

Nathan, Salisbury, Moorooka Neighbourhood Plan draft strategy

Feedback and Recommendations Submission [extract]

26 July 2021

The following items represent a series of matters that I believe are critical to achieving the proposed outcomes, but have been either completely omitted or are in conflict with other aspects of the overarching planning guidelines and outcomes.

The draft plan at present lists a lot of visionary ideas, but is very weak on substantial strategies on how these outcomes are to be achieved. A reliance on the current wider Brisbane region planning guidelines is unlikely to deliver on these, and in general it is in direct conflict with the outcomes proposed in the draft plan.

Unless this is properly considered and tangible strategies incorporated, the plan is likely to fall well short on delivering the promised and proposed outcomes. In addition we are faced with significant environmental and climatic changes due to global warming, and for the sake of social, political and economic stability it is essential that communities are planned with inherent resilience to deal with the forecast risks and threats. Here we have such an opportunity, and we must make the most of it.

I believe that the following items are critical inclusions that are essential to the successful delivery of the outcomes presented in this draft plan.

1. **Immediate stop on split blocks** (resulting in narrow 400m²): A cumulatively significant percentage of no-mans-land results from poor planning guidelines to suit these shape and size blocks. This is unusable land and contributes to tree-canopy/shade/wildlife habitat loss, contributes to heat islands, and also limits (or often completely obliterates) kerbside parking as distances between adjacent driveways becomes too small. This has a significant impact on social interaction within the suburb as guests (in particular elderly or non-ambulant) are unable to park near the house they are visiting. Smaller "spots" of higher density (townhouses, low rise multi-res) offer a solution that overcomes this and also makes it viable to protect the existing larger lot urban fabric and all its qualitative attributes. Of course such higher density also needs to be subjected to strict urban fabric and urban ecosystem integration that is currently absent from the plan.

Small blocks -if allowed to continue- must be subject to different planning rules than conventional blocks including:

1. **Site cover limits** incl. hard surfaces, incentives for permeable driveway treatments.
2. Requirement/incentives for **green roof/roof gardens and large canopy vegetation.** (more in items 3 and 5)
3. Requirement for **roof forms that facilitate solar PV** (make that a requirement too, see item 6.)
4. Future-proof construction that can provide safety in heat-waves and severe weather events incl. hail, 200mm/h rain events and 300km/h wind events. Given that these are all forecast for this region within the next decade, a failure to implement genuine strategies that effectively deal with this would be negligent.
5. Encourage and extend the use of **zero-lot-lining for small blocks** in order to provide a wider range of land-use design solutions and avoid **no-mans-land outcomes.**

6. **No-mans-land rule:** a complete ban on external spaces between adjacent buildings that are unusable, ie. too long and narrow (as a rough suggestion: less than 1.5m for more than 5m in length, but proper research required), and any space less than 750mm between adjacent properties. Zero-lot lining should be mandatory in such instances. (Currently we are seeing many instances already built of land strips 300mm and less wide for near entire site depths that are vermin, weed and wind-driven rubbish collector that nobody can access to service/use/maintain).
 7. Limitation of the prevalent "for-builder-convenience" **cut and fill, retaining walls and site benching**. This inevitably results in poor design outcomes, and contributes negatively to storm-water management and run-off.
2. **A mandate for natural habitat regeneration and urban tree-canopy protection within the suburb.** Near future forecast climatic conditions (heat) will make this not a matter of comfort but life-and-death. Canopy loss results in native wildlife loss, drastically worsens the effect of heat islands, and is well documented to impact emotional and physical wellbeing of residents. This degradation has become both highly visible and, due to inadequate control mechanisms and good design incentives, is propagating through the area rapidly.
- Small blocks have already decimated large canopy vegetation and street trees in the suburb, increased hard surface cover, altered hydrology through poorly managed statutory approvals and cut/fill. As a result we have seen a proliferation of poorly designed dwellings, and this is negatively impacting the % of our urban landscape that is "left over" for nature. If the goals of quality of life outlined in the draft plan are to be achieved, this is a fundamentally necessary requirement. An urban ecosystem that is good for all forms of life in general is also good for its human inhabitants, and the plan needs to go beyond paying lip service to this in its vision statement, and have a set of clear legislative mechanisms that ensure this is achieved. Current draft omits all references in this regard.
3. **Safe travel:** a segregated journey from Salisbury train station to Griffith Uni Campus/Nathan side of Orange Grove Road is urgently needed for pedestrians and bikes. Currently this road has limited dangerous pedestrian crossings with frequent accidents involving pedestrians, and isolates Toohey Forest/Nathan precinct from the suburb and train networks. A flyover bike/pedestrian bridge extension to the proposed Lillian Avenue "travel axis" would solve this problem and overcome the brutal (and sometimes lethal) separation caused by this busy road. similar situations and potential also exist in the other precincts within this plan.
 4. Clear height limits, open space, deep planting, ecosystem regeneration, hard surface limits and other key good-design incentives and design guidelines that are **not negotiable by developers** via alternative solutions, relaxations and "impact studies". As a professional Architect I believe that the proposed 3, 5 and 8 storey zones in general present a reasonable height for these precincts as proposed, as they allow higher densities and simultaneously enable healthy protection and enhancement of the urban fabric, and above all provide an offset against the current increase of density by splitting blocks as per my earlier points. It is however **imperative that these are governed by a clear and well considered set of location-specific design guidelines** (the draft has no mention of these and simply lumps

these under the wider Brisbane planning rules -which are in themselves a significant source of the problems we are here endeavouring to solve)

5. Community solar grid infrastructure and **net zero-carbon strategic plan:** a requirement for all new dwellings to be designed to host reasonable solar PV systems, and the necessary network infrastructure provisions to enable a community solar initiative to operate. As part of the overall strategy the following should also be considered:
 1. All new dwellings to be fitted with EV car charging points.
 2. Phase-out of piped LPG/Natural Gas use and subsequent de-commissioning of this infrastructure.
 3. Long term plan to make local areas grid-independent to provide greater natural-even resilience.

I believe that omitting any of these will result in a considerable diminishment of many of the outcomes aspired for in this plan, and some would be outright unachievable.

I look forward to seeing these critical components manifest unambiguously, in tangible and substantial form in the next iteration of this plan.

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