

URBAN RENEWAL IN NORTH WATSON

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD



ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO COUNTRY

Yuma. Dhawura nguna ngurumbangu gunanggu
Ngunnawal. Nginggada dindi dhawura Ngunnawalbun
yindjumaralidjinyin. Mura bidji mulanggaridjindjula.
Naraganawaliyiri yarabindjula.

Hello. This country is Ngunnawal (ancestral/spiritual)
homeland. We all always respect elders, male and female,
as well as Ngunnawal country itself. They always keep the
pathways of their ancestors alive. They walk together as
one.

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as Canberra's first
inhabitants and Traditional Custodians. We recognise the
special relationship and connection that Ngunnawal
people have with this Country.

Prior to the displacement of Ngunnawal people from their
land, they were a thriving people whose life and culture
was connected unequivocally to this land in a way that
only they understand and know and is core to their
physical and spiritual being. The segregation of the Ngunnawal people from Culture and Country has had long-
lasting, profound, and ongoing health and well-being effects on their life, cultural practices, families, and
continuation of their law/lore.

We acknowledge the historic interruption of the Ngunnawal people of Canberra and their surrounding regions.
We recognise the significant contribution the Ngunnawal people have played in caring for Country. For time
immemorial they have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual, and
economic connection to these lands and waters.



SECTION 76, NORTH WATSON

Section 76 in north Watson, between Aspinall Street and the Federal Highway, has been identified for housing and a park
to retain habitat for wildlife, community amenity, and cooling with a changing climate.

We asked your views on:

- the draft Place Plan and Development Concept to guide future development of the site,
- the proposed public neighbourhood park, and
- walking and cycling connections to the site.

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THE CONVERSATION

The ACT Government held a conversation online and face-to-face with stakeholders and residents to consult on the draft Place Plan and Development Concept concurrently with proposed land-use changes through draft variation to the Territory Plan number 361 for the Watson block from **1 February 2021 to 19 March 2021**.

Two surveys and a mapping tool on the project's YourSay webpage captured feedback on different parts of the plan for Section 76. These were supported by a letterbox drop in north Watson, signage, posters, and social media advertising, two pop-up information stalls, a talk, a workshop, and a live online presentation where the audience could ask the project team questions.

WHO ENGAGED

We engaged with community organisations, individual residents, and schools in the inner north of Canberra, targeting those in Watson in particular. We are also:

- briefed the Watson Community Association and North Canberra Community Council on the consultation process;
- involved Co-housing Canberra, a Demonstration Housing Project proponent seeking to build on the site, in our two pop-up information stalls to expand our engagement with the community;
- worked with the Watson Arts Centre / Canberra Potters to run a “make your own Superb Parrot” event to draw attention to plans for the site;
- consulted with the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee to discuss plans for the site;
- contacted the two major schools in Watson - Majura Primary and Rosary Primary – to seek their students' input into what the proposed neighbourhood park should look like; and
- engaged with Living Streets Association to gain their input on the proposed plan. The Living Streets Association provided a submission outside of the formal consultation process.

Three quarters of the YourSay respondents to the Place Plan survey lived in Watson and one in five worked in the area. Nine out of ten respondents lived either in Watson or a nearby suburb (Downer, Dickson, Hackett, Ainslie, Braddon, Lyneham, O'Connor, or Turner).

Parents engaged with the park survey. Three quarters of those who took the park survey were aged 26 to 55, and half of all park survey respondents lived with children. We held one of our pop-up information stalls at the Watson shops at school pick-up time, capturing contributions directly from school children and their families on what they wanted to see in the proposed neighbourhood park.



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Key insights from the community

THE DEVELOPMENT

Section 76 will accommodate up to 200 new homes, including a Demonstration Housing project. The community provided feedback on what they thought of the draft Place Plan and Development Concept that will guide this development. Their responses to the Place Plan survey are grouped into five categories below. The end of this Listening Report outlines how community responses during community consultation have been responded to in the Place Plan and Development Concept.

Green space

Respondents told us they highly valued treed, green spaces and streets, nature, wildlife and their connections to the bush. This was reflected in the design themes (leafy suburb) and the principle (green and active) which were identified as most important. Specifically, respondents wanted to see mature trees retained, streets with canopy cover, native tree plantings, and housing integrated with the existing natural environment.

There was strong support for retaining habitat for the Superb Parrot as well as the trees along Aspinall Street, as a visual buffer to the new housing planned for Section 76. While some respondents wanted the entire block retained as is, others were open to sensitive, sustainable development if most of the trees could be retained and new plantings added to support local wildlife. There were also suggestions to replace all non-native species with native species for food for wildlife. The Ngannawal Plant Use Guide was suggested.

Densification

Many residents expressed support for Watson's low-to medium-density character and some raised concerns about the proposed new development impacts on existing infrastructure. Some respondents identified the single road in and out of the block onto Aspinall Street as a potential bottleneck for traffic and hazard to cyclists and pedestrians. They asked that the plan show access into the block from the Federal Highway and/or upgrade of Aspinall Street to accommodate the extra traffic. Suggestions for upgrades included the addition of bus bays to improve traffic flows or building off-road shared paths for cyclists and pedestrians on Aspinall Street. Other comments focused on the need for the new housing on the site to provide adequate parking for residents and guests, to avoid adding to on-street parking pressures.

Plans for housing on the site also prompted comments about the need for upgrading community infrastructure in broader Watson, or new facilities on Section 76 itself, to manage the cumulative impact of population growth in the suburb. Many of these comments focused on pressures on local schools and shops, with some respondents proposing new community meeting places, shops, cafes or other facilities on Section 76.

Some residents asked that the proposed housing of up to four storeys be located next to the Federal Highway, with only those buildings up to two to three storeys being allowed to front onto Aspinall Street, to reduce the development's visual impacts.

Design and aesthetics

Respondents asked that any new housing on Section 76 be designed sensitively to enhance the character of the streetscape. They noted the rapid growth of "new" Watson (North Watson) and pointed to differences in the design quality and aesthetics of various developments. Respondents asked that housing on Section 76 not overshadow nearby homes or overlook private spaces and instead be set in and softened by greenery. One respondent cited concerns about a wall of "visually depressing black cladding and flat faced buildings and almost non-existent landscaping".

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Environmentally sustainable

Support was expressed for more environmentally sustainable, energy-efficient, climate-resilient development in north Watson. Of the design themes and principles proposed for Section 76, “sustainable living” and “sustainable and resilient” were nominated a second most important within their respective categories.

Some respondents called for innovation such as community solar, green roofs or smart technology for composting and recycling or proposed minimum standards such as making water tanks or solar panels compulsory for homes on the site. Other residents asked that a ban on cats be applied to people buying into or living in the new homes on Section 76 to help protect local wildlife.

Inclusive and diverse

Some residents asked that the development of Section 76 be used to increase the diversity and inclusiveness of the suburb. Comments were made on the need for more affordable housing to accommodate groups such as young people, first home buyers and retirees, alongside homes that prioritised marginalised communities. There was also interest in the Demonstration Housing co-housing project earmarked for part of the block, with some support offered online and at the pop-up events for more innovation and choice in housing.

Engagement with the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country committee asked that the Ngunnawal acknowledgment to country be included in all ACT Government documents relating to development of the site and on-site signage to acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians. The committee considered this very important, noting that each time a development occurs on Ngunnawal country it affects the spiritual connection to the land and its Traditional ancestors and peoples. The consideration of naming developments and buildings with Ngunnawal names was also raised as an opportunity in acknowledging Ngunnawal connection to Country.

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THE PARK

Plans for Section 76 includes one hectare set aside for a proposed new neighbourhood park. Residents were asked what they would like to see in the park, via a YourSay survey and face-to-face engagements.

Respondents expected to make multiple uses of the park, with relaxing (58%), socialising (56%), exercising (53%) and playing (49%) all rating highly among responses received. A lesser, but still significant, number (34%) also planned to walk their dog there.

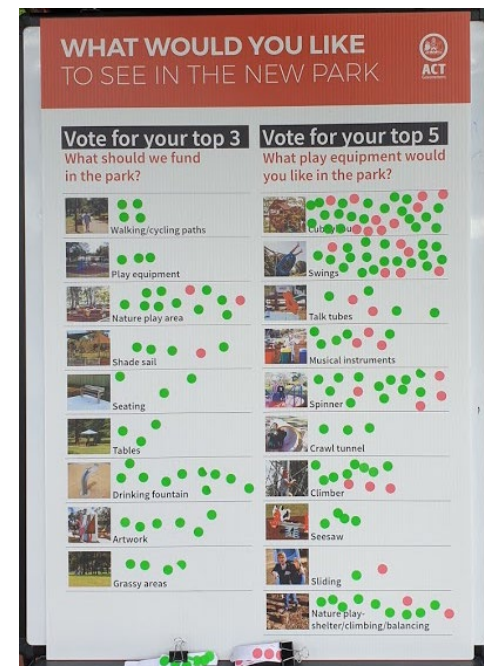
Overall, they ranked nature play area, grassy areas, walking and cycling paths, play equipment and seating as their priorities for the new neighbourhood park. Of the formal play equipment options listed, online survey respondents (almost exclusively adults, most with children) nominated swings, climbers and slides as their preferred choices. The favourites among school children who voted at the Watson shop pop-up were cubbyhouses, swings and spinners.

Most respondents wanted to see the park with muted and natural colours (62%), with natural materials such as wood and stone strongly preferred (49%) over manmade ones (3%), although a mix of the two was acceptable to many (42%).

When asked for their own ideas on the park, the strongest theme was the need to retain existing trees and plant new ones for wildlife habitat, shade and amenity. Some respondents explicitly wanted the block retained as it is or rezoned as a nature reserve, without a park or housing. Out of 98 contributions there were 45 contributions that offered their own ideas for new park infrastructure. These suggestions included outdoor gym equipment, sports facilities (basketball, rock climbing/bouldering and skating areas), playground equipment, toilets and/or BBQs.

There was also support for nature play areas, frog ponds, nest boxes and other shelter for wildlife, as well as maintained grassy areas with seating. One proposed the park embrace Ngunnawal or Aboriginal reconciliation themes and another that the park showcase local flora and fauna.

Three respondents identified the need for a dog park and dog waste bins on the block. However, two others wanted it to be dog-free zone.



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WALKING AND CYCLING CONNECTIONS

The strongest themes to emerge were calls for:

- safer, easier access along the Aspinall Street side of the block for pedestrians and cyclists. Respondents suggested extending and upgrading the existing footpath or developing a new shared off-road route along Aspinall Street to separate pedestrians and cyclists from car and bus traffic along this route. One respondent also identified the need to address drainage issues in and around the block along Aspinall Street to reduce hazards to cyclists during wet weather.
- new, direct walking/cycling connections across the block from Aspinall St to the Federal Highway.
- the Northbourne Ave off-road cycle path to be extended along the Federal Highway side of the block and beyond, to Zelling Street and Antill Street.
- A further connection along Zelling St to Aspinall St was also proposed.

One respondent proposed a path around the entire boundary of the site, while another asked for better walking and cycling connections from the block through developments such as Norrebro through to Roma Mitchell Crescent footpaths. Others used the mapping tool to identify improvements to walking and cycling connections in other parts of Watson or the inner north.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Your views have been used to finalise the Place Plan and Development Concept that provides a concept for the new neighbourhood park and guide future development.

Your views will also be considered when finalising variation number 372 to the Territory Plan that had proposed land-use zoning changes on Section 76.

The Place Plan and Development Concept and Territory Plan variation, once finalised, will not approve any specific development. Future development proposals will still need to go through the development application process, which provides further opportunities for community comment.

You can keep up to date with the project at: yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/northwatson

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Key Timings

Step 1 – 1 February 2021 – 19 March 2021

Community consultation on the draft Place Plan and Development Concept and the draft Territory Plan Variation for the site.

Step 2 – Mid-2021

Final Place Plan and Development Concept and Listening Report released.

Step 3 - Late 2021 or Mid 2022 (depending on when DV372 is finalised)

Consultation report on draft Territory Plan Variation to be released.

Step 4 – Late 2022 or Mid 2022

Territory Plan Variation no 372 commences, if approved.

Step 5 – Future

To keep up to date about the project please go to:

<https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/northwatson#:~:text=The%20ACT's%20urban%20renewal%20program,150%2D200%20new%20dwellings>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

3,376

We reached 3,376 people
via YourSay

337

We received 337
contributions via YourSay

45

We received 45 written
submissions on the draft
Territory Plan Variation

16,159

We reached a social media
audience of **16,159**

1200+

We distributed letters to
more than 1200 households
in north Watson

5

We held 5 live events during
the consultation: 1 online
presentation, 2 pop-up
stalls, 1 talk and 1 workshop.

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HOW THE KEY THEMES WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN RESPONDED TO IN THE FINAL PLACE PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT FOR SECTION 76 WATSON

The following table details the five key themes that emerged during the community consultation process for the draft Place Plan and Development Concept (PPDC) for Watson Section 76 and how the final PPDC responds to these themes. The key themes identified by the community relate to green space, densification, design & aesthetics, environmentally sustainable, and inclusive & diverse. These themes have been considered and addressed in the final PPDC which will guide the future development of Section 76 Watson.

Key Themes	How the PPDC has responded
Green Space	
<p>The community supports the maintenance and expansion of green spaces within the site. This includes the retention of mature trees, the expansion of canopy coverage within streets, increasing native tree/and or exotic plantings and integrating new housing developments with the surrounding natural environment.</p> <p>There is also strong support for the retention of habitat trees for the vulnerable Superb Parrot on the western edge of the site. There were calls to retain trees along Aspinall Street and the eastern boundary as a visual buffer for new housing and cooling for a changing climate.</p>	<p>The place vision, which provides the blueprint for the development's function and character, outlines the retention of trees and vegetation, embedding housing within a landscaped setting and retaining the sanctuary for the vulnerable Superb Parrot and other wildlife.</p> <p>The place theme 'Leafy Suburb' reflects the community's valuing of treed streets, green spaces, wildlife and maintaining a strong connection to the bush. The 'Green and Active' design principle indicated that retaining important trees and habitat should be a design priority. The 'Sustainable and Resilient' design principle outlines that spaces should be designed with an intention to support large canopy trees and edible gardens.</p> <p>The PPDC makes reference to the book <i>Ngunnawal Plant Use - a traditional Aboriginal plant use guide for the ACT region</i> that support wildlife including the Superb Parrot.</p> <p>The Zoning and Development Plan shows Superb Parrot foraging habitat along the western edge of the block being retained. Additionally, trees are shown as retained along Aspinall Street to the south and the eastern edge of the block. The park concept shows new tree and understorey plantings.</p> <p>The Zoning and Development Plan also highlights the Government's commitment to maintain or exceed 30% of tree coverage across an area alongside the provision of a one-hectare public neighbourhood park.</p>

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Densification	
<p>Community members have expressed support for a low-to-medium density residential character for Section 76.</p> <p>Concerns were raised over potential impacts on existing infrastructure such as increased traffic congestion and additional pressure being placed on local services such as shops and schools due to population growth.</p> <p>Aspinall Street was identified as a site for potential traffic congestion as it is the only proposed vehicle access to Section 76 Watson. Community members requested that the Place Plan and Development Concept consider upgrading Aspinall Street and/or expanding access into the Block from the Federal Highway.</p> <p>Suggestions were made to install bus bays or construct off-road shared paths for cyclists and pedestrians on Aspinall to ensure that traffic flows would not be impeded.</p> <p>There was support for up to 3 storeys and some support for 4 storeys closer to the Federal Highway.</p>	<p>The design principle 'Accessible and Compact' responds by specifying that housing on the site should be low-density though mixed with compact housing to provide a variety of housing options.</p> <p>This design principle addresses the need to improve connectivity between Section 76 and surrounding infrastructure and amenities. It proposes new walking and cycling paths along the Federal Highway, Aspinall Street, Zelling Street and Antill Street to enable greater connection. The Design Concept also identifies the future Norrebro development adjacent to Section 76, which has proposed the construction of childcare, café, and local shop facilities.</p> <p>A planning report and associated studies relating to the impacts of new housing on existing infrastructure was also undertaken prior to the PPDC. The planning report was made available on the projects YourSay page during the consultation on the draft PPDC and provides more information about the potential impacts of new housing.</p> <p>The document <u>How we have addressed key community concerns through the draft Place Plan and Development Concept and the draft variation to the Territory Plan number 372 for Section 76 Watson</u> is available on the project YourSay site and advises there is insufficient space for new bus bays along Aspinall Street. This is due to impacts on existing trees, and a new walking and cycling path to the south of Section 76.</p> <p>Four storeys have been provided along Aspinall Street to provide opportunities for more housing closer to public transport and future commercial services at the Norrebro. The building height limit will also provide flexibility to the design of demonstration housing, such as reducing their building footprint and allowing for more shared green space. A two-storey limit, closer to the Federal Highway is due to the planning provisions in the National Capital Plan which govern any development within 160 metres of the Federal Highway.</p>

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Design and Aesthetics	
<p>Residents requested any new housing be designed sensitively to enhance the character of the existing streetscape.</p> <p>There were community requests for housing to not overshadow existing homes or overlook existing private space. Suggestions were made to ensure the new development be buffered by greenery.</p>	<p>This theme has been incorporated into the place vision, outlining the need for integrated residential developments that are situated within a landscaped setting.</p> <p>The design principle 'Accessible and Compact' responds to this by detailing that housing should be designed using small blocks with minimum setbacks and the use of laneways. It continues to propose dwellings should be oriented around open green spaces.</p> <p>The 'Green and Active' design principle stipulates the need to blend the bush and nature reserves with the urban character and embed the built infrastructure with the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>The retention of trees along the boundary as shown in the Zoning and Development Plan will provide a visual buffer for existing and new residents.</p> <p>The opportunities and constraints map in the PPDC show where there are opportunities for views to Mount Majura and the Brindabellas.</p> <p>The concept for the park provides for natural and muted colours that were selected by most of the community as something they would like to see in the new park.</p>
Environmentally Sustainable	
<p>The community has expressed support for environmentally sustainable, energy-efficient, climate-resilient development in North Watson.</p> <p>The community has suggested implementing innovations such as community solar, green roofs or smart technology for composting and recycling or proposed minimum standards such as making water tanks or solar panels.</p> <p>There was also a request for a ban on cats to be applied to people buying into or living in the new homes on Section 76.</p>	<p>The place theme 'Sustainable Living' explicitly names of suggestions provided by the community i.e., the suite of technological innovations and the cat ban.</p> <p>Additionally, the design principle 'Sustainable and Resilient' responds by proposing the provision of common sharing facilities such as communal laundries and common spaces for food production including native foods. It also considers the need for trees, irrigated spaces, permeable surfaces to address the urban heat island effect.</p> <p>The design principle 'Resilient Neighbourhood' responds to community input for climate-resilient development. It proposes development should be designed to be resilient to economic, environmental, and social shocks and stresses. This includes damaging weather-related events</p>

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	<p>posed by climate change.</p> <p>The PPDC does not specifically address cat containment. However, there are new provisions for cat containment in the ACT Government's Cat Plan 2021-2031, including cat containment after 1 July 2022 for all new cats acquired after this date.</p>
Inclusive and Diverse	
<p>The community raised that there are opportunities within the development of Section 76 to foster inclusiveness and diversity within the Watson community.</p> <p>There was support for expanding affordable housing to support groups such as retirees, young people and first-home buyers as well as provide homes that prioritised marginalised communities.</p> <p>The Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee provided input on opportunities to acknowledge and pay respects to the Traditional Custodians of the ACT within the proposed development. Suggestions were made to create on-site signage and to name buildings with Ngunnawal names and to include Acknowledgment to Country in all documents for the site.</p>	<p>The place vision encapsulates this theme with the need to provide a variety of housing types alongside acknowledging Ngunnawal history and meaning within the design.</p> <p>The place theme 'Strong Sense of Community' recognises the importance in providing a safe and inclusive suburb where every member feels valued and comfortable within the neighbourhood. The place theme continues to acknowledge the role of the urban form in accommodating a diversity of ages, abilities, and backgrounds.</p> <p>The place theme 'Inclusivity' reinforces the need to provide a variety of housing options to support different demographics. It also mentions that principles of 'universal design' will be applied within the development. This refers to a human-centred design approach where all designs are to be accessible, understood and used by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.</p> <p>The design principle 'Safe and Inclusive' comments on the need to consider affordable housing to support a diverse and changing population. Public and shared spaces are identified as key to fostering greater community connection and therefore inclusiveness.</p> <p>The design principle 'Safe and Inclusive' acknowledges the importance of all cultural heritage objects discovered during site assessments to be protected and integrated within the development. The Zoning and Development Plan shows the opportunity for future place names to use Ngunnawal names as discussed in consultation with the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee.</p> <p>Opportunities to encourage cultural awareness have</p>



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	been embedded in the Zoning and Development Concept for the local neighbourhood park with both the playground and landscaping recommended to provide education on native plants, Ngunnawal stories and language.
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