

Statement of **Planning Intent** 2015



Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Planning



ACT
Government



CANBERRA

Minister's message



As Minister for Planning, I would like Canberra to be a city renowned not only for its liveability, but its vibrant and distinctive civic lifestyle. Our city will be increasingly sustainable, compact and well-connected and we will seize opportunities for urban renewal to become a showcase for innovation and design excellence. Our city will be accessible and inclusive, where well-designed and friendly urban environments promote the health, wellbeing and prosperity of all Canberrans.

Canberra has just celebrated its 100 year anniversary. We are transitioning from a regional city to a major metropolitan centre as well as maturing as the national capital. We are embarking on a period of significant urban renewal.

In developing my Statement of Planning Intent I spoke extensively with community groups, peak industry and business groups, researchers and academics, the heads of government agencies, older people and the younger generation. I thank everyone who participated for your insight and creative ideas. You have certainly inspired me with your enthusiasm, optimism and energy for our city.

Community engagement revealed broad support for the government's current planning policies and vision for Canberra. People are less confident about the translation of these policies into good outcomes on the ground in our buildings and public spaces.

We need to continue the conversation about how we can collectively pursue innovative approaches to achieve design excellence, adapt to climate change, become more sustainable and, particularly, improve the quality and experience of our public realm.

NewActon's Nishi building, where I hosted many of the consultations, was recently awarded the International Project of the Year at the 2015 Building Awards in London and inspired us all to aim high. We need to ensure planning is an enabler and facilitator of great city outcomes on the ground for our economic prosperity and growth as well for the great civic life we wish to be renowned for.

My Statement sets out four planning priorities for the ACT Government over the next five years, with actions and timeframes for each priority. The government looks forward to working with all Canberrans to ensure Canberra remains the world's best city to live, work and play.

Mick Gentleman, MLA
Minister for Planning

Statement of Planning Intent at a glance

This Statement of Planning Intent articulates four planning priorities for Canberra which have evolved over a number of years and strongly reflect the key messages heard from the community and stakeholders.

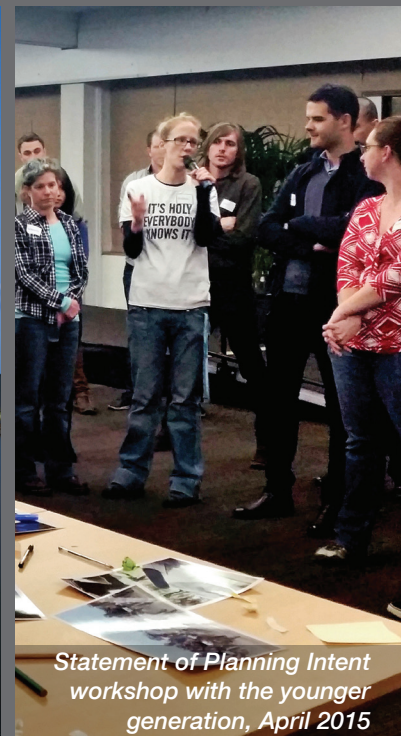
For each priority, the planning intent and actions to make this happen for the immediate term (next 12 months), short term (2-3 years) and medium term (4-5 years) are identified.

A Creating sustainable, compact and liveable neighbourhoods with better transport choices

B Delivering high quality public spaces and streets through placemaking

C Delivering an outcome-focused planning system to reward design excellence and innovation

D Engaging with the community, business and research sectors to optimise planning outcomes



Statement of Planning Intent workshop with the younger generation, April 2015



Creating **sustainable, compact and liveable neighbourhoods** with better transport choices

What we heard from the community

The engagement process highlighted the desire for neighbourhoods throughout the city to be inclusive, providing housing choice and community facilities that meet the needs of all socio-demographic groups and allow for ageing in place. Compact neighbourhoods would cater for diverse lifestyles and the increase in density would be accompanied by improvements to public spaces and streets, infrastructure and services.

The creation of strong neighbourhoods with identity and character was highly desired. The community endorsed the idea of a diverse range of destination neighbourhoods and precincts such as NewActon, Braddon, Kingston Foreshore and elsewhere in Canberra, but particularly in suburban Canberra.

Planning intent

- Focus higher-density development with diverse housing types in the city centre, town and group centres, along major transport corridors and in other locations with good public transport and amenity.
- Foster medium-density housing options such as terrace houses, town houses and secondary dwellings as an appropriate form of development in suburbs.
- Locate infill development and affordable housing close to public transport routes and adjacent to parks, open space and other areas of high amenity.
- Encourage mixed-use developments at major centres and along public transport corridors to ensure active, vibrant community spaces and places.
- Create environments that are child- and age-friendly, support cycling and walking (active travel) and housing in proximity to recreation opportunities and services (active living).
- Ensure the quality of public spaces and streets is a primary consideration in urban renewal projects.
- Encourage innovation in the adaptive re-use of heritage places as part of the creation of vibrant and liveable neighbourhoods.
- Use demonstration precincts to provide the community and industry with examples of how flexibility and innovation in planning can result in more liveable, sustainable communities.
- Design living (green) infrastructure to retain water in the landscape, respond to the urban heat island effect, and be fit-for-purpose throughout its lifespan.
- Continue to collaborate on regional and cross-border planning, catchment management, infrastructure and transport projects.
- Foster the development of prosperous economic and employment hubs in the city's centres to support transport infrastructure, including light rail.
- Recognise and support the continuing development of the Canberra Airport's transport infrastructure, including air travel and freight.

Actions to make this happen

Immediate

- Identify a number of demonstration precincts across Canberra to undergo an innovative planning process to guide future change and sustainable development.
- Progress innovative and alternative housing options in partnership with industry.
- Include locations along the Northbourne Avenue corridor and in southern Canberra as the first demonstration precincts.
- Develop a guide for community gardens to support communities build social capital and grow their own food.
- Facilitate affordable incubation spaces for business start-ups, pop-up shops, and creative art and cultural events to revitalise underutilised spaces across Canberra.

Short term

- Use best practice water sensitive urban design to manage water quality, recycle stormwater, retain water in the landscape, and create valuable community spaces for recreation and visual amenity.
- Integrate innovative techniques, materials and products, fit-for-purpose infrastructure and alternative energy options into the planning and design of urban renewal precincts and transport projects.
- Review the role and function of local centres to deliver sustainable, liveable and healthy communities.

Medium term

- Continue to build a suite of transport policies for an integrated transport network, including light rail, active travel, parking, low emission vehicles and freight.
- Continue to roll-out innovative and sustainable demonstration precincts and communities across Canberra.



Delivering **high quality public spaces and streets** through placemaking

What we heard from the community

The community and stakeholders emphasised the need to adopt a placemaking approach that focuses on pedestrians first, cyclists second, public transport third, then private vehicles when planning, designing and managing public spaces and development. Placemaking is *“the art of creating public ‘places of the soul,’ that uplift and help us connect to each other.”*¹

A high quality public realm (streets, pathways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and public buildings and facilities) is essential for quality of life in a more compact city. There is the need for better integration of the public realm into the overall design of development. In a constrained budgetary environment, this would also require support for alternative delivery and maintenance models.

Planning intent

- Involve the community, in particular the younger generation, in placemaking exercises associated with major developments, including urban renewal projects.
- Explore how the legacy of garden city planning, evident in much of the public realm, can be used in placemaking.
- Promote water sensitive urban design and living (green) infrastructure as significant contributors to a high quality public realm, climate resilience and a city for all seasons.
- Explore options for sustainable public realm design, development and maintenance to improve sustainability and reduce reliance on government funding.
- Plan for the public realm with ongoing use and maintenance in mind.
- Provide greater clarity around subjective terms often used in planning documents such as ‘vibrant’, ‘high quality’ and ‘liveable’.



Actions to make this happen

Immediate

- Investigate innovative models for the design, delivery and maintenance of the public realm and showcase examples in demonstration precincts, e.g. Haig Park.
- Develop a placemaking framework for Canberra, including a place vision and principles to guide planning and design for better public places and spaces across the city (e.g. city centre, town centres, group centres, local centres, streets and neighbourhood parks).

Short term

- Develop a public realm design guideline for use across Canberra to encourage innovation, quality design and environmental sustainability of the built form.
- Develop partnerships to set up an evaluation and monitoring framework for the on-going improvement of public spaces and streets across the city.
- Continue to work with the Heart Foundation (ACT) to promote supportive urban environments for active living.

Medium term

- Develop partnerships for the on-going evaluation of the design and use of public spaces and identify areas for improvement.





Delivering an **outcome-focused planning system** to reward **design excellence and innovation**

What we heard from the community

The Statement of Planning Intent consultation revealed that many people thought the current planning system's reliance on codes and regulations stifled innovation and did not result in the best urban outcomes. The community and industry are seeking a more performance-based and outcome-driven planning system; in summary, more innovation, less regulation.

Planning intent

- Planning is to facilitate and incentivise innovation and design excellence, seeking to clearly articulate how the city's built form has to perform to improve environmental, social and economic outcomes.
- Better convey planning and design concepts to the community and other stakeholders.
- Planning should encourage greater take-up of public transport and active travel.
- Review building policy and the building regulatory system to ensure quality development and a strong construction industry.

Actions to make this happen

Immediate

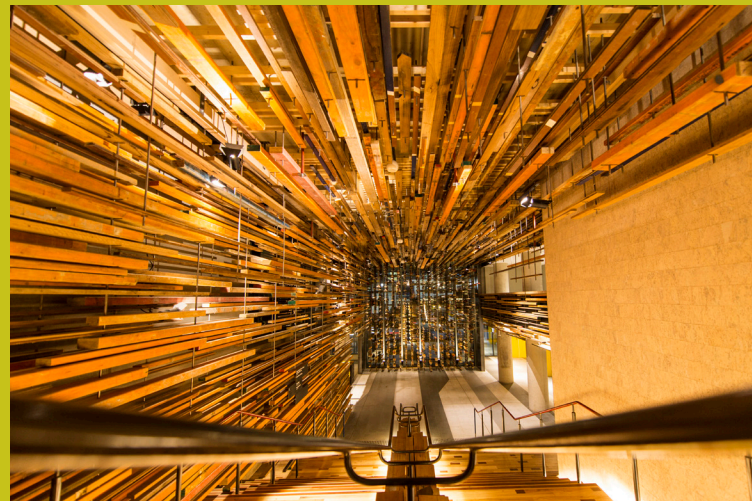
- Establish a single urban design advisory panel in Canberra to improve the quality of development outcomes and the public realm. This multidisciplinary panel with independent experts is to provide advice on significant private and public projects.
- Investigate the adoption of visual tools such as 3D graphic modelling to better investigate, develop, visualise and convey desired future outcomes for the city.
- Establish an Active Travel Office to coordinate the government's planning and implementation of active travel.
- Incorporate active living principles into the Territory Plan.
- Revise and simplify the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code of the Territory Plan to provide greater certainty on the desired outcomes of development.
- Introduce a planning efficiency bill to enable concurrent lodgements of Territory Plan variations associated with a development proposal to accelerate development, reduce red tape and increase economic opportunities.

Short term

- Investigate mechanisms to incentivise innovation and sustainable, high quality urban renewal.
- Review third party appeal rights for certain strategic areas to support more flexible and innovative planning outcomes.
- Review current residential zonings to achieve a wider range of housing choice and innovative medium-density housing forms across individual neighbourhoods and suburbs to meet the demand for age-friendly living and affordable housing.
- Investigate the inclusion of outcome- and performance-based provisions in Territory Plan precinct codes aimed at targeted urban renewal areas to encourage new design approaches and provide incentives for innovation and sustainable design.
- Review the Estate Development Code of the Territory Plan to be more outcomes-focused and less prescriptive.
- Replace the Inner North Precinct Code of the Territory Plan to reflect recent planning and transport policy changes related to light rail, public housing renewal, and urban infill in the city centre and along the Northbourne Avenue corridor in accordance with the City and Northbourne Avenue Urban Design Framework.
- Review the Parking and Vehicular and Access General Code of the Territory Plan and introduce a parking offset fund for alternative options in providing parking spaces and sustainable travel options.
- Review the Bike Parking General Code of the Territory Plan to ensure it promotes best practice bike parking and end-of-trip facilities for cyclists.

Medium term

- Review the structure of the Territory Plan and the content of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* to encourage higher quality design and more sustainable and innovative planning outcomes.
- Support initiatives to ensure ACT Government assets and services become climate wise and carbon neutral to demonstrate and promote government leadership in climate change.





Engaging with the community, business and research sectors to optimise planning outcomes

What we heard from the community

The engagement leading to this Statement of Planning Intent identified a strong desire for the government to provide early and ongoing engagement throughout the planning and subsequent development processes.

The community, business and research sectors would like to see better implementation of planning policy to improve on-the-ground outcomes. The community and stakeholders also want a clearer understanding of the ACT planning process, greater transparency and more information made available on planning decisions.

Planning intent

- Engage with community, industry, business and research sectors early and ensure public engagement is meaningful, transparent, effective and ongoing.
- Communicate the vision and the process steps for each major project from strategic planning through to development applications, highlighting the opportunities for public contribution.
- Work collaboratively across government to ensure continuity of vision and direction for major projects.
- Develop partnerships with industry and research sectors to foster innovation and sustainability in planning, design and development.

Actions to make this happen

Immediate

- Adopt more interactive and flexible engagement approaches utilising online techniques and social media to reach out to broader segments of the community during the planning process.
- Use multiple platforms to make information easily accessible, including a sustainability web hub.
- Publicise more widely the ways and means of how the community can engage in ACT planning processes.
- Engage with the public on the long-term roll-out of light rail across the city, including on the Transport Canberra Light Rail Network.
- Ensure high levels of community involvement in the development of water quality treatment options for the ACT Basin Priority Project to protect and improve the health of Canberra's lakes and waterways.
- Provide annual report cards that monitor the implementation of the ACT Planning Strategy and Transport for Canberra.

Short term

- Government partner more with research organisations and research-into-practice initiatives, such as the Canberra Urban and Regional Futures (CURF) and the Heart Foundation's (ACT) Active Living program.
- Use an enquiry-by-design approach for significant development proposals or for proposed changes to planning policy. Enquiry-by-design, also known as a charrette, brings together stakeholders, the community, local authorities and developers in a creative design process to discuss and negotiate on planning projects to promote joint ownership of outcomes.
- Improve the understanding by community representatives, industry, business and research sectors of ACT planning processes and desired outcomes through a series of continuing seminars and/or workshops.

Medium term

- Build the community engagement capacity of public sector planning staff through targeted training.
- Educate industry about sustainable and innovative development through a series of policy publications and innovation forums.



Statement of Planning Intent workshop with community groups, March 2015



Statement of Planning Intent workshop with the younger generation, April 2015



Minister Gentleman meeting with internationally renowned urban designer Jan Gehl, February 2015



How you can be kept informed about ACT planning

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