

Comments on Diverse and Well- Located Homes- Changes to Create Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy- Increasing housing density in Six Cities urban areas.

1. In the midst of a climate crisis and increasing global temperatures increasing housing density should not be done at the expense of losing green canopy and green corridors. Increasing density should not be an excuse to eliminate gardens and street trees from urban developments or remove trees from existing urban areas. It is not sufficient to have green areas relegated to parklands alone. A green matrix needs to be spread among the fabric of urban developments and protected in existing urban areas in order to provide relief from increasing temperatures driven by climate change and to provide pleasant and livable spaces for communities. Too long have developers and compliant bureaucrats dominated urban planning presenting the community with a sea of grey roofs and bitumen without a street or garden tree to be seen, and definitely no green parks, as there just hasn't been enough space provided. Even bulldozing valuable remnant forests and filling in wetlands to make more space for housing lots, rather than incorporate these important remnant trees and wetlands as community parkland. This is permitted under the guise of housing affordability and called good planning and not called out as profit maximization that it truly is!
2. Increasing building footprints on urban lots has not been an effective way of increasing housing density, more a means of increasing builder's profits by encouraging ever increasing sizes of houses for a similar number of people to live there. This has accompanied the ever-increasing loss of large trees and gardens, even impacting existing street trees as result, where owners aim to maximize the floor area of the building simply to maximize perceived building value. This is definitely not good urban planning. A few Yuccas and cactus planted among a pebble covered handkerchief garden is not a replacement for a mature eucalypt or angophora and the environmental services they provide. Building footprints should not be more than 60 percent of the lot.
3. The proposed increased density and reduced car parking space requirements of only 0.5 to 1 space per dwelling will lead to increased congestion and competition for already limited street parking in these areas close to transport hubs and shops, especially when families commonly have two vehicles, placing extra pressures on existing residents and new residents.
4. The proposed green space requirements of only 15-30% of a lot for low rise housing is inadequate. Only lots greater than 3000 sq m are expected to be able to provide for the planting of a large tree. The majority of lots are only expected to provide for a medium or small tree i.e., shrub. For mid-rise housing the green space requirements are only 15-20% of

the lot (Appendix C). This will definitely result in an effective loss of green tree canopy across the city and consequent further heating increases in urban areas. A minimum of 40% per lot for green space should be required.

5. Good urban planning can increase density and allow green spaces with large trees around the buildings and in the streetscapes. Examples of this can be seen in 1970's and 1980's units developments in the Sutherland Shire where unit blocks are surrounded by large eucalypts. Older high-density housing in the inner west, such as Marrickville have tree lined streets. It is developer greed alone that is de-greening our beautiful city and it is greed alone that is promoting the treeless deserts of new housing developments we see today that will become the heat islands of the future. We do not want our green urban spaces to be lost to cement and bitumen deserts.
6. A government with vision can require good urban planning that incorporates significant green spaces in urban developments within the urban matrix, and protect existing trees and vegetation corridors, and does this while increasing density. A government with vision can re-green areas with well-planned urban development.
7. The protection of our existing trees is usually delegated to very junior officers in local councils with fines of insignificant amounts compared to the value of most building projects. These officers are expected to challenge owners, experienced builders and building companies with extensive financial resources who will just consider a fine for illegally removing a tree a building expense. Councils rarely challenge the illegal removal of trees in court. Trees are regularly removed or poisoned around building sites with little or no consequences. Sadly, mature trees are lost and even with replanting a similar tree will take 80-100 years to be replaced if it survives. The cost of current fines is insufficient to stop the illegal removal of trees and councils are not prepared to contest their illegal removal.
8. Is the proposal to increase urban density around transport hubs going to be another example of poor government planning, enhancing the profits of developers with another wave of de-greening and loss of our mature urban trees, with communities expected to live in an ever hotter and harsher environment. Can we expect anything better? Evidence to date suggests not.

Concluding comments

1. The protection of trees and vegetation in our urban areas must be given much higher priority, protecting existing trees and vegetation and requiring all new developments to incorporate trees and vegetation, particularly native vegetation, in streets and gardens. Fines for illegally removing, killing and damaging existing trees and vegetation must be greatly

increased to represent 25-50% of proposed project cost to discourage illegal removal of trees.

2. Dual occupancies should not be automatically allowed on any R2 zoning and should not be permitted where zoning or other mechanisms identify significant trees and vegetation or other items of environmental or cultural heritage value present that require protection. Building height in R2 Zones should be limited to two stories. Individual assessment must be required.
3. Dual occupancies, terraces, townhouses and 2 storey apartment blocks should only be permitted close to transport hubs where they will not require the removal of significant vegetation or large trees or items of environmental or cultural heritage. Their construction should increase large tree canopy, not decrease it.
4. No Mid-rise housing should be permitted in Low Density Residential Zones. It should not be permitted unless it can increase tree canopy area.
5. Adequate car parking spaces needed to be required; a minimum of one and preferably two per dwelling.
6. At least 40% of a lot should be set aside for green space and new developments should be required to provide enough space to plant large trees along streets and in gardens.
7. A simplistic approach of applying a blanket 400-800 metre zone around transport hubs, not considering the landscape, environment, heritage or urban character of that area, is unlikely to result in good planning outcomes for the community and cannot be called good planning. It is most likely going to result in the loss of trees and green areas and increase of hard heat absorbing surfaces forcing the community to endure an even hotter, harsher future.

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