



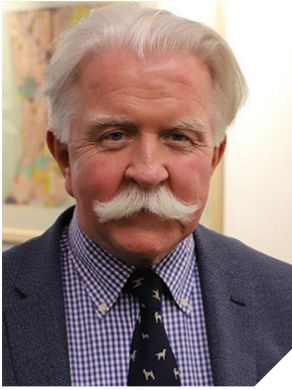
STATE PLANNING COMMISSION OVERVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD GROWTH & CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

In preparing for the release of phase 2 of the Planning and Design Code (the Code), the State Planning Commission is looking to address significant community concerns around heritage and character, residential development and design in the planning system. As such, the Commission is publishing a suite of materials, ahead of a People and Neighbourhood discussion paper, which not only articulate the issues but propose some solutions for transition into the Code.

By addressing these topics now, we want to provide you with a broad understanding of these key transitional concepts before the draft Code for regional South Australia is made available in mid-2019. Your input into these matters via two statutory consultation periods for phase 2 and 3 of the Code will assist the Commission in building better planning policy and delivering better outcomes for communities in the new planning system.

The Commission is cognisant of the inquiry into heritage by the Environment Resources and Development Committee of State Parliament and will consider the report's recommendations and any implications for the Code in transitioning national, state and local heritage items over the coming months.



MICHAEL LENNON
CHAIR, STATE PLANNING COMMISSION

We have come to understand that the world is not static at any one point of time. It changes, grows, adapts, circumstances emerge and adapt again. In this sense cities are also organisms. They rarely stand still.

In planning, our job together is to create the future that we want and not to be predetermined by other factors.

In South Australia and in metropolitan Adelaide we face several key challenges that will affect our living environments. This is not just the economy and the big questions of climate change or jobs. This is about our streets and neighbourhoods, and the way that we live.

One of these challenges is our demography.

It is a triumph of medical science that life expectancy has now added a significant number of years to the lives we all lead. What this means however is that the population of South Australia is aging. In fact we have the highest proportion of single person households and the highest proportion of people aged over 65 years of any mainland state.¹

This has serious implications for how many people we will have to house and what their living circumstances will be. We want people to be able to choose to spend the last years of their life in their own homes, or in suitable accommodation within their neighbourhood, close to established social networks.

We also know that our fertility rates are at all-time lows. Nationally, the average number of babies per woman is 1.76, and falling. In South Australia the average is 1.68 - the lowest rate in the country.²

These circumstances, together with a relatively low proportion of international (11,600) and interstate (-5,100) net migration for Adelaide³, is contributing to our relatively modest population growth rate.

Whilst this may vary because of international migration and immigration targets, in general we understand that these factors will lead to an aging population and a smaller number of people in each of our houses.

In addition, where we are choosing to live is changing very quickly. This is not driven by policy but by the

individual choices we, our friends and our children are making.

Until recently, the growth in Adelaide was largely driven by the outward expansion of the city, the so called 'fringe growth'. This has contributed to a linear metropolitan plain of almost 90kms for a population of just over a million people.

What has changed is an individual preference and market demand to live closer to the city with approximately 76 per cent of new housing growth occurring in our established suburbs⁴. This is a positive thing as it refreshes, changes and revitalises our streets and neighbourhoods, whilst giving us the chance to replenish and upgrade what we have.

Importantly however it also challenges the way that we live because smaller household sizes tend to have more diverse living options. The traditional house with a separate piece of land is progressively, as in almost every other western city, being replaced by more diverse housing forms – units, apartments, townhouses and the like.

This in turn raises other questions for us to deal with especially around the **quality of infill**.

It is very clear from all of our conversations there are significant community concerns around at least four areas:

- traffic on local streets,
- loss of vegetation and tree canopy,
- site coverage when existing buildings are replaced with more dense building forms, and
- overshadowing and the loss of privacy.

The Commission has also identified a number of challenges within the current SA Residential Code that has led to a dominance of double garages, a lack of landscaping, and low streetscape amenity across our suburbs.

We are proposing a range of solutions in the Code to improve residential infill such as a reduction in driveway set-backs and widths, deep soil provisions and the inclusion of design features in street-facing building facades.

1. Australian Bureau Statistics, 2016 Census
2. InDaily 'SA birth rate lowest in Australia' 17 December 2018
3. Australian Bureau Statistics, Drivers of Capital City Population Growth, 2017-2018
4. The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide, 2017 Update



Underneath all of this however is an emerging concern around the preservation of **heritage and character**.

In the new planning system we want to give every assurance that areas and places of state and local heritage significance will be preserved and will immediately be transferred into the new Code. As part of this transfer, historic conservation zones will move to local heritage areas, enabling groups of properties which together have heritage value to be afforded a level of protection.

In addition, we need to resolve what we mean by 'character' of an area – the associations which create distinct identities and allow us to forge personal relationships with an area.

In the past 20 years we have created a vast confusion over the status of 'Contributory Items' in the planning system - what it means for property owners, what it means for neighbours, and what it means for communities.

The Commission wants to clear this up and provide transparent, certain and widely understood ways in which these properties can be utilised in the future.

Two proposals are central to this. Firstly, we are going to open a process through which local authorities can nominate a Contributory Item for local heritage listing

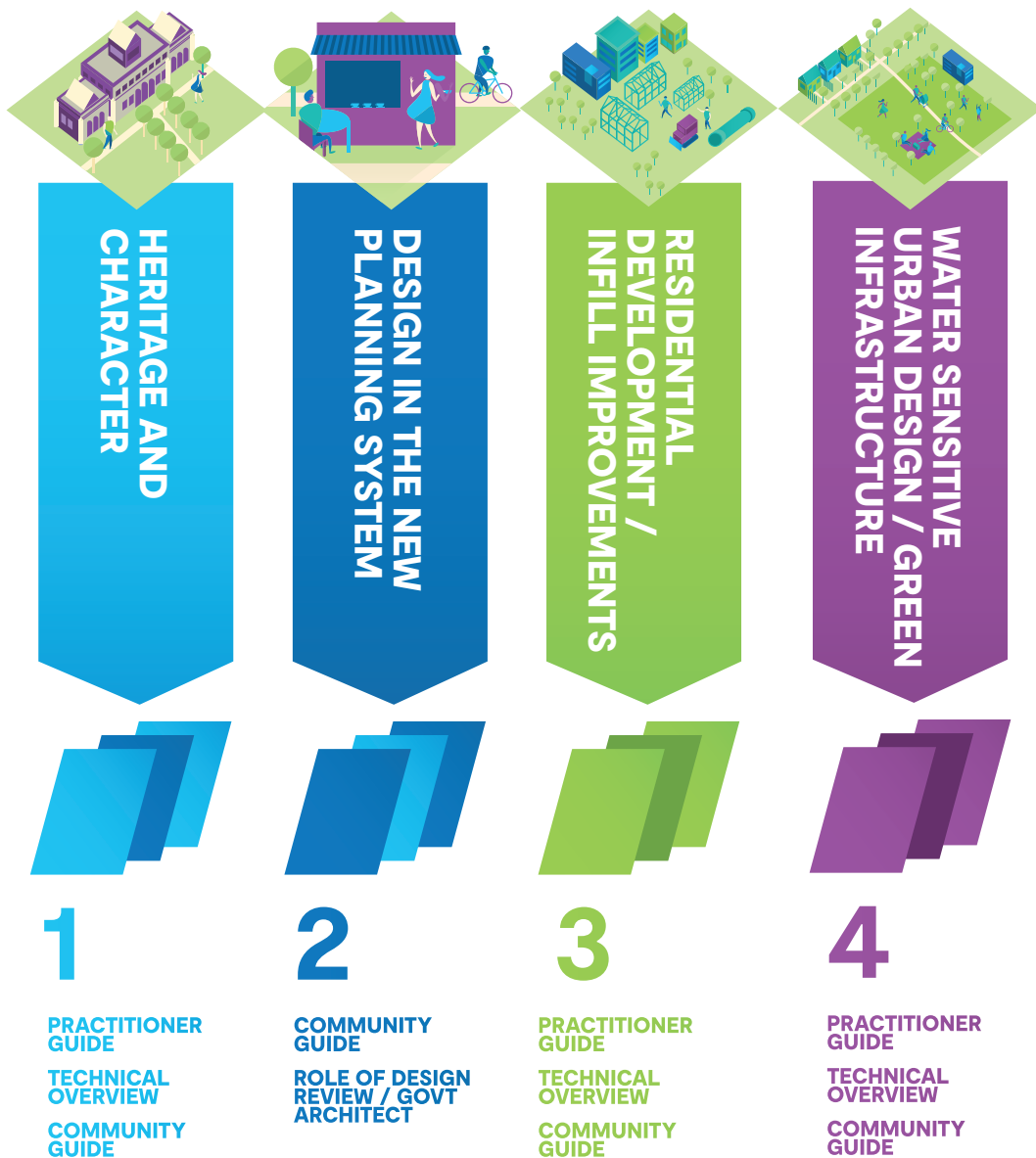
if they meet established criteria. Development Plan Amendments will be able to be progressed allowing those items to get local heritage protection.

Secondly, for items which are not about local heritage but are part of the broader character of a neighbourhood we need to better understand what it is that we are seeking to preserve or enhance. Is it about the materials used, is it about the built form, is it about heights and setbacks, or is it about the rhythm of the street?

Whatever it is, we must be clear that we are changing and adapting, and understand what we want to retain and where we can evolve and improve. But we need to be specific about what that is. It is not enough to choose on the basis of personal taste what should or should not be retained. By articulating this, we can then codify what we value and express it through policy in the Code.

In addition, the Commission wants to assert the importance of good design in replacement dwellings where this occurs. It causes me and the Commission deep concern where a view is expressed that an existing character cannot be improved upon by a new building. That implies a level of confidence in ourselves which is not acceptable. We can do better as a community and a society and we continually do.

This diagram illustrates the key topics and indicative materials the State Planning Commission is releasing in preparation for Phase 2 of the new Planning and Design Code.



Good design improves the way our buildings, streets and places work making them more sustainable, more accessible, safer and healthier. How people feel about their neighbourhood is directly related to the interface between private and public space. The inclusion of natural light and ventilation, building orientation to reduce heat, and access to open walkable spaces are essential in creating places in which communities can grow and prosper and are further outlined in the *Community Guide to Design in the Planning System*.

In this age of climate change, the Commission is also committed to the development and delivery of a contemporary suite of **water-sensitive urban design (WSUD)** and **green infrastructure (GI)** policies that can deliver better water conservation, improved storm-water management and increased tree canopy cover. We acknowledge the need for further discussion and research in this area and the need to codify these policies in the new planning system.



SO IN SUMMARY:

- Infill issues and streetscape impacts from challenges in the current residential code and zones will be identified and addressed in the new Code
- State and Local Heritage Areas and Places will be unquestionably preserved, with Historic Conservation Zones moved to Local Heritage Areas
- If a Contributory Item should be local heritage it will go through a Development Plan Amendment process
- For areas identifying character in our streets and neighbourhoods we will codify this and create overlays
- We will assert the importance of design into our thinking to a greater extent than previously possible
- Further research and consideration on WSUD and GI will occur as we transition to the new planning system.

In terms of opportunity for input, there are two remaining statutory consultation stages leading to the finalisation of the Code. People should be assured there is no threat of any change before those formal timeframes for the new Code are put in place.

Councils will be asked to review Contributory Items, to look at codification and the expression of character and how design can be elevated in the new system. Through these methods we are confident that South Australia's unique character through its streets, suburbs and neighbourhoods is not only preserved but built upon for future generations.

This is an opportunity to show how great not only our suburbs are but how they are going to be in the future.

Michael Lennon

Chair, State Planning Commission