



# ACT Omnibus Territory Plan Variation

## Dickson Part Section 72 – Engagement Process

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ACT Economic Development Directorate

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# 1 Introduction

The ACT Government, through an Omnibus Territory Plan Variation, is seeking to change zoning and development opportunities for 17 sites across Canberra. Four of these sites have been identified as the first to undergo an engagement process based on a participatory workshop format. The four sites are:

- Stuart Flats in Narrabundah
- Gowrie Court in Griffith
- Red Hill Flats
- Part of Section 72 in Dickson.

This outcomes report focuses on part of Section 72 in Dickson. Unlike Stuart Flats, Gowrie Court and Red Hill (which are reported on separately), Dickson 72 is not currently a site used for public housing.

The ACT Government's intention was to design and deliver an engagement process that provides key stakeholders including local residents, community groups, property tenants and leaseholders with the opportunity to provide input into the design and possible redevelopment of this potential urban renewal site.

A community workshop approach was used to involve key stakeholder groups in a collaborative way. The community workshop forum enabled Government to explain its rationale, priorities and parameters for the Territory Plan Variation process and for Dickson Part Section 72 more specifically. The community workshop format also enabled interested stakeholders to work with the project team to better understand and to suggest potential improvements to proposed planning and design initiatives.



## 1.2 The site

The map below shows the area being considered as part of this Territory Plan variation process.



The Dickson pool has been excluded from the variation process, and not considered as part of this project, in recognition of the sensitivities associated with that site and the strong community concerns about any prospect of change to the pool. Hence, this process involves consideration of a variation for 'part' of Section 72 and not the total of the section as the pool has been excluded.





## 1.3 Report structure

This report:

- Outlines the engagement process undertaken
- Summarises key outcomes of each of the two community workshops
- Provides an overall summary that identifies key issues to emerge from the process overall
- Identifies next steps in the process.



## 2 Consultation process

While the community workshops were the central component of this engagement process, other activities were also conducted to ensure a comprehensive and robust approach. This chapter describes the key engagement activities undertaken.

### 2.1 Notification

Local residents were notified about the community workshops as follows:

- Letterbox drop
- Information distributed through the channels of the North Canberra Community Council
- Direct email to people who had participated in previous community engagement activities or had provided a written submission
- Information was included on the ACT Government's 'Time to Talk' website and promoted by that site through ACT Government social media channels.

### 2.2 Consultation process

#### 2.2.1 Key stakeholder briefings

Prior to the commencement of the community workshop process briefing meetings were held with key members of the North Canberra Community Council. The initial briefing meeting was an important component of a collaborative approach to this process and involved discussing with key stakeholders:

- Proposed workshop format
- Suggested timing and location
- Avenues for notification/advertising
- Key issues and local considerations.

Two other meetings were held with representatives of the North Canberra Community Council between the first and second workshops. These meetings provided feedback on the first workshop and input into the design of the second.

#### 2.2.2 Workshop process

Two community workshops were held:

- Community Workshop 1 on 20 October 2014 at Dickson College with 82 attendees
- Community Workshop 2 on 8 December 2014 at Majura Community Hall with 75 attendees.

The primary purpose of the community workshops were to:

- Understand the community's vision and values for the site

- Communicate Government's interests and objectives
- Arrive at a concept that addresses both of the above
- Identify the appropriate implementation tools to deliver the agreed outcome – zoning, design guidelines, precinct code, etc.

### **Community Workshop 1**

The structure for Community Workshop 1 was:

- An introductory presentation that provided background and context to the Territory Plan variation process, reviewed previous planning efforts in Dickson including the Neighbourhood Plan and the Dickson Centre Master Plan and reviewed key outcomes from consultation to date
- A table/small group exercise on reaffirming vision and values based on key vision and values themes that had been previously identified in the neighbourhood plan and centre master plan processes
- A table/small group exercise on what works and what doesn't for the site as it is now
- A series of station rounds where participants were split into four groups and then rotated through stations that focussed on connectivity (how we get from place to place), land use and built form (including community facilities), open space and landscape, and traffic and parking
- A summary of the station rounds feedback and information on the next steps in the process.

### **Community Workshop 2**

The structure for Community Workshop 2 was:

- An introductory presentation that included:
  - Explanation of purpose of meeting and process to be undertaken
  - Review of the key outcomes from Community Workshop 1
  - An overview of the planning context including how this site could address ACT Planning Strategy objectives
  - Explanation of the current zoning (CZ6) and what is currently permissible
  - Site analysis – identifying key parts of the site including trees and paths, views, access points as well as impediments to access, neglected areas, blockages to permeability
  - Explanation of three possible approaches to planning and potential redevelopment of parts of the site – do nothing, develop with current road and path structure, develop as a precinct
- Group activity – to review the approaches and provide participant feedback on the relative strengths and weaknesses of each
- Summary of group activity and discussion of next steps in the process.

The key outcomes from both Community Workshop 1 and 2 will be summarised in the next chapter of this outcomes report.

## **2.2.3 Project web site**

ACT Economic Development Directorate utilised the ACT Government 'Time to Talk' web page to provide updates to the wider community on the outcomes of the workshop process and posted presentation materials, photographs and outcome summaries after each of the two workshops.



#### 2.2.4 Engagement with tenants and leaseholders

Economic Development Directorate staff engaged directly with tenants and leaseholders currently occupying Section 72. Both of these groups were invited to attend the workshops and while some did take this opportunity, individual meetings were also held to discuss their specific interests.

## 3 Workshop outcomes

This section provides a summary of the key issues and comments from each of the community workshops.

### 3.1 Community workshop 1

The first Community Workshop focussed on providing background and context, reaffirming community vision and values, identifying strengths and weaknesses of the site and providing structured feedback on connectivity, land use and built form, open space and landscape, and traffic and parking.

#### 3.1.1 Key issues and comments

##### **Summary of key issues – Community Workshop 1**

- Retain focus on community facilities
- Established trees and green spaces are highly valued
- There is poor connectivity currently through the site
- There is a lack of good pedestrian access to and through the site
- The site contains neglected and seemingly abandoned spaces that could be improved
- Safety and security should be key considerations for any future planning. There are currently safety concerns regarding the trails and paths along the stormwater channel
- Section 72 is one of a number of sites being considered for redevelopment in the area – an integrated approach to future planning is required
- There are general concerns about future redevelopment and possible over development
- Some participants reported that they felt like residential as a future land use was being pushed/promoted

### 3.1.2 Vision and values

Participants were asked to rate vision and value statements, or add their own, based on the worksheet on the following page. Statements were derived from community input provided previously in the Neighbourhood Plan and Centre Master Plan planning processes.

Participants were asked to rate items individually, then discuss as a group at each table. Each table was asked to identify through discussion the group's three highest vision and value priorities.

The most important values that participants thought should guide future planning for Section 72 were:

- Retention of a community facilities focus for the site
- Maintenance of existing established trees
- Creation of well maintained, accessible green spaces and tree lined streetscapes.

Other highly rated values included:

- Integrated planning
- High quality and sympathetic architecture
- Neighbourhood character
- Safety and security.

The values that participants considered less important were:

- Provision of a wider range of dwelling types
- Provision of dwellings for smaller household types.



Workshop participants discussing the vision and values exercise



# Dickson Section 72

## Workshop 1 // Reporting Sheet



Please record your own responses on this sheet and then discuss at your table with your fellow participants.

### Reaffirming Vision and Values

#### 1 Thinking about Section 72, what are the most important values that you think should guide future planning?

The following are key vision phrases and values taken from the Neighbourhood Plan and Centre Master Plan, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 how important each of these are to the future planning of Section 72.

Think about Section 72 itself and how it relates to Dickson Centre, Dickson suburb and the wider city.

You can add additional or new suggested vision elements and values in the space at the bottom of the table.

Vision element/value	Not important				Very important
Community facilities focus	1	2	3	4	5
Safety and security	1	2	3	4	5
Wider range of dwellings	1	2	3	4	5
Tree lined streetscapes	1	2	3	4	5
Neighbourhood character	1	2	3	4	5
High quality and sympathetic architecture	1	2	3	4	5
Connectivity (getting from place to place easily and safely)	1	2	3	4	5
Dwellings for smaller households	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic management and control	1	2	3	4	5
Neighbourhood diversity	1	2	3	4	5
Well maintained, accessible green spaces	1	2	3	4	5
Integrated planning	1	2	3	4	5
Maintenance of established trees	1	2	3	4	5
Supply of adequate parking	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE TURN OVER



Recording form for vision and values exercise

### 3.1.3 Current likes and dislikes

When asked to identify what they like about Section 72 as it is now, the most popular participant responses were:

- Community facilities and amenities
- Trees and open space
- Pedestrian and bicycle paths
- Low density and low building height.



Northside Community Services – community facilities were identified as one of the features that participants liked most.



Trees and open space were also a well-liked features of the site



When asked what they do not like about Section 72 as it is now, the most frequently reported responses were:

- Poor connectivity and traffic flow
- Neglected/abandoned spaces
- Lack of pedestrian access.

Other disliked features included:

- Lack of parking
- The need for better green spaces including a children's play area
- Lack of lighting and related concerns about safety
- The ad hoc and unplanned nature of the site.



Neglected or abandoned spaces were identified as a feature of the site that participants did not like



### 3.1.4 Opportunities

Workshop participant feedback on opportunities focussed on the improvement of community facilities in the area and reinforcing Section 72 as a 'community hub'. The retention of community facilities on the site and the reinforcement of the site as a 'community hub' with numerous community facilities was a key and clear direction from community representatives attending the workshop. Most concerns regarding potential redevelopment were related to the impact this would have on both existing community facilities and the possibility of community facility expansion in the future.

Other suggestions for improvement included:

- Improvements to recreational areas including the inclusion of a children's play area and enhancements to existing green spaces
- Improvements to and enhancement of existing pedestrian and bicycle paths
- Improved connectivity and transport links generally
- The inclusion of additional uses including cafes, shops and aged care facilities.

There was some support for limited residential development on selected areas of the site. This preference was not universally held and was generally limited to low to medium scale development.

### 3.1.6 Station Rounds

Participants were divided into four groups to discuss connectivity, land use and built form, open space and landscape and traffic and parking. Each group of participants spent 15 minutes at each station where facilitators and scribes recorded key comments.

#### Connectivity

A general observation was that given the status and function of the Dickson Group Centre, connectivity needs to be considered in relation to the surrounding suburbs and not just within the site. Section 72 was described as 'an island' having no real connection to the surrounding area.



Connectivity station round

Key connectivity points raised included:

- There are no real attractors on the site and as such it is used mostly as a thoroughfare - a place to pass through rather than go to
- As well as having poor connectivity to the surrounding suburbs, the site itself suffers from poor internal connectivity. A number of participants observed the seemingly haphazard and ad hoc

nature of development to date and this lack of an integrated approach to planning has resulted in a block that has few usable connections to enable easy passage

- Visual connectivity from outside or the periphery of the site to within is poor. This contributes to the 'obscure and complex' appearance of the site and the feeling that 'it does not invite you in'
- Lack of adequate lighting, poor natural surveillance and obscured site lines add to the lack of safety of the site and are a further impediment to connectivity and use of the site by pedestrians and cyclists.

### Land use and built form

The key feedback in this station round was the importance of retaining the integrity of the community facilities on Section 72. When asked to identify areas that should be preserved participants identified the existing community facilities sites as key areas for preservation.

The paths and trails associated with the stormwater channel at the southern boundary of Section 72 was also identified as an area of high value that participants would like to see preserved and possibly enhanced in the future. The retention of this path and trail system and the preservation of the character of this area were both seen as important. One of the issues discussed with this area was its relatively secluded nature and poor natural surveillance resulting in feelings of a lack of safety by users. This led to a discussion of the potential for some sympathetic development adjacent to the paths and trails that would provide some surveillance and increased activity in the area.



Land use and built form station round



While no clear consensus was reached on land uses, three key areas were identified as having the potential for some improvement and enhancement through new development. Those areas were:

- The former soccer club site which is currently vacant and is located on the south east corner of the site
- Part of the land currently leased by the Salvation Army
- The Antill Street frontage (shown in order below).



While no clear consensus was reached some participants identified the potential for some redevelopment of the site and supported consideration of residential development, preferably in the form of residential aged care, as a possible future use. It was stressed that scale would be important and that any future new development should not jeopardise existing community facilities or the capacity of those facilities to expand in the future.

### Open space and landscape

As with most other groups the key overriding theme to emerge from the open space and landscape discussion was the importance of maintaining space for community use. The site was strongly associated with community use by participants and this station round suggested exploring how the landscape could better support, facilitate and encourage community use of Section 72.



Open space and landscape station round

Specific discussion points to emerge from the open space and landscape station included:

- Retention of established trees (although it was recognised that some of the established trees were not in good health)
- A desire to create well connected but discrete spaces
- Suggestion to include a children's play space which could be something that could act as an attractor to the site
- The importance of maintenance of current and any future landscape
- The need for the creation of better separated and designated pedestrian and bicycle areas
- The importance of enhancing feelings of safety for users of the site by creating better sight lines, enhanced opportunities for natural surveillance and improved lighting
- The need for additional bridge crossings of the stormwater channel
- Greater signage and gateway improvements with participants feeling that improvements to sense of arrival, way finding and directional assistance were required.



## Traffic and parking

The traffic and parking discussion highlighted a larger community concern about cumulative impacts and a desire to ensure that the incremental effects (traffic, parking and others) of a number of potential developments were being considered in future planning of the Dickson Group Centre area. While it is too early for detailed traffic studies to be conducted for Section 72 there was concern that existing problems may be exacerbated by any development of Section 72 and also other developments planned for the area.



Traffic and parking station round

Other key discussion points were:

- Parking in Dickson Group Centre was already seen as an issue and any loss of existing car spaces or creation of additional demand would need to be factored in to the assessment of any future planning proposal
- Cowper Street was identified as an existing traffic issue with substantial queueing at the traffic lights during peak times
- Both Cowper and Antill Streets were suggested as roadways that required detailed study in the preparation of any future planning proposals
- Cowper Street was also seen as a significant obstacle to the natural desired path of travel between Section 72 and the Dickson Group Centre
- Within Section 72 a more coherent roadway pattern that enabled greater linkages through the site was seen as desirable
- An area wide traffic study was suggested as a more integrated way to consider the possible impacts of Section 72 and other proposed developments in the area
- A key concern with the prospect of any multi-unit residential development was the lack of parking provision for both residents and visitors and the impact of the overflow demand on public car spaces
- While the former soccer club site was seen by some as a possible location for additional parking, there were also concerns about the site being dominated by passive uses and the dominance of surface car parking on Section 72.

## 3.2 Community Workshop 2

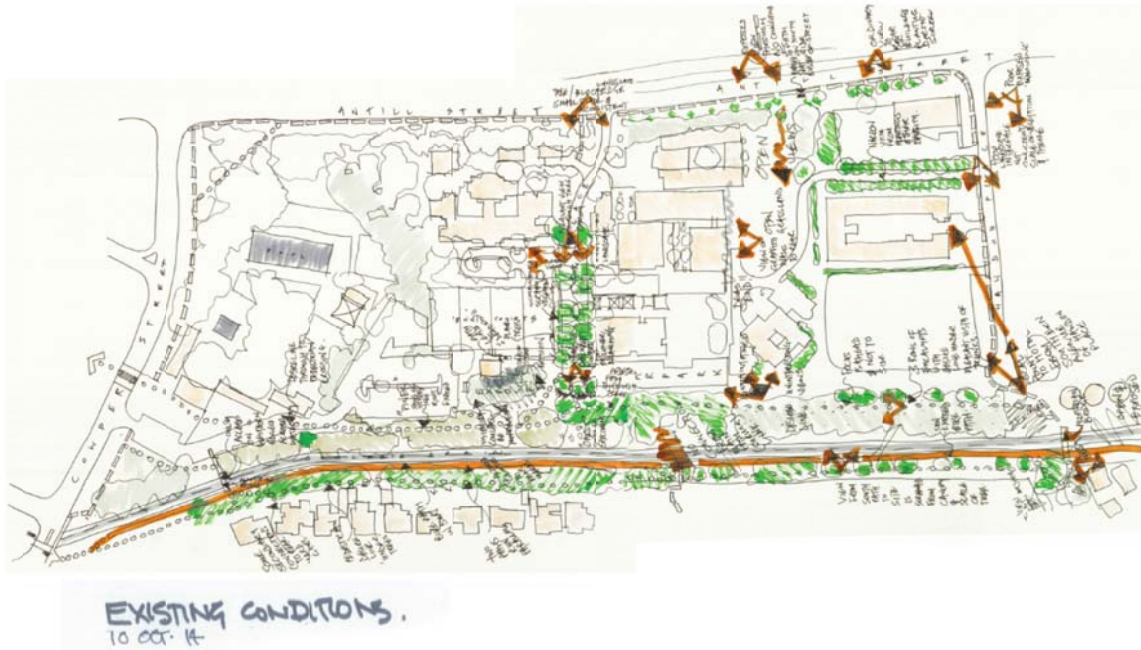
The second community workshop focussed on presenting and gaining community feedback on different approaches to developing the Section 72 site. These approaches were presented as different approaches to design and development that could lead to the creation of more detailed options for Section 72. The approaches were based on feedback received at the first community workshop, detailed site analysis undertaken by landscape and design consultants, and recognition of the key policy directions of ACT Government through the ACT Planning Strategy and plans for light rail.

Key features of the introductory presentation referenced by the design consultant were:

- The site contains two distinct zones. One is based around Rosevear Place and includes the Northside community facilities, tennis courts, CFMEU, child care and art space. The other is further east and includes the Salvation Army site, church, motel and former soccer club
- There is an issue of connectivity with the two zones within the site disconnected from each other. East-west travel is only possible along Antill Street (vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists) or the stormwater channel paths and trails (pedestrians and cyclists only)
- There are significant opportunities to improve the public domain in Section 72 and create a real place. For this to be fully realised the site needs to be considered holistically and connectivity improved
- Market experience shows that residential uses will attract greater value than commercial or other non-residential uses. Although there are community concerns about residential development it remains an important consideration in future planning and a possible avenue to generate the revenue required for the required or desired public domain improvements
- Due to a range of competing priorities (health, education, Mr. Fluffy, Capital Metro) it is unlikely that funds for public domain improvements in Dickson will be made available through Government appropriation. Planning for Section 72 needs to consider alternative funding mechanisms including how development could be used as a catalyst for revenue generation for public enhancements.

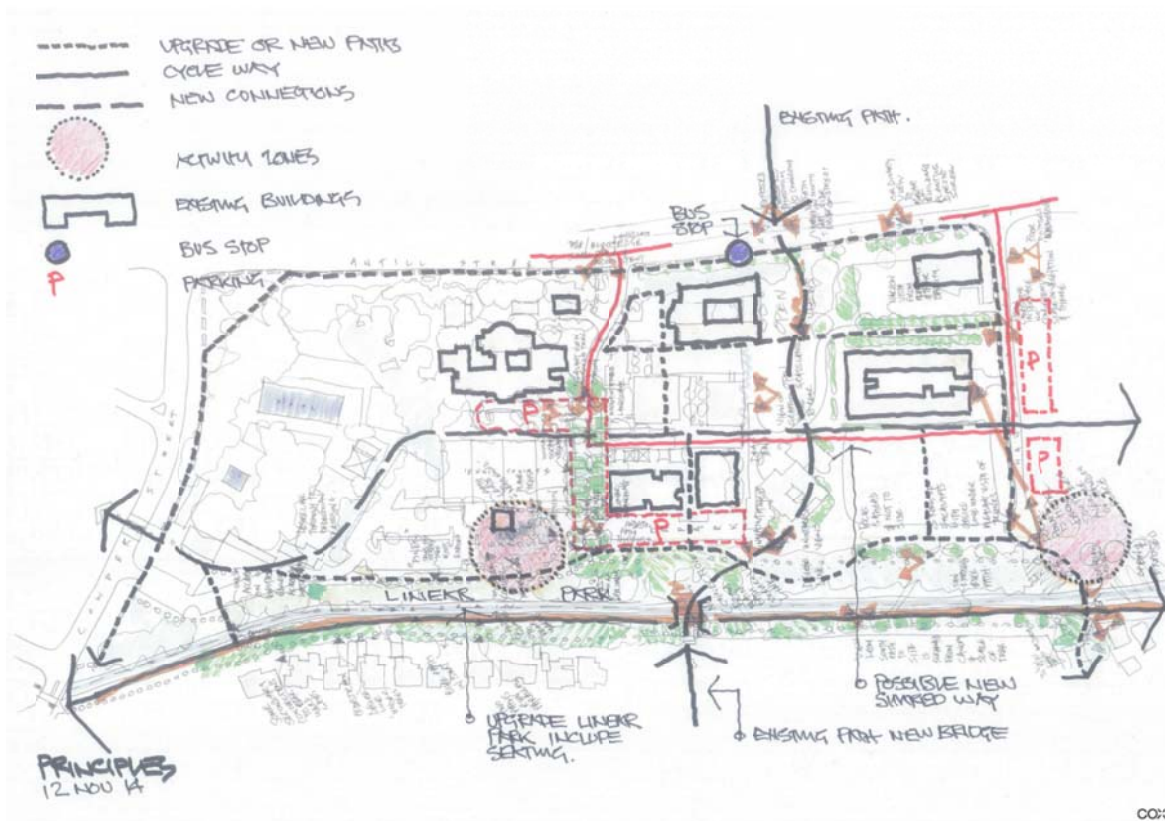


## Site Analysis



COX

## Planning principles



COX

Following this analysis, three approaches were presented. The approaches were:

- Do nothing
- Develop within the existing road and path structure
- Develop as an integrated precinct.

After presentation of the site analysis and three approaches, participants worked in facilitated small groups to discuss the following issues and questions relating to each approach:

- General comments particularly on strengths and weaknesses
- Views on residential development – if it were to happen, what could you support – type, scale, design
- Suggestions for public domain improvements
- Key considerations to carry through to next stage of design.

### 3.2.1 Key issues and comments

#### Summary of key issues – Community Workshop 2

- Doing nothing was generally not seen as a desirable option
- Planning the site as an integrated precinct was seen by most participants as the most desirable approach
- Groups suggested that a master plan that enabled a coordinated approach to planning of the site was required
- While not universally supported, a number of groups recognised that residential development on selected sites and with the appropriate controls would be acceptable
- The sites identified as having most potential for development were the former soccer club site and the site currently occupied by the Salvation Army
- More information was requested on how revenue generated through residential development could be utilised to fund public improvements on site
- More information was requested on how design codes and other controls could be used to enable greater control over development outcomes on the site
- Some concerns were raised over 'blanket' rezoning of the whole site with the suggestion that a master plan could be used to identify areas where residential uses could be added and where community facilities needed to be preserved
- Consideration needs to be given to future demand for community facilities and how this may need to be accommodated on Section 72.

### 3.2.2 Do nothing approach – group feedback

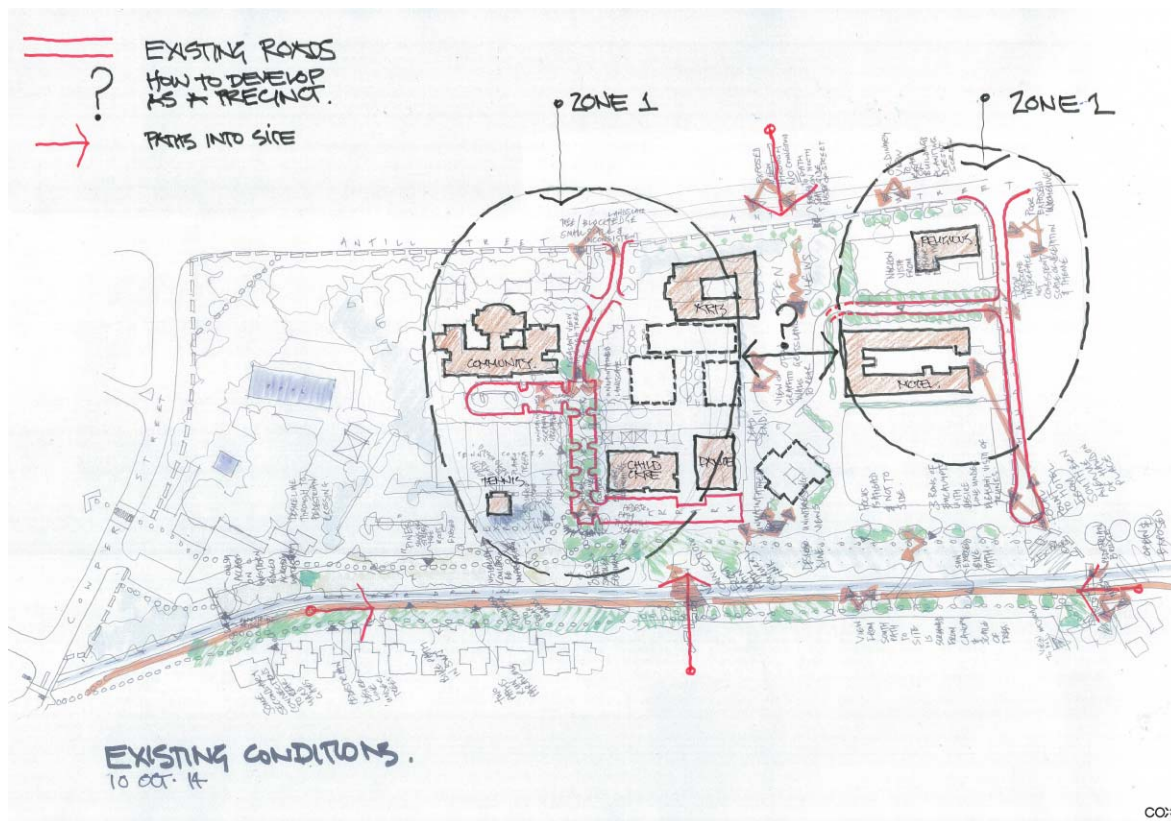
Do nothing as an approach was not supported by most groups. Most groups felt the current unplanned and ad hoc nature of the site was a result of a lack of planning and that a more integrated approach could create better community benefits. There were some participants who preferred 'doing nothing' or leaving the site as it is, to any form of development although this was not a majority view among participants.

Some participants did question why the site cannot be improved without a zoning change and suggested the current zoning provides some built form protection. However, there were some concerns about some of the uses permitted under current zoning that participants were not aware of.

Group comments on the do nothing approach included:

- Not desirable
- Potential for continued uncoordinated development
- Community has no say in future of the site in the do nothing approach
- Everyone wants something done
- If do nothing the site will continue to deteriorate
- Need a planned approach to the precinct.

#### Do nothing approach





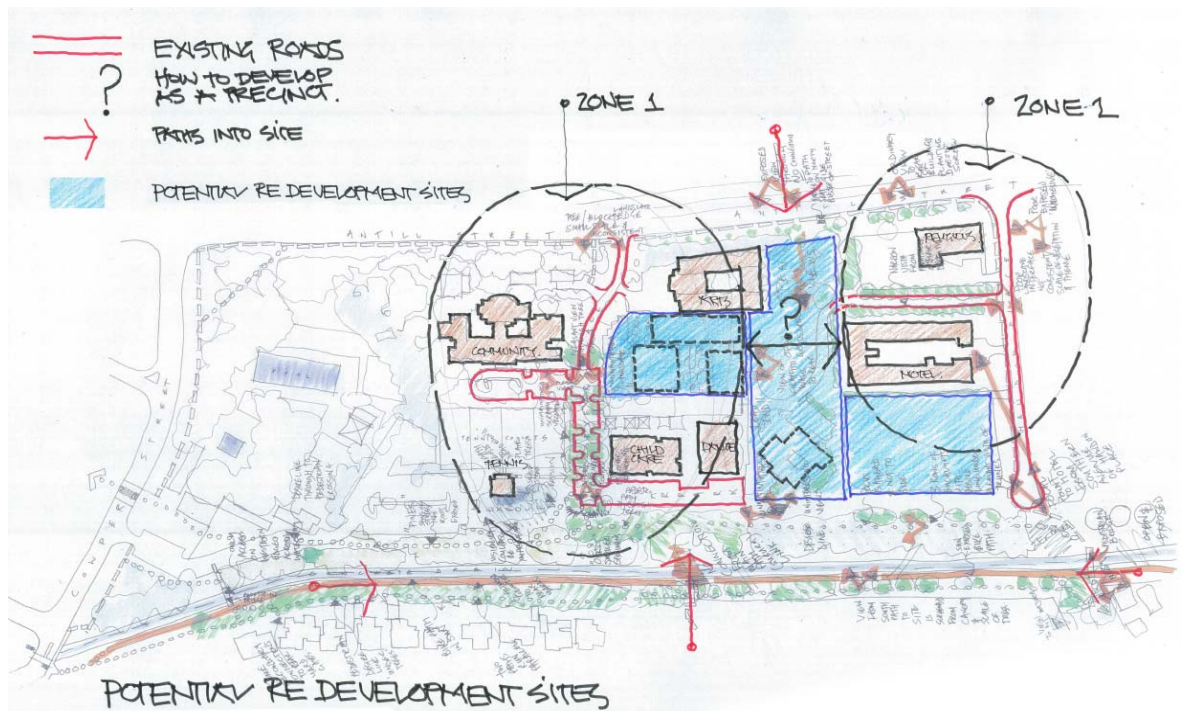
### 3.2.4 Develop within the existing road and path structure – group feedback

This approach, to develop within the existing road and path structure, lacked widespread support among participants. One of the key issues identified by participants was the need for greater connectivity and permeability of the site and this option was seen as not contributing to this goal.

Group comments on the develop with the existing structure approach included:

- Preference for a plan that integrates the site
- Lacks cohesion
- Development would occur in two separate zones
- Lose opportunities for greater connectivity especially with bike and pedestrian paths that cross the site and connect to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

#### Existing road and path structure approach



COX



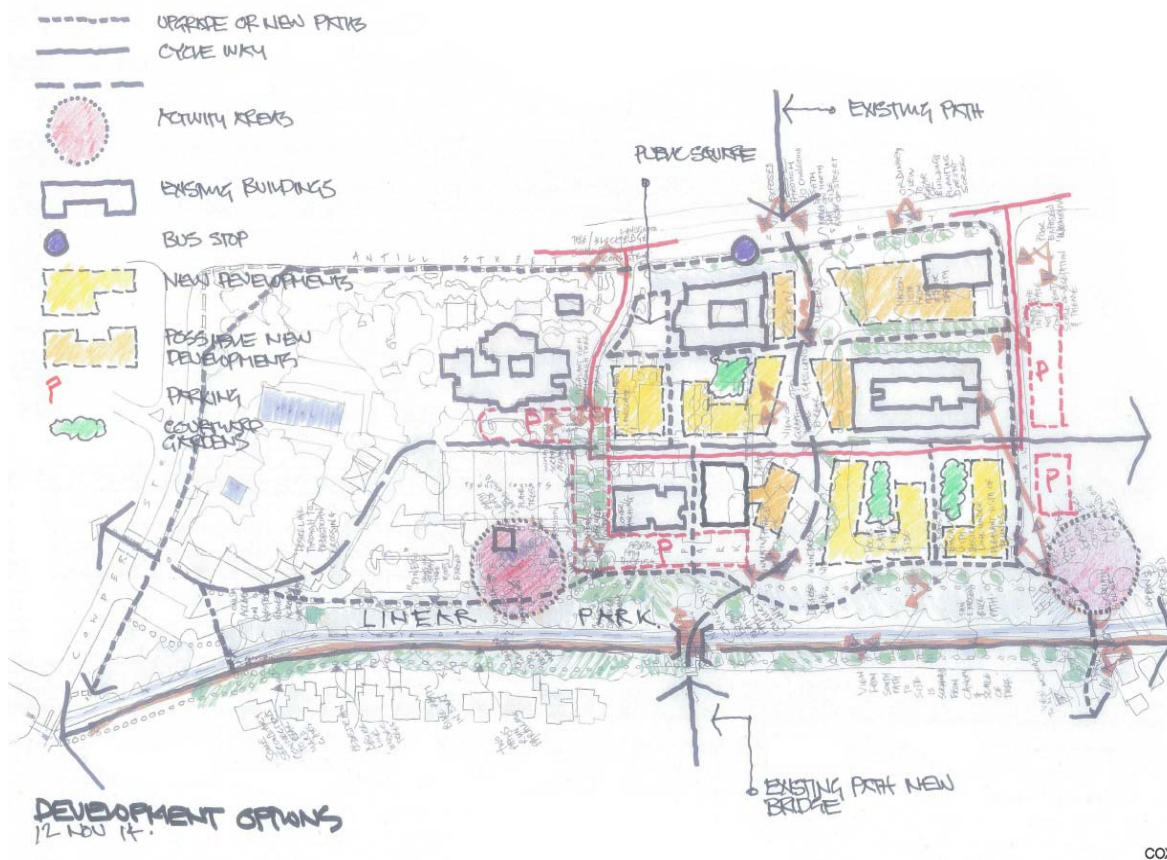
### 3.2.6 Develop the site as an integrated precinct – group feedback

Development of the site as an integrated precinct attracted most support and interest among group participants.

Group comments on the integrated precinct approach included:

- Potential to serve community best but community need continued input
- Need better information and input into planning controls for height, density, etc.
- Greatest opportunity to create a community and build on the existing character
- Could and should enable pedestrian access through the site
- Opportunity to create something special and attract more people to the site
- Enables greater connection and access to other areas like Downer, Majura, other parts of Dickson
- Opportunity to rationalise and consolidate uses like parking across the site if planned as a precinct.

#### Integrated precinct approach



COX

Specific concerns identified about this approach included:

- Concerns about 'high rise' development and perceived associated impacts including noise and traffic
- Future development would require a social impact analysis including assessment of impact on human services
- Need stronger controls on use, heights, setbacks, etc.
- Allowable heights need to consider how it complements or contrasts existing neighbourhood.

Concerns remained among community members regarding future development of the site. There was a level of support for some development on selected sites (particularly the former soccer club, the Salvation Army site and parts of Antill Street) but the scale and nature of that development was the subject of some discussion. Residential development was discussed as a possible option and this attracted some support. Residential aged care was identified as a form of residential development that may be more acceptable. Public housing was also seen as a type of residential development that could be incorporated. The scale of any proposed development was also an issue with an unsurprising preference for lower to moderate scale development.

A significant concern was raised about rezoning the whole of part Section 72 to allow residential uses. Participants questioned whether rezoning was required at all, not recognising the validity of the presented arguments about increased value being realised through rezoning to allow residential uses. Feedback from workshop participants suggested support for residential was limited to particular sites and that an overall blanket rezoning was of concern. A master plan for part Section 72 was suggested as a tool that could help to create an integrated concept for the site including where residential development could occur and where it could not, as well as identifying areas that would be preserved for community facilities use.

Mixed use development was also discussed as an option where existing community facilities uses could be potentially enhanced through incorporation of community facility floor space on the ground floor of mixed use buildings that may have residential uses above a community centre or child care centre, for example. Guarantees about the preservation of the community facilities space was again a concern with this concept.

While a number of concerns were raised, positive aspects of possible future residential development were also identified, including:

- Positioning of residential uses to provide greater surveillance of stormwater channel paths and trails to increase safety of that area
- Greater activation of site generally with more people moving through and being on the site during various times of day and evening
- Greater activation along the Antill Street frontage which is currently a blank façade that does not provide an appealing streetscape
- The potential for residential development (with the greater value it attracts) to be used as a catalyst to generate revenue for public domain improvements on site.

The last point about value capture for public domain improvements generated some discussion. Generally participants were interested but sceptical about this initiative and it was not clear to them what the mechanism was to enable this value capture to occur. More information is required to satisfy community members' questions and curiosity about the validity of this possible initiative.

Similarly, development and design control and uncertainty about how this could be achieved was also a significant issue for workshop participants. It was evident that many participants felt they could not 'trust' Government to follow through on its intentions or at least that those intentions, while well meaning, could not be effectively regulated or implemented through the current policy

or regulatory frameworks. More information is also required to provide participants with a greater understanding of how these controls could be implemented and regulated.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a member of the community council expressed concern that the process was designed to lead participants to a conclusion to support residential uses on site and, therefore, rezoning. This participant felt like community members were being steered to the conclusion that Government wanted and the facilitation of the meeting was biased in this regard. This understanding of the process evoked some response from other community members present and did not appear to be a sentiment widely held by workshop participants.



## 4 Overall summary

Dickson Section 72 addresses a number of criteria for redevelopment sites identified in the ACT Planning Strategy. It is an established, inner suburb that includes a range of existing infrastructure, it is within walking distance to a group centre and is close to current and planned major public transport routes. A key concern for community members appears to be about the need for an integrated and coordinated planning process that views the future of Section 72 along with the future of the Dickson area more broadly.

Redevelopment brings change which can be challenging for existing communities. Concerns from existing residents in established communities about the impacts of change often focus on traffic, amenity, impacts on lifestyle, and change of character. Residents in Dickson are particularly concerned about cumulative impacts of development in the area and also about preserving the largely community facilities focus of Section 72.

It seems that a resolution that meets the planning strategy and Government requirements, while addressing the key community concerns is possible. Trust between the community and Government is not high but this process has clearly identified the information and tools that community members require to increase their confidence that the planning intentions can be fulfilled.

### 4.1 Key outcomes

In summary, some of the key outcomes and suggestions to emerge from this process included:

- The development of a master plan that presents an integrated and holistic view of Section 72 as a precinct including its relationship to the surrounding suburbs and location of potential residential/mixed uses and community facilities lands
- A more definitive review and explanation of the planning controls that could be introduced on the site to ensure that the land use and physical form outcomes agreed in this process can be practically implemented, developed and regulated
- A clear explanation of how resources from any development of Section 72 could be used for the funding of public domain improvements on the site and a commitment that this localised use of revenue for local public improvements is supported by Government
- A better understanding of future community facilities demand and identification of models of provision to understand the potential of community facilities uses on the Section 72 site.

## 4.3 Next steps

A commitment has been made to continuing community engagement for the planning of Dickson Part Section 72. The next logical steps are:

- Development of an option or options reflecting the discussions documented in this engagement process to date
- With that option or options addressing the key issues identified above including development of a master plan for the site and providing further information and certainty about planning and design controls, value capture mechanisms and analysis of future demand for community facilities.

While additional community engagement will be required, the precise form that this takes will require further consideration by Government to align with timing, resources, etc.



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