

Public Transport Alliance

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Housing ... a transport issue?

Housing debates may seem to be remote from transport issues. This is far from the case. Consider for example the rate at which the green areas at the edges of the developed areas of SEQ are being eroded in some areas for more housing and in others for more industry. *Could such development occur, and would it be viable, if these distant places were required to rely on walking, cycling and public transport access?* Are they only viable because they are easily accessed by car? Do these new developments promote car use or, as purported by the *Integrated Regional Transport Plan* (IRTP), do they encourage of land use and transport planning and encourage less use of cars?

Urban renewal in various forms has also been considered a solution to transport and land use integration. Redeveloping inner areas at higher densities and with mixed uses in addition to residential uses *should* discourage car use and encourage local trips using the "green modes" ie walking, cycling and public transport. Urban design that ensures all necessary amenities are provided *should* encourage people to stay in these areas thus ensuring a socially equitable and mixed community population, not unlike that in other areas except living in a higher density environment.

Increasingly, higher density urban renewal theory is questioned including in Brisbane. As in Melbourne, there is increasing evidence that developers and planners representing local and state authorities are failing to ensure that the diverse needs of existing and prospective residents are met. Arguably, for those whose needs are not met, there is little option but to move out. Population stratification whether as a "slum" due to decay or as "gentrification" due to appealing to a narrow market, seems inevitable.

In Brisbane, residents have been driven out by BCC policies and implementation. While planning rhetoric supports retention of "timber and tin", the "old Queenslanders", the reality is that decisions on what is of value and what is not remain totally with the planning authority, the BCC. The inner suburbs, supposedly valued for their heritage and amenity, are under sustained attack from approved forms of new development approved by BCC planning policies and approval processes. Residents have little if any say in the community they would like in 10 or 20 years. Despite replacement of the "old" three storey "six pack" with the R4 alternative, which provided the higher density low cost housing with minimal site coverage, reduced overlooking, and preserved the rear and front spatial distribution of the new buildings consistently with their neighbours, this form of development, after being substantially devalued by relaxations, was effectively banned except in very limited circumstances. This in itself may well have been a good planning outcome if it had led to preservation of the "old Queenslanders".

However, rather than using development control constraints to limit the replacement of the older housing stock, BCC policies allow and encourage the removal and/or relocation of "old Queenslanders" and their replacement with either five small dwellings located across the entire site or two dwellings on the block where one stood previously. Both forms of development allow incompatible development whether "Tuscan" or "pseudo heritage". Both allow the wonderful continuity of old Brisbane's front and back yards to be destroyed and with them, the mango trees, the "old Queenslanders" and the green space.

The effect of continued low cost car dependent development at the edges and urban renewal in the inner areas has been to force many residents to the edges while at the same time, threatening the road system and environment with increased traffic in both the inner and the outer areas while the "timber and tin" still disappears with BCC approval. Housing and transport issues are closely related if not integrally dependent. It is the failure of the responsible authorities to adopt integrated planning and local community consultation which is allowing both "new edge" and "urban renewal" to threaten our cities.

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