

# **Save Our Brisbane Suburbs**

Part of the Australia wide *Save Our Suburbs* network

Factsheet #3

## **Why protect some urban amenity and character but destroy others?**

As the impacts of previous planned and promoted development become more obvious and new government policies which aim to avoid such impacts become increasingly diverse, it is inevitable the various policies will be in conflict. This is one of a series of factsheets which raise and discuss a number of "issues" where the conflicts are obvious, the new policies only increase conflict with other policies and where, contrary to the view promoted by governments, local community interests and knowledge are increasingly excluded. If it is the role of "local" governments and authorities to address and protect the local, why are they not so doing?

**History** People generally like the places where they live, work, shop, etc. This is despite the obvious need for improvements to better suit individual needs. People with a choice will seek places they enjoy and avoid those they do not. Urban amenity and character are therefore at the very core of people's preference for their activities and where they choose to carry them out. Places and precincts create the diversity and livability which endure as memories. Often, it is the remnant links of history which remains from previous times which is valued both as urban amenity and character, and upon which claims for livability are based. Equally, as people choose to live their lives where they wish, it is the knowledge or security that the area or place is not subject to unwanted change which increases community ownership. While others may choose to change a local community and its urban amenity and character, it is the lack of mechanisms available to the local community to ensure it can decide what is wanted which is increasingly seen as a major problem, especially in established community precincts.

**The problem** Local authorities increasingly produce planning policies which promote more and/or increased intensity of development. Often, the result is an increasing threat to the values of urban amenity and character with which the same local authorities promote their claim to livability eg Brisbane as Australia's most livable city. With increased development intensity, the existing fabric must be threatened. Reductions in allotment size make reductions in both the size and number of mature trees and the extent of greenery inevitable as the space required for more traffic (parking areas, driveways and roads) increases. Similarly, the garden "setting" of character housing cannot be provided on smaller lots. With policies encouraging smaller lot sizes, both the gardens and character houses are threatened. Even relatively recently developed precincts (eg post World War 11) are threatened as Councils promote higher densities and create "as-of-right" planning processes to encourage increased development despite the same processes encouraging increased removal or reduction of the core components of existing urban amenity and character. Obviously, policies encouraging and promoting increased development are the cause, what is the solution?

**Solutions?** If it is the intention of local authorities to preserve urban amenity and character while also increasing development and if the certainty that precincts should be protected from unwanted change is valued, the decision and responsibility for preserving the precincts and for negotiating changes to them must be returned to the local community on whose commitment to the precinct and its values (including primarily those of urban amenity and character), preservation depends. Then, proposed changes can be negotiated and resolved to ensure the local community need for certainty is protected ... not the rights of developers.