

Opinion Editorial

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DEVELOPING GREAT PLACES TO LIVE IN SA

It's an unfortunate modern reality that the terms "density" and "development" are often regarded as dirty words.

Oddly, this is despite Adelaide boasting a clear, strong framework to deliver our future growth plans and also some excellent examples of how many people already share the city space to everyone's benefit.

There are some very important points to ponder when looking at how our city will grow up – rather than out - over time.

Targets in the State's 30-year-plan for Greater Adelaide are realistic assessments of how the city will grow and are in fact based on 80 per cent of existing suburbs remaining as they are today.

And in areas earmarked for growth, that growth is often modest, with fewer than five storeys around existing city sites.

There is also a clear direction that higher density must incorporate high quality shared open space.

The ambition of the 30-year-plan is indisputably right; how best to deliver larger densities around better transport corridors to provide for affordable, green and healthy living. It also recognises that we cannot afford to grow endlessly outwards.

Despite the successful pioneering developments in the East End and on the former Coopers site, a majority of South Australians are still cautious concerning high-density or even medium-density living.

State Government research shows half of us don't intend to leave the current house we're in within the next decade and a third of people don't like the notion of living too close to others.

Single dwelling living is always to going to be attractive where it is affordable and it is, in fact, one of the great attractions to South Australia.

But there is also room for higher-density developments, where young families can afford to live near suburbs where they grew up; where empty nesters can downsize and live a more urban, simpler lifestyle.

The challenge ahead of Government is to show these potential buyers, these renters and even the building industry itself how high quality, shared open space and apartment and unit design deliver great places to live.

Our first and biggest opportunity is in the Bowden Development, on the former Clipsal site.

Fronting the parklands, adjacent a tram and train line and near an entertainment precinct, Bowden can showcase a world-class public realm and attractive public transport. It is a great opportunity to change minds and attitudes and show what our innovative South Australian builders can do.

Former Thinker-in-Residence Fred Hansen says this kind of change in mindset only occurred gradually in Portland Oregon as they regrew their city.

But the change did occur and Mr Hansen firmly believes we have the opportunity to do the same here.

A third of people surveyed in the most recent research specific to perceptions around density were already attracted by the better public transport and another quarter attracted to better affordable housing.

The State Government wants South Australians to have great housing choices wherever they live and we'll continue to work towards more inner-city housing and successful transit developments while maintaining the heritage and advantages of our great suburbs.

The Residential Density (Liveable Communities) Market Perceptions report was undertaken as part of the Fred Hansen residency and is available at www.thinkers.sa.gov.au