Stanhope Gardens / Newbury
Project Review
10 years on
Project Significance

• Located in Northwest Sector
• Beginning of move away from sprawl
• New Urbanism not named
• Landcom “Making a Difference” projects
• Team had ‘warmed up’ and ‘urbanised’ on Olympic Village competition
The Site

• 189ha former dairy site
• On edge of Blacktown & Baulkham Hills
• North of Parklea markets and south of Rouse Hill (not then developed)
• 40km from Sydney CBD
Stanhope Gardens Review

10 year review of the almost completed Stanhope Gardens (Newbury) project was commissioned by NSW Landcom in late 2009. The original project team reassembled and spent a day walking around the project, comparing it with the lofty ideals promulgated in the mid 90’s.

The team was:
• Peter Annand (now AAUD)
• Clive Alcock (now AAUD)
• Rod Simpson (ex Allen Jack+Cottier)
• Tanya Vincent (ex Allen Jack+Cottier)
• Bob Earl (Oculus)

PROJECT DESIGN TIMELINE

• **early 90’s** - Blacktown Council DCP for development of Stanhope Gardens (SG)
• **1995** - Landcom sponsored charette at Blacktown Workers Club focuses on SG (Mick Owens, Peter Annand, Clive Alcock, Evan Jones, Paul Murrain)
• **1996** - Eventual project design team works on Olympic Village bid for Aurora Consortium (Peter Annand, Clive Alcock, Rod Simpson, Tanya Vincent, Bob Earl)
• **mid 1997** - Landcom determines new approach to SG - Competitive Design Tender
• **late 1997** - Tender won by Peter Annand Associates, Allen Jack+Cottier, Oculus
• **Nov 1998** - ‘Better Suburbs’ booklet produced to summarise project intentions and design
• **mid 1999** - Development Control Plan produced by project team
• **Jan 1999** - DCP adopted by Blacktown City Council
• **mid 2000** - Wins State & National Planning Awards
• **late 2000** - Tendered to development partners. Won by Mirvac. Stage 1 – Newbury opens with display village, clubhouse, park
• **2000 – 2010** Construction
Plan Formulation

- Plan making (Design Review)
- Consultation
- Engagement with authorities
  - Roads
  - Electricity
  - Council (all depts.)
  - Drainage
  - Education
  - Etc.
- Education / Justification
  - “Stanhope Gardens... A Better Suburb” document & powerpoint
- Based on traditional urbanism of Sydney
Why Do We Need Better Suburbs?

- Conventional Practice
- Traditional Suburbs
# Project Objectives

The objectives of the project were:
- to create a high quality public domain
- to achieve a higher density
- to provide a more liveable suburb.

The analysis of this report is organised into topic areas which denote the objectives of the project and formed the structure of the original “Better Suburbs” document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links With Surroundings &amp; The Past</th>
<th>Making Special Places</th>
<th>Quality Homes &amp; Gardens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Linking place with surroundings</td>
<td>• Create memorable places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take advantage of regional transport</td>
<td>• Establish local places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Link and extend regional open space</td>
<td>• Encourage walking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appreciate the historical context</td>
<td>• Reinforce the main natural systems and transport links</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reinforce identity of place</td>
<td>• Provide variety of opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respond to site</td>
<td>• Embracing stormwater</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Clear Urban Structure</th>
<th>Safe Streets</th>
<th>Fronting the Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Locate parks and street patterns in response to landform</td>
<td>• Invert car-oriented design procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take advantage of the special features</td>
<td>• Create comprehensible places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand site constraints</td>
<td>• Encouraging responsible driving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrate water with streets and open spaces</td>
<td>• Provide “eyes on the street”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protect local vegetation and habitat</td>
<td>• Reduce the visual dominance of garages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide eyes on the street</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encouraging responsible driving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Protect investments through coding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create character for long-term value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Links with the Surroundings & the Past

Better Suburbs Intent

Connections as Built

Conventional Practice

Better Suburbs
Appreciating Historic Context

• If historic elements are kept, they need to form special places, not ordinary ones.

Successful park due to many retained mature trees.

Poor frontage of surrounding bldgs dilutes otherwise well-designed parks.
Lessons - Links with the Surroundings & the Past

**Flexibility**
- The DCP cannot foresee all the changes in the surrounding region. A regular review process is required.

**Compliance**
- DCP not always enforced.
- Need for all institutional players to embrace the vision.
- Identity of project rests on the elements Landcom did itself (parks & streets).
- Financial and contractual strategies needed to achieve identity objectives in public buildings.
Responding to the Site

Objectives

- Respond to the landform in the location of parks & street patterns.
- Take advantage of the special features of the site such as mature trees & microclimate.
- Understand & work positively with the site constraints.
- Integrate water & catchment systems with streets and open spaces.
- Protect and add to local vegetation and habitat for native wildlife.

Conventional Practice

Placeless

Ugly & unloved

Better Suburbs

Co-located.

Integrated.
Turning Drainage into Amenity

- The drainage reserve park provides excellent visible water management and amenity.

- The northern watercourse managed by Sydney Water provides very little in the way of amenity or value as open space.
Turning Drainage into Amenity

- These concrete irrigation tanks could possibly have been utilised in the landscape design.

- Where the ‘wild’ things are...

- The vegetation on the embankment of Caddies Creek has a refreshingly ‘wild’ feel.
Bridges should Look like Bridges

• Side walls should be visually permeable. You should be able to tell that water is nearby.

• Surface continues the street across the watercourses, disguises the water crossing function with verges, median and an impermeable wall edge and fails to deliver character and identity.
That’s better...

Shadow line and permeable railing treatment create a lighter feel and make this culvert feel more like a genuine bridge.
...or is it?

However, the bridge surface still disguises the water crossing function with verges, median and a tree!!!
Bridges should Look like Bridges

A bridge which expresses its purpose and becomes a neighbourhood landmark... giver of character and identity.
Lessons - Responding to the Site

Infrastructure

• We need a national set of infrastructure options as alternative to standards e.g. the bridge as a bridge as a traffic calming device.

What if...?

• The extraordinary “what if” worst case scenarios imagined by council officers to justify existing practice are a disabling paralysis.

Established Trees

• During the first decade in a new suburb, mature trees are a priceless asset.
Objectives

• Create memorable places, making it easy to find a way around.

• Establish local places and neighbourhood centres, making the most of important buildings as landmarks.

• Encourage walking.

• Reinforce main natural systems & transport links.

Conventional Practice

Better Suburbs
A Clear Street Skeleton

Higher order streets are discernible from the general local streets.

The surrounding local base case.
Legibility / Wayfinding

• Church succeeds as a landmark.
• Other key public buildings fail.
Establishing Local Places

• This pavilion fails as a placemaking building...
• It fails to connect with the street, does not establish place, does little to encourage use - no large, undercover viewing area or significant terracing & is seriously ugly.
Walkability

• Footpaths are generally only on one side of the street.

• A street which is conducive to walking.
Walkability

• A street edge which is not conducive to walking.

• A street edge which is conducive to walking.
Lessons - A Clear Urban Structure

Transit-disoriented

• Planned car based suburbs.
• Even if the railway line does get eventually built, the surrounding development is already locked in as car based, suburban.

Walkability

• There is not enough to walk to.
• There are improved opportunities for leisure walking.

Placemaking

• “Placemaking” is not an objective. The culture is “SUBurban”.
• Developer control of delivery is required.
Special Places

Objectives

- Create memorable places.
- Establish local places and neighbourhood centres.
- Make the most of important buildings as landmarks.
- Encourage walking.
- Reinforce main natural systems & transport links.

Conventional Practice

Better Suburbs
Town Centre – a missed Main Street opportunity

• Council fails to activate the east side of Main Street and thereby dooms it to failure.
Town Centre – a missed Main Street opportunity

• Main Street condition is poorly activated and unattractive.

• What is the purpose of this space?

• Road section / design and street edge fails to create a ‘Main Street’.

• Why a slip road?
Town Centre – a missed Main Street opportunity

• Council civic buildings fail to address the street and consequently debase ‘Main Street’.

• Major community facility sits in open space and does not engage the street.
Town Centre – a missed Main Street opportunity

• The public square is well shaded with formal trees and deep awnings.

• Space colonised by kids’ play.

• Pedestrian path to parking area is appropriate.

• Space colonised by cafes.
Local Nodes

• Northern village centre was not established.
• This was a major missed opportunity.
• All economic energy was diverted to the Town Centre.
Density

• Exceptionally poor amenity capture.
• Fails to front the park!!!
• Single storey house fronting park.
• Sits below road level!!!
• Poor amenity capture & failure to enclose the public realm.
Lessons - Special Places

**Town Centre Urbanity**
- Creating an urban town centre requires new delivery processes.
- Vision failed because:
  - Council never “on board”.
  - Needed more detailed design work between the DCP and handover to developer, and/or more design engagement.
  - Council’s minimum lot size (450-500m²) effectively required integrated development for density lots.

**Small Lots**
- Council regs (min. lot width of 13m), min. lot size for Torrens title, stamp duty rules hinders density development.

**Northern Village**
- No “northern village” because:
  - Institutional players didn’t contribute.
  - Lack of understanding on how to deliver small, n’hood retail.
Great Parks for People

Objectives

• Link open space, drainage systems, streets and special places.
• Use high quality public domain to provide character and identity to the area.
• Offer a variety of recreational and civic opportunities.
• Embrace the use and movement of stormwater.

Conventional Practice

Better Suburbs
A Variety of Scales

- Some open spaces are simply too big to integrate successfully into residential areas (Northern Oval).

Bad example from DCP...

... has been successfully delivered.
A Variety of Scales

- Epsam Ave Park is a well proportioned, formally arranged local park.
- An excellent local park.
- Note failure of rear access due to Council policy.
Maintenance & Quality

- Parks are:
  - High quality
  - Well maintained
  - A strong asset for the project.

Playgrounds

- Playgrounds are well provided and form a strong element of the project.
Lessons - Great Parks for People
Ownership of Drainage Reserve

• The drainage reserve had to be wrested from Sydney Water and Community Titled.
• Fighting these battles on a project-by-project basis is time consuming and demoralising.
• Water is a winner

Edge Definition

• The bigger parks needs better edge definition.
• The northern village sports fields would have benefited from a white picket fence.
Safe Streets

Objectives

• Design from the least mobile up (ie pedestrians & cyclists), not cars down.
• Link memorable places with clear, direct routes.
• Encourage responsible driving behaviour.
• Provide opportunities for “eyes on the street”.
• Reduce the visual dominance of garage doors.

Conventional Practice

Better Suburbs
Surveillance & Safety

• The basic elements of improved passive surveillance are present.
• Signs of life – open blinds along with coffee cups and toys left on the verandah.
Rear Lanes

• Lanes are not permitted, so the argument is not resolved.
• 6-7m width (with 0.5m each side for landscaping) is undeniably the model.
Lessons - Safe Streets

Simple & Symmetrical Streets
• The 13.5m neighbourhood street was problematic in practice, and not helped by the substitution of roll kerbs for upright kerbs. 16m+ is desirable.

Private Domain Planting
• The role of the front garden in creating beautiful streets is undervalued.

Street Tree Canopy
• The simple truth is that large canopy trees, regularly spaced on both sides of a symmetrical street makes a street beautiful.

Kerb Radii
• Large kerb radii and excessively splayed lots are unnecessary.
Quality Homes & Gardens

Objectives

• Create homes & gardens for people to enjoy for many years.
• Determine block and subdivision patterns most suitable for meeting environmental standards.
• Build energy efficient and water conserving houses.

Conventional Practice

Traditional Suburbs
The Good...

Consistency

• Partial success.
• The best are well proportioned, well modulated and have recessive garages.
...the Bad...

Consistency

• Double garages often dominate frontages.
• No front fence.
• No verandah.

• No overlooking.
• Too much garage.
...& the Ugly.

Consistency

- Not what a corner house should be.
- Trying to hide in shame.
- DCP compliance regularly overlooked.

- In a hole, single storey, fails to address either street... no public contribution.
Corner Buildings

- A corner house which successfully addresses both streets.
- Poor verandah.
- Good boundary treatment (fence & hedge).

- Corner house which successfully addresses both streets.
- Emphasises the corner with additional height.
- Hedge is good but needs some background structure (fence).
Ancillary Dwellings

- Are provided – but most often not as a separate dwelling with a distinct and separate entry.
- Fails the passive surveillance test.

- A balcony / verandah provides additional opportunities for passive surveillance, if you can see out from it!!!
Lessons - Quality Homes & Gardens

Private Open Space

• The DCP specifies a mandatory “minimum area equivalent to 30% of the site area with minimum dimension of 3m”. (i.e. 54m² on 180m² or 90m² on 300m²)

• Include front verandah (if directly accessed from habitable room) and front yard (if fenced, landscaped & gated). This will encourage provision, use, passive surveillance & social engagement.

Private Domain Trees

• Backyards need more trees. Consider a 6m planting strip.
Fronting the Street

Objectives

• Reduce ambiguity between private & public spaces.
• Use design codes to ensure coherent whole and protect peoples’ investments.
• Create consistent character for the long term value of the suburb. This page was omitted from the DCP.
Building Address

- Buildings address the street well in Stanhope Gardens.
- Generally SG represents a major improvement in building address at the time and the tipping point for reduced garage dominance... a success.
Front Boundary Treatments

- Improved from the norm.
- Some very good examples... however
- Wide variety of definition between public and private domains.

- Better streets have consistent front boundary treatments.
- Ensuring boundary treatments are included and that minimum heights are adhered to is a strong factor in creating safe, active, well-loved and well-used streets.
Front Gardens & Verandahs / Porches

• Too narrow.
• Inaccessible.
• At least it has a bench.

• Accessible.
• Too small to be used.

• Too narrow
• No direct access from living room.

• A rare good example from Stanhope
Front Gardens & Verandahs / Porches

• Verandahs should be provided.
• Useable Depth
Lessons - Fronting the Street

Living Verandahs
• A beautiful, well used verandah is:
  – elevated (ideally about 3 steps) above the street level.
  – able to be furnished with permanent seating.
  – enclosed to provide a level of privacy.
  – defines the public / private domain interface.

Boundary Definition
• Fences were a great achievement given initial reluctance.
Lessons Learned...
Links with Surrounds

• Think “big”...
• How do we connect with the wider context?
• Vast improvement...
• Reduced spaghetti...
Responding to the Site

Drainage
• Express the water

Bridges
• Calm the crossing

Vegetation
• Keep & enhance
A Clear Urban Structure

• A clear legible pattern

• Public buildings as wayfinding icons
Special Places

**Town**
- Active Main Street Mixed Use Density

**Village**
- Anchor with shop & public building plus gathering place.
Parks for People

Size
- Not too large

Enclosure
- Requires building height & proximity

Character
- Active / passive
- Soft / hard

Type
- Parks are provided. Urban places are not
Safe Streets

- Requires passive surveillance
  - Windows
  - Verandahs
Quality Homes

Reduced Setbacks
- Efficiency
- Improved interaction
- Eyes on the street

Garages at Rear
- Reduced dominance
- Improved safety
- Improved streetscape
Fronting the Street

- Boundary definition public / private
- Celebrate the frontage
- Use the frontage
- Enhance the street
Call to Arms...

NATIONWIDE, we need the capacity to implement New Urbanism without fighting with every Council and every Engineer on every issue.

We need to establish a vehicle that can reach agreement on appropriate solutions for different places using the Transect as an organizing tool.

We must liberate ourselves from the endless tiresome arguments over trivia (significant trivia !!).

We need a national set of solutions that can override state and local prejudices.
Call to Arms...

Consider:

• Road design and section should be “context sensitive”.
• Road links to the wider context (more than one link!!)
• Permissible 4 way intersections without roundabouts
• Standard, appropriate radii of curvature for place on transect
• Rear lanes always permissible to specific dimensions (6-8m)
• Trees permissible in parking lanes according to volumes/moving lanes
Call to Arms...

Consider:

• Parks size should be based on more than maintenance requirements
• Facilitate multiple use of open space
• Define acceptable definitions and treatments for riparian corridors
• Remove the term BUFFER from all planning frameworks
• A bridge is a bloody bridge
• Express the water
Call to Arms...

Consider:

• Include veranda and front yard in private open space calculations
• POS should not be subject to PLANNING CREEP.
• Front fences should be mandatory
• Privacy standards should be reviewed nationally
• Auxilliary buildings/studios/lofts…should be able to be separately titled, be on corners without splays, should overlook lane and should not need POS, drying courts (or covered car space/garage).
• Does this sound like “Liveable Neighborhoods?”
Does this sound like “Liveable Neighborhoods” ???

Stanhope Gardens / Newbury
Project Review
10 years on