



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR MYHOME IN CANBERRA

Abstract

This is a community engagement strategy for the proposed development of MyHome units and shared facilities on a site in Curtin, ACT. The strategy was developed in collaboration between the MyHome committee and KB West Advisory in late 2020.

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1. Background

MyHome in Canberra is a not-for-profit association, formed in 2014 through community initiative and subsequently incorporated. Our aim is to provide people who have enduring mental illnesses with affordable homes that are more safe and supportive than in normal housing.

The land on Block 1 Section 15 (the vacant block on the corner of Theodore and Carruthers Streets) is currently being considered as the site for MyHome. This is subject to approval by the current leaseholder, the Uniting Church, and the ACT Government.

The Master Plan for the Curtin Group Centre, published in November 2018, highlights this block as one of three in the centre of Curtin with potential for redevelopment. The Master Plan suggests the block should be developed for community uses, in line with the land-use zoning in the Territory Plan, mentioning both supportive housing and affordable housing.

The 2020 ALP-Greens Parliamentary & Governing Agreement states on page 8:

More and better Housing Options for all Canberrans

1. The ACT Labor and Greens Government will improve social housing and housing affordability over the next four years as part of the roadmap for increased supply of affordable housing that is outlined in the ACT Housing Strategy, which includes:

i. Working with the land owners and community organisations to deliver the MyHome proposal in Curtin.

As part of our engagement with the community, the MyHome Board wishes to pursue the proposal as a development on the block which people in Curtin want, especially that the proposal is complementary to the existing housing configuration and the development itself engaged closely with community. This supports the idea of engagement in four stages, the first to undertake a co-design workshop, second to seek advice from key leaders on the process of consultation, third to engage in a formal Board process, and fourth to support an ACT Government process.

2. Engagement Theory

It is useful to start by considering the theory of community engagement, which will help form a view about what community engagement should mean for this project, and what it does not. This also helps with how community engagement is communicated.

For this project, the ACT Government and the Uniting Church are the ultimate decision makers and while the Board can endeavour to accommodate the best suggestions from stakeholders and the public, we also need to be clear that we must operate within planning requirements, available resources, and within the existing land envelope. In addition, in terms of operational procedures, the Board would likely take the role of oversight, with a selected service provider directly responsible for managing the complex.

The IAP2 Federation has developed a Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process¹. This diagram is represented overleaf. For this project, we might be

¹ <https://www.iap2.org.au/resources/spectrum/>

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contained in “inform”, “consult” and “involve” domains rather than the “collaborate” and “empower” domains.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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3. Engagement objectives

The objectives of the community engagement strategy for the Curtin MyHome project are proposed to be to:

1. *Seek advice* on and confirm the process and risks of consultation from key leaders;
2. *Inform* the community about the project, providing balanced and objective information – such as options for development of the block, impacts on surrounding streets and positive stimulus to shopping precinct.
3. *Consult* the community about the project, seeking feedback about concerns and aspirations. This will include reassurance on concerns if raised around tranquillity and property values.
4. *Involve* the community to address where possible any concerns and meeting aspirations.

Additional objectives are also to:

5. *Seek endorsements* from influential local leaders (or at least non objection).
6. *Fund-raising and securing financial commitments* from businesses and donors. This would follow after objective 4.

4. Project governance and resources

The MyHome Board is the governing authority for the MyHome project, and the Board is to approve:

- This community engagement strategy, including its objectives, methods/strategies, and timeframes;
- Text used in leaflets/on-line/talks; and
- Material to prepare for response to comments.

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Day to day communications and responses may be approved by the Chair of the Board.

This communication engagement strategy can use the skills and contacts of members of the Board, including

- Members who live locally or belong to organisations that are part of Curtin;
- Members who have connections with decision-makers in the ACT Government and the Uniting Church;
- Members with connections with other services or churches.

5. Community engagement to date

It is also useful to consider what community engagement has occurred to date, and identify learnings from these activities.

Community engagement to date	Lessons learnt
Letterbox drop in neighbouring houses (in Martin Street and Parker Street), which occurred in 2016.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Important to ensure the engagement is timed appropriately.• Consider potential objections in advance and potential responses
Talks/ presentations to the Curtin Residents Association and to the Curtin Community Panel established as part of the development of the Curtin Master Plan in recent years (2017, 2018, 2021).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Important to continue liaison with these influential groups.• Make sure that both leadership and members are engaged.
Fundraising events at Catholic Church Hall & in St James Hall (e.g. wine tasting).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes effort to organise logistics• A useful way to raise publicity and awareness.• A good media opportunity.
Engagement with other churches in Curtin & in Woden	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Useful to seek a broad consensus with different churches in Curtin and neighbouring suburbs.

6. Engagement method

The New South Wales Government released a useful method outline for community engagement that could be used for this project², as set out overleaf.

² Page 42 of the *Integrated Planning and Reporting Manual for local government in NSW* (text adapted) <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/Integrated-Planning-and-Reporting-Manual-March-2013.pdf#page=37>

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Activity	Detail
Scoping	What is the purpose of the engagement process? What are the 'deliverables'? What are the principles underpinning the process? What timeframes apply? What financial and human resources are available, and what are the opportunities for resource sharing?
Stakeholders	Who are the main stakeholder groups both within and outside the area? What other groups would have an interest in the process?
Methods	Compile a list of engagement methods that may be used e.g. workshops, media community forums, surveys, focus or drop-in groups, blogs, info kiosks.
Strategies	Which methods will be used to engage each of these groups? How will it tailor that method to suit the group? Are multiple methods required?
Implementation	Develop an implementation schedule to ensure the various activities are conducted within the timeframe. Allocate responsibilities and resources.
Review	How will the engagement be reviewed to assess its effectiveness both during and after its delivery? Are there opportunities to adjust the approach if it isn't working?

7. Stakeholders and Methods/Strategies

An analysis of stakeholders and methods/strategies is set out below. It is proposed that there would be four phases of consultation:

1. Co-Design workshop;
2. The pre-consultation phase;
3. Board consultation; and
4. ACT Government formal consultation.

NB: there will be some pre-consultation before and during the first phase, especially at Minister/official level.

Stakeholders	Methods/strategies
<p><i>1. Co-Design workshop</i></p> <p>The purpose is to co-design more specific features of the MyHome proposal, including the position on types of residents who will live there, how they are to be selected, and their responsibilities. Aim is to include service providers and people with lived experience, to assist the Board further develop its understanding and policy development.</p>	

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Stakeholders	Methods/strategies												
<p>2. <i>pre-consultation phase</i> – the objectives of this phase are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Seek advice on how to approach consultation in terms of who to talk to, what products we need for consultation, and feedback & comments on proposed approach and what potential concerns might be. b. Propose our thinking and seek feedback on types of residents who will live there and characteristics of the built form of the residence in particular, and what products we need to ensure before we undertake the second phase of engagement. <p>We also need to be prepared on a range of questions that might be asked of us. With this in mind, the products we need therefore before we undertake pre-consultation are set out below. The Board has already articulated some of these products as shown below, others will need to be created or developed.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Product</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Status</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Guiding principles and shared values that we are trying to achieve</td> <td>https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/about/guiding-principles/ https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/about/benefits-to-the-community/</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Position on types of residents who will live there, how they are to be selected, and their responsibilities;</td> <td>To be managed through a tenancy selection committee, based upon Home in Queanbeyan procedures.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sense of the built form of the accommodation;</td> <td>https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/about/how-myhome-in-canberra-will-work/</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Description of how the accommodation would be run and supports on-site;</td> <td>https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/about/how-myhome-in-canberra-will-work/</td> </tr> <tr> <td>An understanding of potential objections and how we might respond.</td> <td>Narrative developed.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>All products would be reviewed after pre-consultation phase is complete. Any meetings and discussions would preferably occur with two Board members present. Once project commitments are clearer, we should then go back to these contacts. We should ask them how they want to be kept informed. We should indicate that we won't undertake formal consultation & engagement until commitments are clearer.</p> <p>The list below is provided in suggested order of contact.</p>		Product	Status	Guiding principles and shared values that we are trying to achieve	https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/about/guiding-principles/ https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/about/benefits-to-the-community/	Position on types of residents who will live there, how they are to be selected, and their responsibilities;	To be managed through a tenancy selection committee, based upon Home in Queanbeyan procedures.	Sense of the built form of the accommodation;	https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/about/how-myhome-in-canberra-will-work/	Description of how the accommodation would be run and supports on-site;	https://myhomeincanberra.org.au/about/how-myhome-in-canberra-will-work/	An understanding of potential objections and how we might respond.	Narrative developed.
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An understanding of potential objections and how we might respond.	Narrative developed.												
Ministers/Shadow Ministers & Officials Chief Minister Andrew Barr Minister Yvette Berry (Housing) Minister Mick Gentleman (Planning and Land Management)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek informal & formal contacts. • Provide officials with documentation developed so far & seek feedback. 												

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Stakeholders	Methods/strategies
<p>Minister Rebecca Vassarotti (Homelessness) Minister Emma Davidson (Mental Health)</p> <p>Officials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT Housing • Mental Health Policy Unit <p>Leader of the Opposition Elizabeth Lee Shadow Minister Giulia Jones (Health) Shadow Minister Mark Parton (Housing)</p>	
<p>Local leads in Curtin</p> <p>Proposed that we talk to key identified local leads, on the basis of capacity to provide advice in a pre-consultation basis, rather than being representative of any sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk & seek feedback on proposed approach.
<p>Peak mental health groups</p> <p>Suggest that we start talking with at least some of these stakeholders drawn from groups below, we may wish to re-visit later</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Community Coalition • ACTCOSS • Carers ACT • ACT Mental Health Consumer Network • Shelter ACT • Havelock Housing • CHC Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek meetings & feedback on proposed approach
<p>Suggest we talk to other community/housing services, ask about their experience in engagement/consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbeyfield • Richmond Fellowship • L'Arche Genesaret • Woden Community Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek meetings & feedback on proposed approach
<p>3. Board consultation phase – the objective is to consult on the proposal, seek support or at least non-objection, and seek feedback and comments.</p> <p>In addition to products in pre-consultation phase, we also need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear in-principle commitments from ACT Government & Uniting Church • Expressions of support from key players; • Visual representation (perhaps artist impression) of what the built form might look like; • Pictures of HOME in Queanbeyan, to say it would look something like this and operate in the similar way; and • Website further updated, perhaps with social media. 	

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Stakeholders	Methods/strategies
<p>We should first go back to list in pre-consultation phase, to let them know we will start consultation. Any meetings and discussions would preferably occur with two Board members present.</p> <p>The list below is provided in suggested order of contact.</p>	
<p>Churches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Shepherd, Curtin • Holy Trinity, Curtin • Baptist Church, Hughes • Church of Christ, Lyons • Lutheran Church, Lyons • St James 	<p>Seek meeting with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev Guy Matthews • Monsignor John Woods • Pastor Duncan Becsi • lyonschurchofchrist.com • Pastor Tim Muller • Church Council <p>• Provide information, seek in-principle support & ask them to let us know of any feedback/concerns</p>
<p>Schools & pre-schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holy Trinity Primary • Curtin Primary • Curtin North Pre school <p>Child care centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email/letter from Board • Seek meetings principals in first instance. • Seek meetings with parent/community committees via principals.
Households in neighbouring streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox information at appropriate time • Invite person to person discussion, door to door
Businesses (managers/owners) in Curtin shopping precinct, including the Hotel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email/letter from Board • Seek meetings
<p>Other community/housing services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbeyfield • Richmond Fellowship • L'Arche Genesaret • Woden Community Services • Nursing home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek meetings & feedback on proposed approach
Shoppers at Curtin Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a stall to provide information.
Woden Community Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Fiona Carrick (President). • Potential presentation to Council meeting
Curtin Residents Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask to address AGM • Ask if information can be provided through its newsletter
Neighbourhood Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask if information can be provided through its newsletter
Curtin/Woden community in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media presence – such as Facebook

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Stakeholders	Methods/strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be ready for comments & how to respond, positive or negative
<p>4. ACT Government formal consultation – while this process would be run by the ACT Government, with its own processes and objectives, the Board can provide support to the process. This might include:</p> <p>Providing information and clarifying points on request; and Offering to meet with key stakeholders if that is helpful.</p>	

8. Risk analysis

A risk analysis is also useful, as it will help identify risks and how potentially to mitigate them as part of the process. Doing this analysis in advance will help inform the planning and implementation of the engagement process.

Risk	Risk rating – before mitigation	Mitigation	Risk rating – after mitigation
Concern about MyHome concept from some, perhaps related to stigma on mental health	Likelihood: High Effect: High	Seek to understand drivers and respond, enlist people with lived experience, appeal to shared values, enlist influential supporters	Likelihood: Medium Effect: Medium
The engagement process starts without adequate preparation or ability to provide responses to key questions or objections	Likelihood: High Effect: High	This plan. Quick responses to questions or objections.	Likelihood: Medium Effect: Medium
A question or objection being raised, for which an answer is not provided.	Likelihood: High Effect: High	Undertake detailed preparation. Establish FAQs. Undertake pre-consultation.	Likelihood: Medium Effect: Medium
A stakeholder is not consulted	Likelihood: Medium Effect: High	Explicit process of stakeholder identification Test list with key community leaders	Likelihood: Low Effect: Low
Engagement process raises expectations	Likelihood: Medium	Set engagement objectives clearly.	Likelihood: Low

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Risk	Risk rating – before mitigation	Mitigation	Risk rating – after mitigation
that cannot be delivered	Effect: High	Communicate clearly.	Effect: Low
Resources of the Board are not sufficient to undertake the engagement process sufficiently.	Likelihood: High Effect: High	Consider what Board resources are available. Tailor engagement to within Board resources	Likelihood: Medium Effect: Medium

9. Potential objections and management strategies

It is worth considering what the potential objections are in advance, and how they might be addressed. It will be important to respond calmly, factually and quickly.

Potential objection	Strategies
Key stakeholders wish to take project in a different directions	Be clear to Government and community about objectives and strategies to get us there. Engage with Minister early and keep in contact. Enlist influential supporters
Concern about living near people with mental health problems – visibility on street or in shopping precinct	Information/FAQs on management of the site. Information/FAQs on access to the site Person with lived experience to discuss or to be available. Draw on strategies to address stigma.
Concern about disruptions to tranquillity – e.g., from traffic, or loss of green vista	Information or discussion on the build
Concern about visitors to site, including if related to drugs	Information/FAQs on management of the site. Information/FAQs on access to the site
Uniting Church and community may have different concepts about the development of the block, and each object to the other	Continue to engage with the Uniting Church early, and get them involved early and throughout. Ensure that the Church is aware of site’s strategic location “at the entry into Curtin”, and that the block is prominent in the 2018 Curtin Master Plan.
Concern that building site and form may be ugly, may not fit in landscape	Information on build & design as fitting to landscape.
Concern about effect on property values	Information on other sites & effects