



Community Engagement in Planning

Opportunities for the inclusion of social and affordable housing
in South Australia

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Community Engagement in Planning

"The rise in economic inequality, housing unaffordability and spatial divides and imbalances has become more visible in the majority of the world's larger cities over the past 15 years, and the trend is set to continue without purposeful and more innovative intervention."

Professor Greg Clark in Great Australian Cities

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Old Royal Adelaide Hospital \$1 billion luxury redevelopment proposal collapses

Updated 19 Sep 2017, 6:15pm




PHOTO: An artist's impression of the redevelopment plan for the hospital. (Twitter: @alpsa)

A \$1 billion deal for a private consortium to redevelop the vacant Royal Adelaide Hospital site has fallen through, with the State Government instead announcing it will manage

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The Problem

Housing affordability is a major issue in Australia. There are 1.3 million Australian households living in housing stress and there were more than 280,000 people who experienced homelessness in 2015-16. With social housing stock declining across the country, innovation is required to increase the supply of properties that are affordable for people living on low incomes. Architects, developers, planners and builders do not consider the inclusion of affordable housing as a routine part of the redevelopments they participate in. It is difficult to find an example of a development that has included social housing, especially without government assistance. There is also an element of stigma when it comes to the inclusion of social and affordable housing, and some mixed-use developments. This paper defines affordable housing as housing to rent or buy at 80% of market rate and social housing as housing that is rented for 30% of household income, specifically for people living on low incomes.

There is currently much residential apartment building activity in Adelaide and two major, publicly owned properties that are awaiting redevelopment – the Le Cornu site in North Adelaide, owned by the City of Adelaide (vacant since 1989), and the old Royal Adelaide Hospital site owned by the South Australian Government. Also, the previous Labor State Government, consulted the Port Adelaide community for many years about the development of that area which has changed course

several times¹. When building is delayed for years and ineffective consultations have to be repeated, public money is wasted. There are also major plans and activities of redevelopment by not for profit organisations in the City, such as the Uniting Communities housing project in Pitt Street, and elsewhere. Uncertainty and delays in developing the various sites are good examples of how tensions can erupt in public discourse between interest groups^{2,3} to the detriment of new construction projects.

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Tom Richardson
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The use of surplus land, vacant land, and underutilised or idle buildings presents real opportunities for the inclusion of social and affordable housing in new construction projects, however the regular development cycle often fails to consider anything other than full market prices for sale. Even when government legislation exists, such as South Australia's inclusionary zoning, the interests of the people who need more affordable housing are absent from planning and design processes. Often the methods used to engage communities rely on public meetings and surveys, which are blunt tools when it comes to uncovering the needs and wishes of all stakeholders. Much more is known about the theories and practices of engaging communities that could and should be used to consult citizens and incorporate their views and need for affordability in planning and design.

Policy Context

In 2017, the South Australian Government published a Discussion Guide, "The Community Engagement Charter: Putting people at the centre of major planning decisions"⁴. The discussion

¹ <https://ourport.com.au/content/uploads/2017/03/Port-Adelaide-Waterfront-Redevelopment-Community-Engagement.pdf>

² <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-19/luxury-redevelopment-deal-for-old-rah-site-collapses/8959570>

³ <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/messenger/city/part-one-the-urban-designers-bold-new-vision-for-old-le-cornu-site/news-story/670f8fce07b86f810ba5b34c83f965f6>

⁴ https://www.saplanningportal.sa.gov.au/our_new_system/community_engagement_charter

paper aims to provide a guide for conversations about developing a new community engagement charter for planning. It is recognised in the discussion guide that when new buildings are being planned and built, the competing interests of stakeholder groups must be heard and addressed (owners, developers, designers, neighbours and businesses) if there are to be satisfactory outcomes. Whoever conducts the community consultation must be able to offer independent advice - to listen and understand issues and concerns from different perspectives and work with potentially biased opinions, to effectively address the trade-offs that may be necessary for projects to proceed.

This Research

Shelter SA is the peak body for housing, and funded by the State Government, operates as an independent, not for profit organisation, conducting policy and legislative work, systems advocacy, research and community consultation. The strength of Shelter SA's advocacy is to be able to understand multiple perspectives on policy and service delivery, without favour, to discern what is fair and ethical about either new policy or changes to policy. Shelter SA has a credible and reliable public profile that is trusted by our stakeholders to represent what is in the interests of South Australians living on low incomes to enable the provision of the housing that we need and can afford. Shelter SA has successfully held multiple workshops to hear from community members using a range of consultative methods, distilling the outcomes into discreet written policy asks and issue statements.

Shelter SA can make a difference by assisting land owners, builders and developers to engage local communities and represent the community's interests, including people living on low incomes, in the development process. We conducted this exploratory research project, to understand the points in the redevelopment process where there is room to change the design and purpose of new building projects in South Australia, so that they are not derailed by local communities or politics, and where and how the planning system helps or hinders. The gentrification of Adelaide has implications for our community service providers located in the City and the recent public discourse around anti-social behaviour. We will be asking stakeholders about their views on the need for a trusted, impartial consultant to conduct community engagement and inform new developments, from the perspective of their profession or organisation.

The methods for this project are quantitative and semi-structured interviews were conducted with each stakeholder, using survey questions as a guide. The survey questions were developed via a small, purposeful literature review. The results will be distributed to the Shelter SA mailing list to increase public debate and inform Shelter SA about a potential role in community engagement in the redevelopment space. To undertake this research Shelter SA has employed a small team approach led by Shelter SA Executive Director, Dr. Alice Clark, working with Adrian Pisarski from National Shelter.

The Interviews

During a week in June, 2018, Dr. Clark and Mr. Pisarski interviewed South Australian developers, architects, State and Local Government representatives and officials, community housing providers and peak bodies, supplemented by a number of interstate participants.

Twelve stakeholder interviews were conducted, mostly with both researchers in attendance. Mr. Pisarski conducted the interstate interviews to complement the South Australian findings.

Data Analysis

The data was thematically analysed and the key themes to emerge are as follows:

1. Engage early - engagement should be conducted early and form part of a continuous cycle of consult – design – test – design;
2. Integrated communities – (also referred to as social mix or mixed tenure) produce benefits beyond economic considerations and have been shown to assist stakeholder acceptance of affordable housing in new developments;
3. Preconceptions - about the best and acceptable use of places need to be tested as it is rare for a developer to accurately identify all stakeholder concerns that may be raised; and
4. The ingredients - of successful community engagement in planning.

Structure of this Paper

This paper outlines the background, context and methods for this research and is structured around the key themes to emerge from data analysis. Case studies of engagement done well will be included to highlight successful methods. The successful methods will be compared to the theory and practice of community development to provide guidance for future community consultations. We will share some examples of developments that have included social and affordable housing to highlight how integrated living can be achieved, but to also demonstrate that there are few, if any, examples that have been achieved without significant government assistance, whether in the contribution of land or other subsidies. We will describe Shelter SA's CapitalAsset model to demonstrate that the inclusion of social and affordable housing is achievable without government assistance. Finally, we look at the potential opportunities for Shelter SA in the planning process and the actions that Shelter SA may undertake in the future.

Research Themes

1. Engage Early

“The stakeholder engagement sessions were worth their weight in gold”

The Community Engagement Charter (the Charter) seeks to ensure that all relevant voices are heard in the planning process prior to developments being considered so that they, conform with an established plan, based on the inputs of all interests in the development of planning schemes and masterplans. The Charter has developed five principles, that consultation with the community must be:

- Genuine
- Inclusive and respectful
- Fit for purpose
- Informed and transparent
- Reviewed and improved

Engagement strategies must be designed to meet these principles and tailor engagement to the needs of local stakeholders and individual projects. The Charter aims to ensure that planners and developers gather input early and more widely from stakeholders and communities of interest. Traditional engagement tools used alongside new technologies will be encouraged.

All participants in this research reinforced that early engagement is critical. There was criticism of processes which had used tired or 'tick box' approaches to engagement where the lowest common denominator was the public meeting. While public meetings serve a purpose, they need to be promoted to the relevant stakeholders affected by new developments to ensure there is an opportunity for those people to attend. In discussing the design of buildings and specific developments our research participants also talked about how essential engagement is to inform design including amenity, quality, community, efficiency and utility. Some participants also talked about understanding the end occupier as an important factor in designing for stakeholder acceptance, satisfaction and fit.

It is unclear if, or how, the Charter principles have been applied to two major public sites in Adelaide, the old Royal Adelaide Hospital (old RAH) and Le Cornu's, as examples, which now have developed plans. The former Weatherill government announced that the old RAH site would not include any accommodation, with the possible exception of short term student housing and now Premier Marshall has taken responsibility for the site. The guiding principles for the LeCornu site include affordable housing but it is not yet known how it will be included. These examples are two major opportunities for the inclusion of social and affordable housing, but without the interests of people living on low incomes represented during the consultations, the opportunities may not materialise.

2. Integrated Communities

"My aunty told me, we don't have areas where poor people live, we have an integrated community and we are one, and that needs to be back in the debate"

A repeated theme throughout the interviews was the idea of integrated communities. Often referred to as mixed tenure, the term refers to the economic, social and cultural benefits that come from developing housing to accommodate diverse occupants. Participants recounted various examples of the benefits of integrated communities where people who are younger and older, who are living alone or in family groups, are from different cultures and socio-economic status are housed in one development or in close proximity. Participants spoke to the concept in both residential and commercial settings where the example of the final mix of users in the Rundle Mall re-development, Ergo⁵ and UNO positively influenced community acceptance.

One participant talked about the lack of demand for family accommodation and three-bedroom apartments in the City of Adelaide. The researchers pointed out that demand would be very high, if there were more suitable apartments that were affordable for people living on low incomes.

Participants supported moves away from concentrating social and/or low-cost housing only in specific places and saw the benefits of ensuring affordable housing was planned and built across a range of developments.

⁵ <http://www.hindmarsh.com.au/projects/ergo>

Evaluations of engagement processes show that where they were inclusive, responsive, allowed a degree of influence by participants over design and provided for genuine deliberation of the issues, they were more likely to result in development outcomes that were acceptable to all stakeholders⁶.

3. Challenging Preconceptions

“What we thought we knew was half wrong”

The Lord Mayor of Adelaide, Martin Haese, made a specific comment about the development of Rundle Mall which resonated with other interviewees. He recalled the preconceptions that existed prior to an extensive community engagement undertaken by Council on the redevelopment and was excited and inspired by the end mix of uses including at least 50% different uses than anticipated at the outset.

Other participants also pointed out that even in a suburban development where you may anticipate 90% of the concerns the 10% that are unanticipated become critical to the success of developments. In building UNO and Ergo it was anticipated that there would be problems marketing high end apartments in complexes also housing social and affordable housing tenants, which when tested, were demonstrably incorrect.

Our research participants also discussed interstate community housing developments. Brisbane Housing Company (BHC) is a community housing provider that received capital funding from the Queensland Government and the City of Brisbane who remain as their largest shareholders. BHC was provided with land and some ongoing access to redevelopment sites from the State government. Two developments^{7 8} from BHC illuminate the issue of perception versus reality in engagement activities.

ARIS - Masters Street, Newstead

- Completed 29th June 2010
- 26 affordable rental housing units
- 30 NRAS units
- 39 market for sale units
- Total Scheme cost \$29.87M
- Economic stimulus grant \$6.2M



Housing is a human right

31

SYRAH - Blackwood Street, Mitchelton

- Completed 6th August 2010
- 16 affordable rental units – active elderly
- 15 market for sale units
- Retail and commercial floors (966m²)
- Total Scheme cost \$13.9M
- Economic stimulus grant \$3.18M



COMPLETED



Housing is a human right

31

Syrah, Mitchelton (pictured above) was developed in a suburban shopping district location. The project had the support of the Local Government, State and Federal Members of Parliament and proceeded to lodge development applications which caused local resident concerns to surface. The resident concerns translated into front page news in the Courier Mail and very nearly prevented the development from proceeding. As the building had pre-approval from Local Government and the

⁶ Abelson J, Gauvin FP (2006) Assessing the Impacts of Public Participation: Concepts, Evidence and Policy Implications, Research Report P06, Public Involvement Network. Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis, McMaster University, Canadian Policy Research Network, Ottawa, Canada.

⁷ http://bhcl.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Development-Portfolio_A3_Nov16.pdf

⁸ http://bhcl.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Development-Portfolio_A3_Nov16.pdf

support of local Councillors, BHC felt it was unnecessary to carry out their normal community engagement until this happened.

As a consequence, the project foundered until BHC made a serious attempt to engage local residents and businesses which resulted in a modified design (removing social housing and increasing the retirement living aspect, including offices and retail spaces) upon which the project proceeded and enjoyed community support.



The second development is Cagara House 2015 (pictured above). This development utilised a piece of vacant land at Mt. Gravatt in suburban Brisbane to build 85 senior living dwellings in a medium density development. BHC did a thorough community engagement with both the local business community, residential community and with prospective tenants who occupied existing public housing. The existing public housing was mostly older three or four-bedroom properties which were now ill suited to the life stages of tenants, but which, having raised families in, many felt reluctant to leave. BHC utilised bus tours to show similar developments (Syrah at Mitchelton) to prospective tenants and found once they were shown the level of amenity, design and support available they happily moved (maintaining relationships within their local community) into Cagara House which is now used as a model of senior living and has subsequently freed up the previously occupied properties for further redevelopments to increase the social housing outcomes.

4. The ingredients - engagement done well

“Poor processes erode goodwill and delays affect affordability”

Our research participants mentioned that many stakeholder engagement processes use tired methods to reach and engage individuals and groups, such as letter-box drops and town hall

meetings. These methods are seen as sometimes useful but not particularly comprehensive in reaching all stakeholders.

Research around community renewal engagement processes notes that only utilising existing known community groups and actors, may miss contact with emerging and minority groups. People undertaking consultation should be properly trained to work with good communications, congenial settings, devolving power and providing evidence of influence over outcomes as useful considerations.

Development conflicts can often be dominated by powerful local interest groups and sometimes a Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) point of view. Nimbyism means that people can sympathise with the need for social housing and social services, but they do not want them to be located in their back yard. Sarkissian⁹ argues that much of the NIMBY resistance to increasing housing density is because the proposed development is not sensitive to local values, or, does not answer the question, “is this development going to be a good neighbour?”, and she emphasises the need to return the ‘richness and texture’ to discussions about development with communities. We must listen deeply, openly and responsively to community concerns about increased density, and take time to educate communities about the reasons for intensification (like sustainability and affordability). Central to listening is early engagement to allow time for the community to adapt to the idea of change, and to properly understand and respond to their issues through design that respects the values they attach to their place. In this way the community will gain confidence that the development will be a ‘good neighbour’.

Social media has emerged as another useful method of two-way communication between developers and stakeholders which should be included during engagement exercises. The marketing and targeting of social media platforms and websites, cannot be neglected, as if stakeholders are not aware of them, they will not use them and opportunities for engagement will be lost.

Case Study 1 - Qattro at Marden

One of our research participants, Mr. Jansen from Qattro, provided the researchers with an example of community engagement done well that specifically addressed the inclusion of affordable housing. The Qattro project, situated at Marden, was always planned to exceed the 15% Inclusionary Zoning requirements in that 44% of the 180 units were affordable. Mr. Jansen said, “the minute the project was announced there were protests”, and that a protest group formed consisting of more than 700 local residents. Mr. Jansen described the first fear expressed by the protest group was that “you are going to change our place” and the second, “we don’t like the height of the proposed development, the parking arrangements or the new demographic we think it will bring to the neighbourhood”. When Qattro commenced their community engagement processes, the emergence of a protest group was described as being helpful to them, as they knew who they needed to engage and they were organised as a group, not a disparate number of individuals. The inclusion of affordable housing became a critical source of support from the residents when Qattro helped them to understand that it would allow their children and grandchildren to be able to afford to live nearby.

⁹ Elliot D, Sarkissian W, Young (2008). *Chermside Centre Neighbourhood Plan, Social Outcomes Investigation, Social Strategies Final Report, Attachment 1. Literature Scan*. Prepared for Brisbane City Council, Brisbane

Qattro listened to the stakeholder concerns, explained why they would or would not change their plans, “had the difficult conversations”, and the development went ahead successfully.

Master Plan



Marden Connect master site plan

Stage 01 - Mitchell Lane Apartments	Stage 06 - Orlando Court Apartments	Stage 11 - Linear Park Townhouses
Stage 02 - Alexander Lane Apartments	Stage 07 - Arabella Court Townhouses	Stage 12 - River Street Townhouses
Stage 03 - River Street Townhouses	Stage 08 - Arabella Apartments	Stage 13 - Arabella Court Townhouses
Stage 04 - Alexander Lane Townhouses	Stage 09 - Future Townhouse Stage	Stage 14 - River Street Townhouses
Stage 05 - Arabella Court Townhouses	Stage 10 - Linear Park Townhouses	

Qattro - Smarter Urban Development

Case Study 2 – Hassell at Bowden

Mr. Homburg from Hassell, provided another example of “good community engagement”. He said that the process is, “getting all stakeholders around the table and hearing all the competing views and understandings”, likening it to a citizen jury process. Design processes by Hassell entail firstly, understanding the vision of the organisation or for the development, synthesising views and then testing the results. Mr. Homburg talked about the Master Plan for Bowden as an example, where they could not just take a single view of how the development should look and who would live there, they were constantly repeating a cycle of drawing plans, testing them, modifying them and testing them again. The interests of neighbours were taken into consideration as were financial models, issues of heritage and transport. Mr. Homburg said, “often missing from these conversations is what the future will hold and how planning for it realistically should be included in the community engagement process”. The usual development process was described as a “rear view mirror” approach, starting with a price point and then working backwards to see what could be built, and also one of looking backwards to make decisions about the future.

Mr. Homburg talked about the need for design and consultation to happen together and said, “design does not happen early enough, we need to put thought pieces in front of people, and ask, what does your [work] place look like in the future?”. If developers get community engagement right, there are better outcomes. Too often the usual process is that the developer lodges a plan with council and then the resident objection commences. Eliciting information and creating principles must occur first as a consistent and essential part of the process.



Mr. Homburg also talked about the “personas” that are used in high end developments – that is, who are the end users, what sort of people are they and what are their wants and needs for this construction. It was suggested that personas should also be part of build to rent models (like CapitalAsset see below) – to describe who will be living in social and affordable housing if it is to be included – to help overcome stigma and objection where it exists. As in the Qattro example, enabling an understanding for local stakeholders that more affordability will enable your children and grandchildren to live near you, whether it is as tenants or home owners.

Intuitively, the participants in this research describe the principles of community development through the examples they provide of ‘when engagement is done well’. The principles of community engagement may be viewed as old fashioned by some, but they are theory based, tried and tested.

If we are serious about doing community engagement well and seek to consistently, effectively and routinely engage all stakeholders, those conducting community engagement in planning activities should be able to grasp the basic principles of the following paradigms¹⁰:

- equality and anti-discrimination
- social justice

¹⁰ <https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/CommunityPlanningR31.pdf>

- collective action
- community empowerment
- working and learning together and
- democracy

Community engagement consultants should have the skills and ability to:

- Work with residents of all backgrounds;
- Empathise and communicate with people in different situations and roles and with people from different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs;
- Work with people who are under stress from a harsh local situation;
- See the commonality of issues and problems across individuals' situations and concerns; and
- Identify residents capable of taking up common issues positively and encouraging others.

And to understand:

- The support needs of people lacking confidence or conditions to participate in community activity; and
- The tensions and stresses that sometimes arise between different groups of people in a locality,

The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The Kaurna people are the traditional owners of the land in Adelaide. Ironically, as a minority group, who experience homelessness and housing stress at a higher rate than the general population, it is their voices, views and culture that are almost exclusively missing from community consultation in planning and the use of old methods like public meetings. Cultural, practical and spiritual meanings are often attached to specific places which do not need to be 'sacred' to be valued. In an Adelaide context, areas in the parklands which surround Adelaide have modern adaptive uses for many Aboriginal people as other places will have meaning within traditional culture. Culture is a dynamic rather than static process and places may have both permanent and adopted meaning. The Charter is silent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the traditional owners and their right to provide cultural guidance to developers. Shelter SA would like to see specific consideration in the Charter, to include consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and translated into practice.

Affordable and social housing can be achieved

A number of participants pointed to projects which had successfully included social and affordable housing. UNO and Ergo were identified as projects which included high-end market priced accommodation as well as affordable, social and youth specific housing in city locations.

UNO (pictured below) was an award-winning project specifically incorporating subsidies from the Commonwealth and State Governments and its design needed to be sensitive to its location next to the oldest surviving heritage listed theatre in Australia. Ergo (pictured below, bottom left) incorporates 179 high quality apartments, landscaped spaces, a multi-purpose building with secure bike storage, underground car parking, a share car facility and secure access features.



Ergo was a result of the Adelaide City Council target for increased permanent residential population and affordable housing units within the City of Adelaide, through the redevelopment of its Sturt Street car park site into a mix of inner urban affordable and market-driven housing. It is an example of what can be achieved using a mix of repurposed land, government subsidy to meet any investor return gap with Local and State Government aligned on a development. A few key elements are mixed to achieve outcomes like Ergo including taking the cost of land out of construction costs, which was a recurring theme in our interviews.

The Uniting Communities development in the city (pictured below right), which involved the removal of a heritage listed church, liberated a large land area for a mixed-use development. When completed, the building will house commercial spaces, offices, retirement living, specialist disability accommodation and respite hotel style accommodation for carers. The second phase of this development is still under consideration and represents an opportunity for Uniting Communities to undertake significant community engagement. In developing the current site significant political engagement was required to overcome heritage considerations and as a result will produce Adelaide's greenest building to date and which was also conditional on the plans meeting a range of



criteria (appearance, utility, integration with surrounding area). The development was reliant on a number of government grants to ensure the mix of uses, especially the affordable housing and disability components. This project demonstrates what can be done with some level of subsidy,

when the cost of land is removed from construction costs and a ‘for-purpose’ entity, as not for profit organisations are, has the commitment to produce housing to meet economic and social objectives – one does not need to come at the expense of the other.

Some of the best examples of mixed use developments, which include a range of housing options, were developed when not for profit organisations, mostly community housing providers, had access to key subsidies, specifically the Nation Building Stimulus Program, the National Rental Affordability Scheme and other land and government incentives. Brisbane Housing Company, Housing Choices¹¹ and Community Housing Limited, all developed housing through this period (2009-2016) which utilised a combination of subsidies to create a range of mixed tenure developments in inner-city, suburban and other locations which have stood the test of time and the approval of their mix of tenants, owners and occupiers.

CapitalAsset

CapitalAsset is an initiative of Shelter SA. It is a build to rent model that removes the cost of land from construction costs. Not for profit organisations that own land, as in the Uniting Communities example, can borrow cheaply often at about 2%. The CapitalAsset demonstration project, shows through a feasibility study and financial modelling, that it can build 42 units, rent 30 at market rates and preserve the remaining 12 units for people living on low incomes, which is in effect providing social housing. The model shows a 5.9% return on investment annually, creating cash flow and allowing not for profits to benefit from capital growth.

Working with Shelter SA on CapitalAsset are some high-profile South Australians including economists, bankers, architects and developers in industry/business who are generously giving their time and intellectual property pro bono, as they can see the benefits of not being hindered by bureaucratic processes or waiting for policy/legislation change.

All participants in this research were enthusiastic about the idea of utilising land owned by not for profit entities. Participants who were familiar with the Capital Asset project provided positive feedback about the potential for that model of development to succeed.

One opportunity emerged from our interviews where Uniting Communities are considering the mix of uses to be included in the second phase of development of their buildings in Pitt Street and Franklin Street. A real interest exists in exploring a CapitalAsset approach, and this could create a context for pursuing a community engagement process that includes social and affordable housing.

A viable business and potential opportunity

Throughout the interviews we heard that the process of engagement is critical to the success of planning policy, schemes and developments. It is clear that community housing providers will play a larger role in future owning, managing and developing projects either in their own entities or in partnership with developers.

¹¹ <http://www.housingchoices.org.au/our-story/>

Increasingly developers and local councils are engaging external agencies to undertake community engagement either as a stand-alone process or as part of a larger engagement conducted by developers. It was observed that government agencies are often too rigid and standardised in their means of consulting. We heard that consultation will often be done after design and this is allowed by the planning system.

Alternatively, the Charter encourages engagement to inform design and policy, prior to land use consideration and this will help to ensure appropriate proposals come forward in development applications. Smart developers, whether commercial or for purpose, will invest in community engagement partly to counter the voices of opponents but also to ensure their project is appropriate, is supported and will not face future conflict over the inclusion of social and affordable housing. Examples were provided from both Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane demonstrating the benefits to developers of good engagement processes.

There was a number of participants in this research whose comments reflected a higher level of trust by the community of community-based organisations. Not for profits are often viewed as non-partisan, for purpose organisations. Peak bodies like Shelter SA also pride themselves on not having vested interests, as distinct from, for example, community housing providers who may have a vested interest in building their portfolio or promoting particular housing forms. Peaks like Shelter SA and National Shelter work across tenure forms, with both private and not for profit providers and are interested in better housing systems, fairness, inclusion and are outcomes focussed. Most not for profit organisations share those values but only peak bodies operate without the constraint of vested interests, financial gain and politics.

We heard from our interviewees that there is a growing trend of developers, councils, community housing providers and others engaging specialists to undertake community engagement. The level of trust enjoyed by not for profit peak bodies like Shelter SA presents an opportunity to further explore a role in this space.

Conclusion

There is a strong case for community engagement in all developments and a specific case for high quality community engagement around development sites, places around urban infill and new developments. Quality community engagement will ensure good planning policy and encourage appropriate developments which consider the nature of place and the range of needs to be considered in development. This is particularly true for developments which include social and affordable housing and services for people experiencing homelessness or exclusion.

Not for profit peak bodies, like Shelter SA, are well placed to consider developing this capacity as an adjunct to the work they currently undertake or in partnership with others. Shelter SA is considered neutral or unaffected by the vested interests that attach to developers, service providers, commercial consultancies or even other not for profit entities like Community Housing Providers or human service providers.

Quality community engagement is a valued activity which is also commercially viable and when done well can improve the opportunities to include social and affordable housing in developments and begin rebuilding the levels of social and affordable housing in South Australian.

Actions for Shelter SA:

1. Continue to promote the value of community engagement in planning, urban renewal and new construction.
2. Consider developing a consultancy to undertake community engagement.
3. Establish a register of potential sites where affordable and social housing could be considered within redevelopment and renewal opportunities.
4. Discuss with Uniting Communities the opportunity to undertake a community engagement process to advise on potential uses of its Pitt Street Phase 2 development, with a specific reference to the inclusion of social and affordable housing and a CapitalAsset approach.
5. Develop “personas” to reflect the end users of social and affordable housing that may be used to assist stakeholders to accept social housing within their neighbourhoods.
6. Meet with Minister Lensink and the South Australian Housing Authority to discuss potential opportunities to undertake community engagement around government-owned land.

To find out more please contact us at sheltersa@sheltersa.asn.au or (08)8223 4077

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