...there was no there, there….?

Neighbourhood based Urbanism

Peter Richards  DEICKE RICHARDS Architects, Brisbane, Qld

Is the 400m radius circle, the five minute walk, that defines a neighbourhood, a subversive new urbanist plot or an important idea in the structuring of settlements? Where are the centres and edges and do the circles touch?
‘Traditional’ or ‘Sustainable Neighbourhoods’
Neighbourhood based Urbanism in inner western Brisbane
Research into Subtropical (?) Neighbourhood Design (not subdivisions)
Two projects
Clarence Perry Neighbourhood Unit 1927

- Area in open development preferably 160 acres—In any case it should house enough people to require one elementary school. Exact shape not essential but best when all sides are fairly equidistant from center.
- A shopping district might be substituted for church site.
- Shopping districts in periphery at traffic junctions and preferably bunched in form.
- Only neighborhood institutions at community center.
- Ten percent of area to recreation and park space.
- Interior streets not wider than required for specific use and giving easy access to shops and community center.
- Arterial street radius 1/4 mile, traffic junction.
Forest Hills Gardens 1912
Clarence Perry Neighbourhood Unit 1927
...advise that the Council..on September 1 2000, determined to **refuse** the application.

...incompatible with and detrimental to the amenity of both existing and future residential development in the locality.

..intrusion of a non-residential and incompatible land-use into a residential area

…modification as proposed would have a detrimental impact on the visual character of the street

…provides insufficient carparking and servicing spaces on the site

....(and as an objection) constitutes ribbon commercial development
Edenbrooke

Edenbrooke is a high quality residential development within a sloping, tree valley on the edge of Sinnamon Park in the western suburbs of Brisbane. A small industrial area is located to the north that has been surrounded by housing in the last ten years. The new infill development is within an existing 1970s subdivision.

The small centre that services the residential area has a range of shops and a child care centre. There is some medium density housing close to the centre however generally there is little diversity in the housing with the majority of it being low density. The green corridor which is a focus for much of the housing is not integrated with the centre and there are no gathering areas.

The central sweeping and winding street creates a long and indirect route through the subdivision making access to the centre difficult. The smaller streets roughly conform to a modified north/south, east/west grid generally providing most lots with good orientation. The streets provide frontages to green corridors. While attractive, separate pedestrian and bicycle routes are provided to the local centre adjacent to this green, riparian corridor, these routes are not legible and there is no casual surveillance from the surrounding residential area. Therefore these routes are potentially unsafe. While there are other pedestrian routes to the centre along the street network, they are not direct.

The streets are well detailed and integrate stormwater infiltration and extensive planting, including trees and lawn planting.

Like many new residential areas, the riparian corridor provides a green focus and considerable care has been taken with the landscaping. This high quality open space accommodates playground equipment and walking and riding tracks. Some existing trees have been retained and the space is lush and provides many cool and shaded spaces.
Northlakes

Northlakes is a new residential area within a master planned community 35km of the Brisbane city centre. It could be described as a better quality subdivision rather than a neighbourhood.

There is little diversity of land use in the subdivision, which includes only housing and open space. Another weakness of the area is that public transport is limited. However the open space in the subdivision is well located. The central park acts as a focal point for the community and has therefore been considered the centre in this case study. It is prominent within the plan and terminates a long avenue that leads down to the lake. This creates a legible spine and a focus for the subdivision. The park provides shaded gathering areas for the community and some recreation facilities.

Despite a small amount of medium density housing around the park, densities within the subdivision are generally low. Given that the subdivision is close to a major regional shopping centre more diversity in density would have been appropriate.

The subdivision has an interconnected street network that allows legible paths through the area. The streets are generally in a north/south east/west simple grid. Rear lanes are provided for the medium density housing overlooking the central park which allows these dwellings to front the park and have car access via the lanes.

There is a series of parks in the subdivision with a larger parkland adjacent to the lake. Landscape of the public areas and the relationship to the topography has been well considered. Footpaths, parks and traffic calming devices are planted with native vegetation and will provide good shade in the future. Views opening to the parklands have been maintained. All parks have housing overlooking them and streets abutting them. Therefore housing does not back onto the parks which can minimise casual surveillance of these areas. Bicycle and pedestrian pathways are provided along the lakeside parklands.
Windemere

Windemere is a new residential area in a strategic riverside location adjacent to an existing regional bulky goods retail centre.

The neighbourhood centre has all the ingredients for a vibrant and diverse centre. It includes local shops, a childcare centre, employment areas, a tavern and soon a supermarket. However the land uses are poorly integrated and some uses are in odd locations.

The centre does not act as a focus for the surrounding residential area. Generally the housing has been designed to turn its back on the centre. The street network provides indirect access that is generally not legible. Pedestrian street access to the local centre is along rear fences and the footpaths are narrow with minimal landscaping.

The neighbourhood incorporates a good amount of higher density housing however many of these developments are walled enclaves that turn their back on streets and surrounding uses, creating large area of fencing along pedestrian streets.

The street network generally provides street frontages to the green corridor. The streets are within 30° of the north/south east/west grid allowing many of the lots to have good orientation. The streets generally relate to the existing streets and to the river.

The residential subdivision has a strong central green spine around the spine/corridor. This attractive environment is edged by streets that allow the housing to overlook the space. As this area was originally farmland, this corridor does require revegetation in order to provide shaded areas. The residential area is bound by the Brisbane River to the north. Parkland along the river also provides a focus for the community though again more shade is required.
The Subtropical Neighbourhood is a Neighbourhood

**Subtropical Neighbourhood Design**

- Parks are incorporated in accessible and visible locations.
- Neighbourhood Centre with a mix of uses creating a vibrant community heart.
- Higher density and variety of housing closer to neighbourhood centre and along busier streets and open spaces.
- Areas of neighbourhood within a five minute walkable catchment.

Interconnected street network provides direct routes and choices of routes to Centre.

Through-streets with public transport routes linking to adjacent neighbourhoods.

Green spaces and wildlife corridors are integrated.
Subtropical Neighbourhoods aggregate to form a Subtropical Town and City
The Subtropical Neighbourhood has a distinctive relationship to its Site and Landscape.
The Subtropical Neighbourhood is characterised by its Parks and Open Spaces

- Streets edges to open spaces
- Green corridors
- Parks act as focal places within the neighbourhood in visible and accessible locations
- Park as community focal point
- Streets provide vistas into parks
- Shade structures
- Active public open spaces with mature shade trees
The Subtropical Neighbourhood has Subtropical Streetscapes

- Views from street between individual houses to vegetated backyards
- Rich layering of entrance transition and occupied verandah areas of houses
- Generous street trees and footpaths
- Trees within street reserves
- Dwellings front onto streets
The Subtropical Neighbourhood creates sites for Subtropical Buildings

Neighbourhoods with appropriate street orientations with streets generally running north-south or east-west
The Subtropical Neighbourhood has a Subtropical Landscape and allows one to grow
The Subtropical Neighbourhood has walkable journeys that are legible, memorable and comfortable.
Inner Urban Neighbourhoods, Regional Queensland City
Inner Urban Neighbourhoods, Regional Queensland City
Neighbourhoods are valid (If there are no neighbourhoods, what is there?)
Circles are OK (the 400m, five minute walk is pretty useful and powerful)
Be relaxed about spacing, but a max 1-1.2km,
Centres in memorable places, accessible and legible locations where reasonable catchment is possible
Work at it. It doesn’t come naturally to the market
Neighbourhoods are a fundamental ingredient of robust urban environments
Make sure the aggregation of neighbourhoods forms a town