

National Local Government Community Development Conference

March 20-23 2001

Case Study: Community Development Planning and the Eastern Horizons New Living Project, Perth WA

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is threefold:

- To describe the Community Development Plan prepared for the Eastern Horizons New Living Project in metropolitan Perth
- To identify the challenges and opportunities experienced in the preparation of the CDP
- To suggest ways in which community planning for public redevelopment projects can be improved.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2.1 The project

The Perth suburb of Midvale, and a section of adjacent Midland, is currently the subject of a major redevelopment project by the WA Ministry of Housing in association with the City of Swan. Under the management of Midland Project Management, the Eastern Horizons New Living Project commenced in 1999 and is expected to continue for several years.

In common with other areas of public housing identified for redevelopment under the Ministry of Housing's New Living Program, the Midvale/Midland area has experienced physical deterioration over a number of years and contains people with a significant degree of socio-economic disadvantage, including a large number of Aboriginal families.

The project is improving public housing, streets, parks and community facilities, and providing new housing for the public and private sectors. Beyond the physical changes, the Ministry of Housing and City of Swan recognise the need to address a wide range of community issues as part of the redevelopment process. As such, a community development process was commenced in 1999.

2.2 The project area

The project area is located adjacent to the metropolitan regional centre of Midland, covering the suburb of Midvale and some residential sections of Midland. The relevant local government authorities are the City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring (which has a few streets in the project area).

Midvale was established in 1948 as a public housing area. Midland is a long established 'working class' area that has developed as a major regional centre. Housing in the project area is approximately 1/3 private, 1/3 private rental and 1/3 Ministry of Housing.

The project area once contained a vibrant community with a range of community facilities. However, it has experienced the loss of major sources of employment over time, the ageing of its population, a high proportion of disadvantaged families moving into the area and the deterioration of housing stock.

The social and physical conditions have declined to the point where a redevelopment project was considered essential.

3. THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Community Development Plan prepared for the Eastern Horizons New Living Project was prepared to assist the local community, human services providers, the City of Swan and Midland Project Management to undertake a range of initiatives to bring about many positive changes to the living conditions and community spirit of people in the project area.

The CDP has three components:

- A community profile
- A community vision for the project area
- Strategies to achieve a range of community development objectives

Community consultation was an important component in the formulation of the Community Development Plan. The community was consulted to identify:

- Current issues
- Current community needs
- Goals/ a vision for the future
- Strategies (what should be done and how the community can be involved)

3.1 The Community Profile

The profile provides information about the population of the redevelopment area and the community services and facilities currently located within that area.

The profile:

- Provides information to inform and guide the community consultation process for the Community Development Plan
- Provides baseline information for any future monitoring of the progress of the New Living Project and any future evaluation of the project's effects on the population and social infrastructure
- Informs relevant stakeholders

The profile is particularly important as it paints a picture of the population of the Midland/Midvale project area before the New Living Project dramatically transforms the area both demographically and socially over the next 2-3 years.

The project area population is considerably socially and economically disadvantaged in relation to the populations of the City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring and the Perth metropolitan area. A number of factors (historical and current) are responsible for this situation. The 1996 population for the project area was 3986.

Relative to the local government areas of Swan and Mundaring and the Perth metropolitan area, the project area is characterised by high proportions of:

- Seniors (14% of population)
- Indigenous Australians (9% of population)
- One person households (32% of households)
- One parent families (19% of households)
- Persons not in the labour force (53%)
- Households with low incomes
- Households with no motor vehicle (24%)

3.2 The Community Vision

The vision statement describes the kind of place and community that the current residents of the project area, and other stakeholders, want for the future.

The community consultation process for the vision involved asking the following questions:

- What do people think of as 'community'?
- What it is like to live/work in the project area now (positives and negatives)?
- What kind of community do people want for the future?

The description of what life in the project area is like now, is largely a negative one. Crime, antisocial behaviour, unemployment and poor sense of community are some of the issues raised repeatedly in the consultations. The high levels of awareness of the area's problems meant that, for many, trying to identify what is good about the area was a difficult task.

The vision was eventually articulated as follows:

“A community:

Where people have more opportunities for interaction and can become more involved in community life. Where people can help each other, work together and live in harmony. Where people can live with feelings of safety and security. Where people have a sense of community and a sense of belonging. Where people have a sense of pride about themselves and where they live. Where there is a feeling of hope about life and the future.

Where there is employment and more things to do for the young. Where there is a more attractive and safe living environment, where there is more open space and a more vital local shopping area. Where there are improvements to pedestrian access and street lighting.

Where people can live a ‘normal’ lifestyle in a ‘normal’ suburb”.

3.3 Community Development Strategies

A number of community development strategies were identified as a response to the community profile, the vision for the future and issues raised by the community.

These strategies are a guide to community development and should be subject to community feedback and regular review. The strategies are not intended to be prescriptive – they illustrate what is possible.

The strategies are intended to support planning, engineering and socio-economic objectives for the project area and be sustainable beyond the life of the project

The strategies deal with the social, cultural, spiritual, economic and physical aspects of peoples’ lives. They are intended to encourage hope, enthusiasm, and an atmosphere of caring and respect.

The community development strategies are described under the following headings:

Sense of place

- Increased awareness of area
- Increased pride in the physical environment

Community and individual wellbeing

- Involvement in community life
- Improved opportunities for interaction
- Living in harmony
- Feeling hope
- Feeling safe
- Supporting the young
- Supporting employment initiatives

The community and the Eastern Horizons New Living Project

- Community identification with the project
- Community involvement in the project

A detailed list of the strategies is provided in Appendix A.

The Community Development Plan also contains a range of recommendations. Key recommendations include:

- A community worker (person or organisation) be engaged as part of the project to facilitate community development and take initial responsibility for implementing the CDP
- A Community Reference Group be formally established for the project. This group should comprise community members and human services providers and have a number of roles

These recommendations have been implemented.

4. CHALLENGES

The study had a range of challenges that were overcome by the CDP team. These challenges are summarised below.

- There was no precedent for a Community Development Plan for a public redevelopment project
- The Community Development Plan was prepared as a separate exercise from the Masterplan for the redevelopment project
- There was little public knowledge of the project as the Masterplan had not been released at the time of CDP preparation
- The disadvantaged nature of the community posed challenges for getting people to participate in the study and identify a positive future (see Appendix B for consultation techniques and study participants)
- The project area has no logical boundaries from a community perspective
- The project area covers two council areas
- Only a short term contract was available for CDP preparation (13 weeks)

5. OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities afforded by the project included the following:

- We could identify what needed to be done without constraints/preconceptions
- We could deal with issues that tap into feelings and spirituality
- We could support existing efforts by the community and human services sector

- We could support actual and planned positive initiatives by the community
- The Community Development Plan could pull a range of community issues and information into one comprehensive document

6. POSTSCRIPT

6.1 what is happening with the Community Development Plan now?

To date, the community development process for the Eastern Horizons New Living Project has involved:

- The preparation of a Community Development Plan by Alison Day & Associates in late 1999 involving consultation with a wide range of local residents and community services providers
- The establishment of a Community Consultative Committee facilitated by Midland Project Management
- The establishment of a Community House in a renovated Ministry of Housing dwelling
- Submissions by the community to the Lotteries Commission seeking funds for community development initiatives
- An agreement between the City of Swan and Parkerville Children's Home (Inc.) (in February 2001) to provide community development services to the project area
- Tendering by Parkerville Children's Home for a community worker to provide an 'on the ground' service in the project area (based at the Community House)

As at March 2001, the Community Development Plan was beginning to be implemented.

6.2 Suggestions for improving community planning for public redevelopment projects

- Community planning be more closely linked with the town planning process
- An approach to community development be 'mapped out' at the beginning of the project planning process. This approach should take into account the needs of the community and local service providers and identify the staging of proposed community development strategies.
- Initial work take place with communities to get people to a level where they can participate more effectively in the planning process. This could include up-front and maintained support for residents who experience difficulties due to long-term

uncertainties, significant changes to their community, limited knowledge of government procedures etc.

- Opportunities be provided for a regular two-way flow of information (between planners and the community) to improve the planning process
- Social and economic change be monitored so that the socio-economic effects of projects can be quantified and qualified and can inform the approach to subsequent redevelopment projects.

APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

SENSE OF PLACE

OBJECTIVE: INCREASE AWARENESS OF AREA

Strategy: Local history projects

Strategy: Cultural mapping exercise

Strategy: Provision of an estate name and other identification

OBJECTIVE: INCREASED PRIDE IN THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Strategy: Improve the appearance of the project area

Strategy: Awards for property and street appearance

Strategy: Encourage private home owners to improve properties

Strategy: Extend verge mowing

Strategy: Reducing graffiti

Strategy: Reducing litter

Strategy: Community art

COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

OBJECTIVE: INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY LIFE

Strategy: Empowerment of community

Strategy: Increase membership of community groups

Strategy: Support for the Residents and Ratepayers Association

Strategy: Encourage linkages between locally based service providers and the community

Strategy: Identify any need for local recreational/sporting/interest groups

Strategy: Involve local offenders in community projects through liaison with the Ministry of Justice

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERACTION

Strategy: Provision of temporary community meeting place in site office

Strategy: Provision of a community facility

Strategy: More and Improved POS

Strategy: Hubs of activity

Strategy: Provide more and better footpaths to assist safe pedestrian movement in an area where there is a low proportion of car ownership

Strategy: Improved access to Midland Gate Shopping Centre and improved accessibility throughout the project area (including crossing of major roads)

OBJECTIVE: LIVING IN HARMONY

Strategy: Promote inclusion

Strategy: Reconciliation

Strategy: Making connections in the neighbourhood

Strategy: Celebrate cultural diversity

Strategy: Celebrate Aboriginal culture

Strategy: Bringing the community and local business together

Strategy: Bringing different generations together

Strategy: Shire boundary rationalisation

OBJECTIVE: FEELING HOPE

- Strategy: Provide adequate accommodation
- Strategy: Celebrate new facilities
- Strategy: Keeping people informed
- Strategy: Supporting families
- Strategy: Supporting individuals
- Strategy: Addressing drug issues
- Strategy: Improving the community's image in the media

OBJECTIVE: FEELING SAFE

- Strategy: Provision of security patrols
- Strategy: Extend Neighbourhood Watch and Safety House Program
- Strategy: Community safety audit
- Strategy: Linkages with City of Swan safety initiatives
- Strategy: Liaison with the WA Police Service
- Strategy: Liaison with Midland Safer WA Committee (local branch)
- Strategy: Improving home security
- Strategy: Review safety issues in relation to Public Access Ways
- Strategy: Provide better street lighting throughout the project area
- Strategy: Provide a safe pedestrian crossing of Morrison Road

OBJECTIVE: SUPPORTING THE YOUNG

- Strategy: Youth workers
- Strategy: Youth programs
- Strategy: Link with Regional Youth Strategy
- Strategy: Link with youth facility study
- Strategy: Link with PCYC
- Strategy: Young people as a part of the community

OBJECTIVE: SUPPORTING EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

- Strategy: Increase employment opportunities
- Strategy: Encourage the employment of local people in the revitalisation project
- Strategy: Encourage home based business
- Strategy: Internet facility

THE COMMUNITY AND THE EASTERN HORIZONS NEW LIVING PROJECT

OBJECTIVE: COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION WITH THE PROJECT

- Strategies: Project signage and information dissemination
- Strategy: Project milestone events
- Strategy: Acknowledgment of local people

OBJECTIVE: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROJECT

- Strategy: Formulate a community consultation program
- Strategy: Community involvement in the project
- Strategy: Community involvement in the development of local parks
- Strategy: To promote inclusion for people with disabilities,

APPENDIX B

CONSULTATION TECHNIQUES AND LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN STUDY

Consultation techniques

A range of consultation techniques was used:

- Attendance at existing community forums (eg. Residents and Ratepayers Association, seniors groups)
- A public session
- A public display (Midland Library)
- Meetings with specific groups (eg. seniors, Chamber of Commerce)
- Primary school exercise and discussion groups
- Youth survey
- Local shop owners survey
- Meetings with government and other service providers
- Project workshops (key stakeholders)

List of study contributors

City of Swan
Shire of Mundaring
Midvale Primary School/Midvale Pre-Primary School
Midvale Child Care and Neighbourhood Centre
Midvale Community Health Centre
Parent Adolescent Counselling Service
Midland Nursing Home
Morrison Lodge
Karnany Aboriginal Centre
Midvale/Midland Residents and Ratepayers Assoc
Midland & Districts Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Shop owners
Pensioners League (Midland Branch)
Family & Children's Services, Midland
Police
Swan Districts Seniors Citizen Centre
Swan Education District
Midland Aboriginal Advisory Group (MAAG)
Midland PCYC
NERYC
Hills Community Support Group
Midland College of TAFE
Ministry of Justice
Midland Enterprise Centre
Jobs Australia, Midland

Centrelink
Joblink
Workright
Kuljak Aboriginal Employment, Training and Cultural Centre
Swan Initiatives
Eastern Metro Community Housing Assoc Inc
MIDLAS
Swan Park Sporting Complex
Swan View SHS
Governor Stirling SHS
Swan Food Centre
Adolescent Conflict Counselling Service, Midland
NE Metropolitan Community Drug Service Team, Midland
Swan District Hospital
Swan Clinic
Swan Hills Division of General Practitioners
Midland Women's Health Care Place
Midland Youth Health
Swan Valley Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service and Youth Therapies Service
Midland Local Drug Action Group
Midland Disability Services Commission
Swan Emergency Accommodation
Family Futures/Aboriginal Health
Midland Artists Collective
St Vincent de Paul
Midland Brick
