



National Urban Policy

Curtin Community Submission

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Introduction

This submission brings together findings and feedback from several community engagement processes, including our Curtin's Pathway to Net Zero report (Feb 2024), Housing Forum Summary Report (Dec 2023), Good Infill Forum (June 2024) and Good Infill Survey (July 2024).

[Curtin's Pathway to Net Zero](#) is a community-driven report, launched earlier this year, that lays out a positive vision for a decarbonised society, and the big changes we need to get there. Over fifty volunteers were involved in the project across five working groups which form the five key chapters of the report - electricity, buildings, transport, urban greening and waste. Each chapter identifies broad steps to net zero, and policy asks for local, state, and federal governments.

In Curtin, infill is a key urban planning issue that constituents feel passionately about. We need more housing to address supply shortages, but medium- and high-density developments must be done well to ensure that the results are liveable, sustainable and accepted by the community. My Good Infill Forum and Survey were intended to explore these questions in a nuanced way and move the conversation past pro- or anti-development. The forum and survey did not discuss specific projects or policies but focused on high-level principles and themes.

This submission provides feedback on each of the six objectives of the draft National Urban Policy (NUP), drawing on responses from the above community engagement. The submission presents the urban policy priorities of Curtin constituents as well as several overarching themes that should have greater attention in the NUP.

The urban policy issues of greatest concern to Curtin residents are liveability and sustainability - ensuring that infill and development in this well-established electorate protects urban green spaces, is built net-zero ready, makes active and public transport safe and easy, and preserves the existing amenities, services and neighbourhood character that is so valued by residents. Community engagement in planning processes is essential to ensure that the community is supportive of development outcomes. Many constituents have concerns about how community engagement has been done in the past.

To be effective, the NUP should use a systems approach and:

1. Recognise and pursue the social, health, environmental, and economic co-benefits of climate solutions,
2. Coordinate and facilitate collaboration between each sector (e.g. buildings, transport, urban greening, health, etc.) and level of government
3. Implement best practice community engagement at all stages of urban planning and development.

On behalf of the Curtin community, I look forward to our views being considered in the development of the NUP.

Kate Chaney MP
Federal Member for Curtin

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations

1. Housing diversity within neighbourhoods should be an explicit commitment of Objective 1, creating local housing options for all stages of life.
2. Objective 2 should explicitly support accessible public green space, as a key urban feature for social connection, sport and recreation, and reconnecting with nature, which foster belonging and place-making.
3. Urban policy and design should support the safe, easy movement of people over cars. The NUP should recognise that reducing car dependency will reduce vehicle crashes, improving road safety overall.
4. Extreme heat needs greater emphasis as a climate-induced threat to public health and safety. Green infrastructure and improving building energy efficiency should be explicitly supported as key solutions to increase urban resilience, especially against heat.
5. Resilience to climate impacts and natural disasters requires substantial public education alongside policy implementation.
6. Objective 4 should include a commitment to the protection of urban biodiversity and ecosystems and acknowledge the impact that urban planning has on such outcomes.
7. The NUP should support the development of nationally coordinated protections for biodiversity and trees on private residential land.
8. Objective 5 should explicitly recognise the physical and mental health benefits of urban green and blue spaces, including improving air quality, encourage active lifestyles, and cooling neighbourhoods and buildings.
9. Urban greening should be acknowledged as an essential component of good active transport and social infrastructure and improving housing quality and energy efficiency.
10. The NUP should include consideration of how urban policy can support the decarbonisation of the electricity grid and energy sector through involving residential and commercial entities in electricity generation, storage and demand management to reduce transmission challenges.
11. Recognise and pursue urban policy solutions that simultaneously provide social, environmental, and economic co-benefits.
12. Coordinate and facilitate collaboration between all levels of government, departments, sectors, and stakeholders.
13. Implement best practice community engagement at all stages of urban planning and development.

Goals and objectives of the National Urban Policy

The five goals of *liveable*, *equitable*, *productive*, *sustainable* and *resilient* are consistent with, and supported by community concerns. 'Liveable' and 'sustainable' are the goals that this submission considers most closely, due to previous community engagement focusing on these themes.

The six objectives are:

1. No-one and no place left behind,
2. All people belong and are welcome,
3. Our urban areas are safe,
4. Our urban areas are sustainable,
5. Our urban environments and communities promote health and wellbeing, and
6. Our urban areas promote productivity.

These are also broadly consistent with community feedback, but community feedback has informed some recommendations in relation to each of these objectives.

Objective 1: No-one and no place left behind

Curtin residents want to see an increase in housing diversity as part of efforts to address housing availability and affordability. Curtin residents wish to be able to remain in Curtin throughout different stages of their lives, rather than being forced to relocate elsewhere. Well-located mid-density apartments would allow retirees to downsize yet remain in their neighbourhoods and allow young adults leaving home to live where they grew up.

Recommendation

1. Housing diversity within neighbourhoods should be an explicit commitment of Objective 1, creating local housing options for all stages of life.

Objective 2: All people belong and are welcome

Public green spaces are essential to community wellbeing, increasing amenity, sense of place and providing beautiful, free places to socialise, recreate, and reconnect with nature.

Public space, especially public green space, is often threatened by infill and density. Curtin residents want to see increased allocations for new public spaces alongside medium and high-density infill developments, both for the preservation of neighbourhood amenity and character, and for the benefit of new residents. Seventy-five percent of survey respondents said they wanted urban planning to protecting urban green space, making it the single biggest concern.

Recommendation

2. Objective 2 should explicitly support accessible public green space, as a key urban feature for social connection, sport and recreation, and reconnecting with nature, which foster belonging and place-making.

Objective 3: Our urban areas are safe

As is mentioned in the draft NUP, safety in movement includes pedestrians, cycling and other vulnerable road-users. Community responses support a shift in focus to urban design

that prioritises the safe, easy movement of people over cars. The NUP should recognise that reducing car dependency reduces vehicle crashes, improving road safety overall.

In Curtin, and Perth more broadly, summer heatwaves and drought will be the greatest impacts of climate change. The NUP should have greater emphasis on the public health dangers of extreme heat, and explicitly support urban greening, tree canopy, urban heat mapping and improving building energy efficiency as key solutions to increase resilience.

Disaster preparedness and climate adaptation needs greater public education and awareness raising. Forty-six percent of Good Infill survey respondents said they ‘don’t know’ how their suburb rates on disaster preparedness, indicating a lack of knowledge about either disaster risks themselves, or the current measures in place. Remaining responses were split between ‘okay’ and ‘poor’, showing a lack of confidence in Curtin’s readiness to cope with extreme weather and natural disasters.

Recommendations

3. Urban policy and design should support the safe, easy movement of people over cars. The NUP should recognise that reducing car dependency will reduce vehicle crashes, improving road safety overall.
4. Extreme heat needs greater emphasis as a climate-induced threat to public health and safety. Green infrastructure and improving building energy efficiency should be explicitly supported as key solutions to increase urban resilience, especially against heat.
5. Resilience to climate impacts and natural disasters requires substantial public education alongside policy implementation.

Objective 4: Our urban areas are sustainable

In addition to supporting the draft NUP’s commitment to net zero, urban emissions reduction, supporting the circular economy and green and blue spaces, the policy should explicitly value the protection and restoration of urban biodiversity and ecology. The insufficiency of current national environmental protection laws to protect fragmented urban biodiversity will not be solved by the NUP alone, but sustainable urban policy should recognise the value of non-human species in urban areas, and the role that urban planning has in protecting ecosystems that overlap urban areas.

Seventy-five percent of survey respondents said they wanted urban planning to protect urban green space, making it the single biggest concern. Curtin’s Pathway to Net Zero identified tree protection on private land as the single most important action for urban greening. The NUP is an opportunity to work with state and local governments to develop tree protections for private residential land across urban Australia.

Recommendations

6. Objective 4 should include a commitment to the protection of urban biodiversity and ecosystems and acknowledge the impact that urban planning has on such outcomes.
7. The NUP should support the development of nationally coordinated protections for biodiversity and trees on private residential land.

Objective 5: Our urban environments and communities promote health and wellbeing

The three goals associated with this objective are *productive*, *resilient*, and *equitable*. *Liveable* and *sustainable* should also be goals connected to this objective, as they are intrinsically linked to health and wellbeing.

Green and blue spaces and active transport infrastructure are essential to supporting healthy, active lifestyles. The NUP should recognise the myriad benefits of urban green and blue spaces in promoting mental health and physical health by encouraging exercise and time outdoors and providing free places to socialise. Urban greening is an essential component of active transport infrastructure, providing shade and making spaces more inviting and appealing to users. Vegetation also plays a crucial role in cooling buildings and neighbourhoods (see objective 3) and should be actively pursued alongside energy efficiency to improve home comfort.

Recommendations

8. Objective 5 should explicitly recognise the physical and mental health benefits of urban green and blue spaces, including improving air quality, encourage active lifestyles, and cooling neighbourhoods and buildings.
9. Urban greening should be acknowledged as an essential component of good active transport and social infrastructure and improving housing quality and energy efficiency.

Objective 6: Our urban areas promote productivity

Steady, affordable energy supply is essential to economic productivity. Decarbonising our electricity networks is a primary challenge in reaching net zero emissions. Urban populations are central locations for electricity use and contribute to future electricity solutions (and current grid challenges like the 'duck curve') through the widespread adoption of rooftop solar.

As urban residents become increasingly integrated into the electricity networks of the future, the NUP should consider the role of urban planning in a renewable grid, and how residential and commercial activities can support a smart, flexible grid with distributed energy resources and sophisticated demand management. Done right, good urban policy can support the energy transition. Urban generation of electricity for local use will help reduce transmission and network costs. Likewise, widespread residential and commercial electrification will reduce the need for urban domestic gas networks and associated infrastructure.

Recommendations

10. The NUP should include consideration of how urban policy can support the decarbonisation of the electricity grid and energy sector through involving residential and commercial entities in electricity generation, storage and demand management to reduce transmission challenges.

Putting policy into practice

In our Good Infill Survey, only sixteen percent of respondents said that overall, infill being built in Curtin is sustainable and liveable. When asked to elaborate on specific criteria of good infill, clear trends emerged (see next page for full survey results) with plenty of room for improvement. Residents are distinctly concerned by the lack of community involvement in planning processes, with projects fitting poorly with neighbourhood character. Loss of urban greening, buildings not being net-zero ready and inadequate active transport infrastructure were other key concerns. Survey results indicate that Curtin's amenities are highly valued, but that the electorate is falling short on emissions reduction, affordable housing and equality. Priorities for future urban policy were clear – better community consultation, preserving neighbourhood character and amenity, protection for existing tree canopy and green space, walkable neighbourhoods, and buildings that are net-zero ready.

At the macro level, three key themes emerged from Curtin's Pathway to Net Zero that are highly relevant to the NUP and reinforce the concerns constituents have about current development projects. Firstly, many climate solutions also help address other social, economic and environmental problems. Urban vegetation, sustainable mid-density housing, active transport and building energy efficiency (to name a few) can improve physical and mental health, boost local economies, reduce the cost of living and improve housing affordability, restore our natural environment, help us adapt to climate change and foster greater social connection. The NUP should be designed to support co-benefit solutions that address many problems simultaneously, rather than the traditional silos of policymaking and government.

Secondly, cities are incredibly complex systems, crossing the natural and built environment, and economic, social and cultural activities. The NUP should support all levels of government, and all departments, to work collaboratively with each other and with external stakeholders. The current draft includes the principle of collaborative and adaptive planning and governance, but little detail on how this will be achieved. Given that urban planning powers often fall to state and local governments, the NUP is an opportunity to help coordinate and communicate across jurisdictions.

Thirdly, as places where we live, play and work, people's opinions, concerns and experiences of their cities matter. Genuine community involvement in decision-making produces better outcomes, through the inclusion of local knowledge not always available to policymakers, and through the experience of fair, transparent and inclusive processes, which increase the acceptance of final outcomes. Despite this, there is limited mention in the draft NUP of either the importance of community engagement or how such processes will be supported.

Recommendations

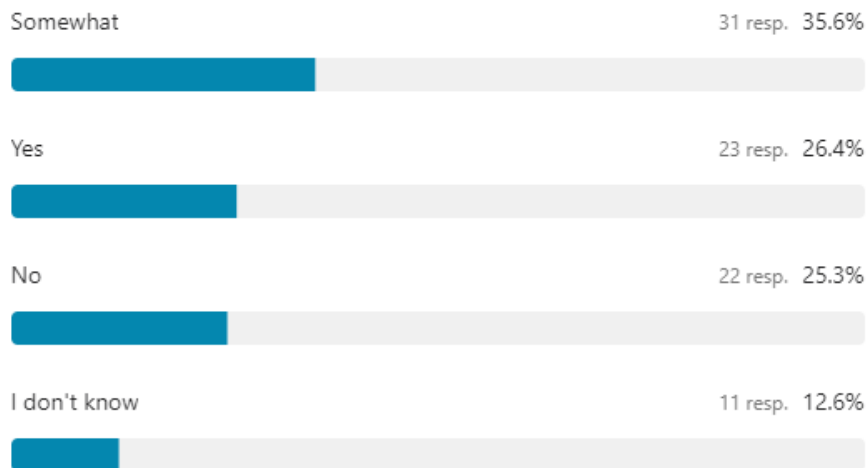
11. Recognise and pursue urban policy solutions that simultaneously provide social, environmental, and economic co-benefits.
12. Coordinate and facilitate collaboration between all levels of government, departments, sectors, and stakeholders.
13. Implement best practice community engagement at all stages of urban planning and development.

Good Infill Survey Results

The following results come from a Good Infill Survey run during late June to early July 2024. The survey was shared in my monthly e-newsletter and on social media. We received 87 responses.

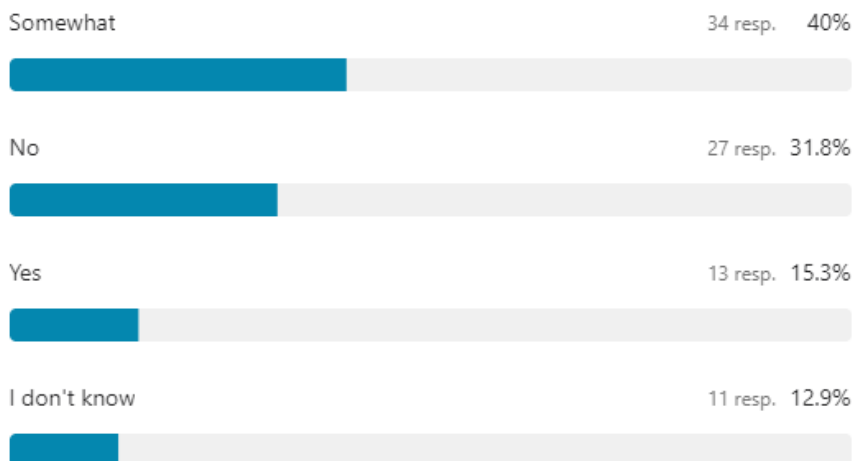
✓ 4 Do you think Curtin is doing its fair share to support infill and increased housing supply?

87 out of 87 people answered this question



✓ 5 Overall, do you think the infill being built in Curtin is sustainable and liveable?

85 out of 87 people answered this question



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Overall, how does infill in Curtin rate against the following criteria?

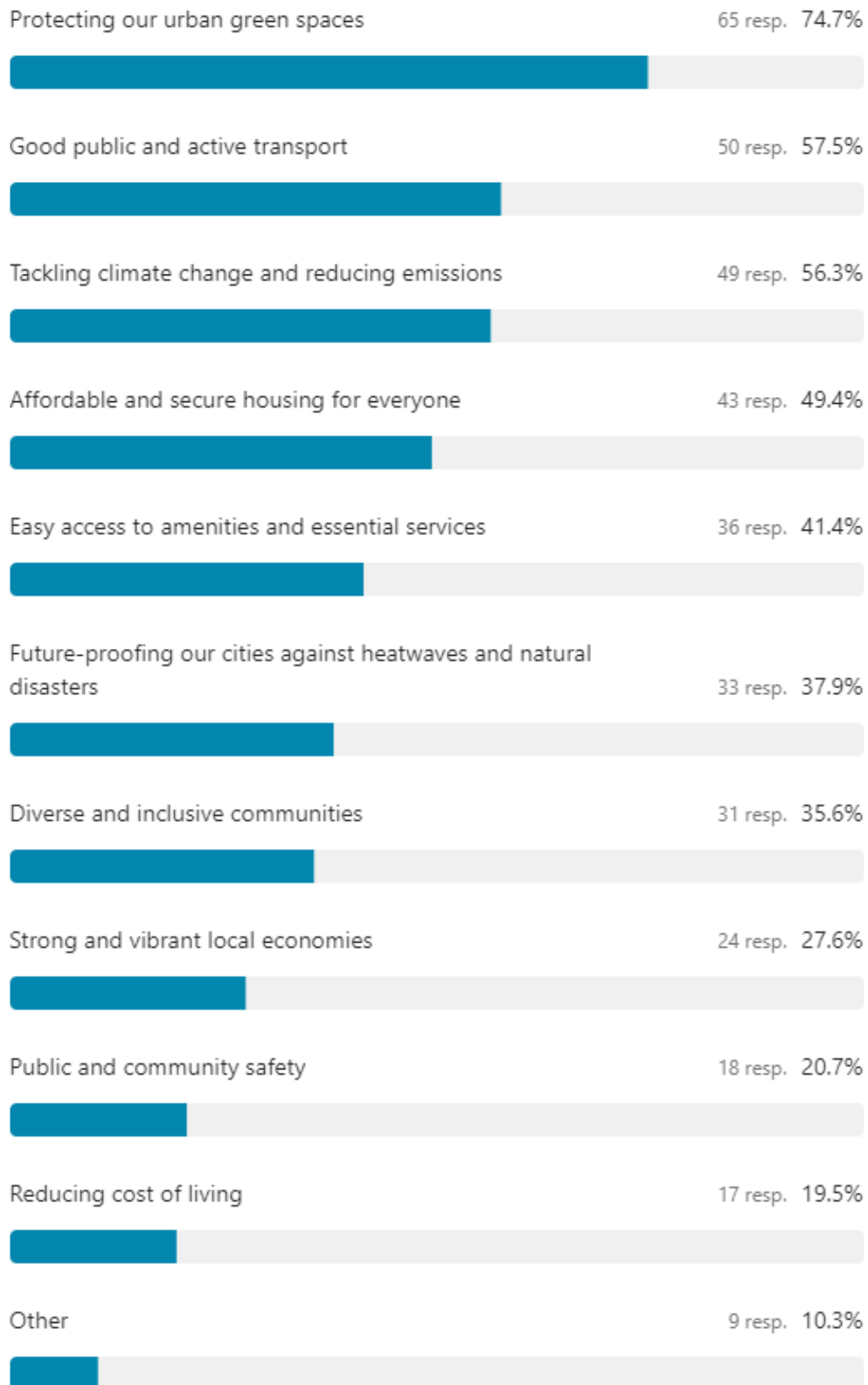
84 out of 87 people answered this question

	Achieved	Somewhat achieved	Not achieved	Don't know
Increases housing supply and affordability	3.6%	44%	42.9%	9.5%
Increases diversity of local housing types	7.2%	47%	36.1%	9.6%
Involves the community in planning	2.4%	31%	57.1%	9.5%
Respects neighbourhood character	6.1%	35.4%	46.3%	12.2%
Is mostly medium density with clear height limits	13.1%	33.3%	41.7%	11.9%
Has good local amenities like shops, schools and parks	32.9%	34.1%	24.4%	8.5%
In next to good public transport routes, especially train stations	24.4%	42.7%	25.6%	7.3%
Is designed for easy and safe walking and cycling	8.4%	42.2%	41%	8.4%
Protects existing tree canopy and green space	6.1%	29.3%	54.9%	9.8%
Is built net zero-ready, with solar panels, electric appliances and good energy efficiency	2.4%	14.5%	60.2%	22.9%



Good urban planning can help address many challenges. Which issues are most important to you?

87 out of 87 people answered this question (with multiple choice)





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How does your suburb rate on the following?

87 out of 87 people answered this question

	Good	Okay	Poor	Don't know
Affordable and secure housing	1.2%	41.2%	48.2%	9.4%
Cost of living	1.2%	51.2%	41.7%	6%
Community and public safety	35.6%	52.9%	9.2%	2.3%
Disaster preparedness	1.1%	28.7%	24.1%	46%
Nature, green spaces and biodiversity	33.3%	46%	19.5%	1.1%
Access to amenities and services	47.1%	39.1%	12.6%	1.1%
Public and active transport networks	37.9%	31%	29.9%	1.1%
Local economy and employment opportunities	16.5%	44.7%	15.3%	23.5%
Community and social cohesion	24.7%	49.4%	20%	5.9%
Easy to walk and cycle	32.9%	36.5%	27.1%	3.5%
Social and income equality	2.3%	31.4%	41.9%	24.4%
Climate action	2.4%	23.5%	57.6%	16.5%