. Some of you may have caught a fleeting glimpse of Director, Marcus Rolfe, performing at HQ in March this year with his former band, Nancy Vandal. Supporting Frenzal Rhomb on their national tour, Marcus reminded us of why, as a rock star, he makes a great town planner. Perhaps website fasterlouder.com summed it up best with an insightful review of the Melbourne leg of the tour:

"...surprisingly, the audience seemed to find them juvenile, with many calling for them to get off the stage, and some throwing glasses...(later) the audience seemed to loosen up and respect the band... glasses were now directed to 'the 8th member of the band', who turned out to be the former bassist, Marcus 'Rolfe' Rolfe..."

More Information

Copies of our previous newsletters are available on our website at www.urps.com.au. If you would like to discuss the information contained in any of our newsletters in further detail please don't hesitate to contact us on 8363 0444 or drop into our offices at 58 Rundle Street, Kent Town.



URPS

Our people

Angela Hazebroek	angela@urps.com.au
Grazio Maiorano	grazio@urps.com.au
Marcus Rolfe	marcus@urps.com.au
Nicole Halsey	nicole@urps.com.au
Kieron Barnes	kieron@urps.com.au
Aaron Curtis	aaron@urps.com.au
Julie Lewis	julie@urps.com.au
Michael Arman	michael@urps.com.au
Beata Maglai	beata@urps.com.au
Krystina Fisher	krystina@urps.com.au

Our place

58 Rundle Street (cnr The Parade West),
Kent Town SA 5067
Phone: 08 8363 0444
Fax: 08 8363 0555
Email: mail@urps.com.au
Web : www.urps.com.au