
We are members of a group called “ Marion Living Smarties’, all participants having completed a Living Smart course through the City of Marion or Holdfast Bay councils. All of us are very concerned about the loss of urban tree canopy we see happening in our neighbourhoods and suburbs. We wonder why in this time of anthropomorphic climate change and destruction of nature, so little protection is being given to trees that give huge environmental, human health and wellbeing benefits. Many older houses in local streets with beautiful established gardens and trees have been demolished, in their place stand concrete structures with minimal or no plant life. This equates to loss of shade, loss of natural beauty, loss of intergenerational asset, loss of insect, bird life and habitat, less fresh air, less carbon sequestering from traffic fumes, less convenient local connection with nature and loss of heritage. In addition, important temperature control that trees provide results in hotter and drier conditions to the detriment of our health and the environment.

For these reasons we believe policy changes should ensure infill is appropriate with trees and vegetation as essential. We advocate for tree planting and landscaping for infill development and in the first instance protecting many existing established trees which are better adapted to counter the effects of Climate Change. Demolition up to date has been a massacre for plantlife and the biodiversity it sustains.

We support the State Commission Update Report confirming that current lists of Significant Trees and Regulated Trees from Development Plans will be transitioned into the Code. We are aware of many letters of concern to the Advertiser (refer below), the Messenger and posts on social media decrying and grieving loss of nature in people’s neighbourhoods, holding the government rules to account. Rules must be adopted to retain as much vegetation as possible, including protection for existing trees. There are many creative ways for developers to do this. The Code should recognise existing tree canopy as an intergenerational asset, a primary factor in micro-climate cooling, biodiversity and neighbourhood amenity and include a new Overlay to include policy on urban green cover and climate change adaptation specifically including biodiversity.

We recommend additional policy which recognises all large trees, both indigenous and nonindigenous in urban and regional areas; these trees have high economic value and they should be conserved until the end of their life. Grey Box trees, a magnificent indigenous species, now endangered, need a specific policy to protect them as they do not grow to a regulated tree size. We request that the Code encourage design guidelines to manage overshadowing and privacy / amenity issues, larger minimum size rain water tanks for water storage and greater green space surrounding buildings and/or with rooftop gardens.

Furthermore, we request that full implementation of the Code be delayed to not only give more time, but to allow the Planning Minister and his Department time to document the errors and omissions and allow further scrutiny of problems and to strengthen protection for natural and built

heritage. We are deeply concerned about the clear lack of protection from development for the Parklands, suburbs, our heritage buildings and for our trees. In its current state we feel it is unfit for purpose, with major omissions, errors and inconsistencies. This Code should not be rushed through. It is extremely important that development is done in a way that respects and enhances our environment and makes our suburbs better places to live and better places for the environment. This reform is a chance to really raise the standards and we should be aiming for a high environmental standard for all new developments. You only have to look at other submissions eg Water Sensitive SA and should be guided by such recommendations.

There seems to be a disconnect between the Governments 30 year plan for Greater Adelaide and the current planning code eg A Green Liveable City 20% increase in urban green cover in metropolitan Adelaide by 2045. At this rate of tree destruction and without mass tree plantings we will have a 20% decrease of urban green cover. We can not continue with the "business as usual approach" that the state planning code has currently adopted. Adelaide is getting hotter and drier so the Code needs to reflect our urgent need to tackle Climate Change. It needs to be innovative, bold and forward thinking, to value trees and to lead and educate the community and developers in the right direction. Since the recent catastrophic and devastating bushfires in large parts of Australia there seems to be a groundswell of support for more urgent action on Climate Change. Not only does the community expect this but the world is now watching Australia and we've become the "poster child" for not enough action. Real action on Climate Change for South Australia starts with this Code.

Simone Hunter and Jane Preston (on behalf of the Marion Living Smarties)

Letters from members of the public in the Advertiser 25/02/2020

Beware code

THE proposed Statewide draft and designing planning code is set to come into effect in September 2020.

Residents will have no right of appeal for many adjoining developments. In many cases, land sizes, front and back setbacks will be reduced and building sizes will increase.

This will give developers carte blanche to create further infill and loss of your amenities.

This proposed planning code does not favour most residents and should be named the developers' handbook.

LYN HILLIER

Small blocks

THE headline “Housing plan tees off next to golf course” is a scary example that developers think they can get away with under the approaching State Government planning code (The Advertiser, 22/2/20).

Hopes that the present trend of pulling down a family home to replace with several townhouses without sufficient parking and no shady trees would be replaced with more environmentally friendly designs has blown up in our faces.

This plan, on two building blocks, would be home to 17 townhouses, each with a frontage of just 4.35m and one garage.

It is supposed to comply with the development rules in a residential zone. Declaring it a category-two development, only neighbours were notified and given a chance to respond.

So are only the big-time developers writing the new planning laws?

Will the 72 councils have any input into what sort of structures they prefer for their area?

Scanning the 800 pages of proposed planning laws send shivers down my back and should any person occupying a piece of heaven in the suburbs. Be very aware – the plans are there to block out your sunshine and privacy.

A. BOWERS

Planning powers

HAVING scanned the State Planning Commission’s draft planning and design code, I suspect that the Government is prepared to destroy the unique character of Adelaide to pander to commercial interests in the pursuit of money.

Allowing greater density by shrinking the distance from the road and between houses will decrease the availability of space for plants with a consequent decrease in habitat for wildlife.

The whole impression is one of a charmless, crowded and treeless city. With urban development moving toward greening and even rewilding urban habitats, I am reminded of the old story about a plane arriving in Adelaide and the flight attendant saying: “Welcome to Adelaide. Please turn your watches back 30 years.”

JIM WILSON