

PC1701-9 FREO ALTERNATIVE - REPORT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ECM Reference:	218/069
Disclosure of Interest:	Nil
Meeting Date:	11 January 2017
Previous Item:	24 September 2014 –SPC1409-01 23 September 2015 –SPC1509-4 24 February 2016 –SPD1502-2 23 March 2016 –SPD1603-1 25 May 2016 –SPD1605-2
Responsible Officer:	Manager Strategic Planning
Actioning Officer:	Senior Strategic Planner
Decision Making Authority:	Council
Agenda Attachments:	1. Summary of community engagement events 2. The Fremantle Alternative Engagement Report - Creating Communities Australia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of *The Freo alternative – Big thinking about small housing*, was to generate a shared community vision on the future of housing in Fremantle. The Freo Alternative engaged with the community on the issue of how more diverse housing options could be provided in Fremantle’s suburban areas by first establishing what attributes the community values about their suburban areas and the challenges and benefits of small housing types.

Community engagement on the Freo Alternative ran from August to November 2016 and consisted of three main events and several surveys. Similar questions were asked at all of the engagement events and qualitative data was compiled from the feedback received. The major themes that emerged out of discussions with the community were: sense of community, trees, car parking, walkability/quality transport options, open space, character and design, sustainability and affordability.

The purpose of this report is to present to Council the engagement that was undertaken on the Freo Alternative initiative and the key themes that emerged. A further report will be presented at the next appropriate Planning Committee to consider how the key themes from the community engagement should be addressed in the draft planning provisions for smaller housing types previously considered by Council in September 2015 and March 2016.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Prior to *the Freo alternative* Council had considered principles of the diverse housing project on several occasions. Deliberation on the diverse housing principles got to a point where the community’s input, outside of a statutory planning process, was essential to progress the project. Accordingly, at the 23 March 2016 (Report SPD1603-1) Ordinary Meeting Council confirmed the principles on which community engagement should be

based and resolved to undertake community engagement prior to any formal statutory planning process.

In May 2016, officers presented a community engagement plan to Council for the 'diverse housing project'. As the project was not constrained by statutory engagement requirements or timeframes, the 'diverse housing project' [later branded *the Freo Alternative*] was an opportunity to more widely engage the community in an alternative way to standard strategic planning engagement processes. Accordingly, the engagement plan proposed three key events including two road shows and a community open day/workshop event. The details of the events were to be further refined by the project team.

The engagement plan established the central engagement messages and areas of focus for the project. A key message of the project was that the engagement was an open discussion on opportunities for, and the community's view of, diverse housing in established areas. Council wanted it to be made clear that while work had been done to establish the principles of 'diverse housing' these were by no means the completed project. On the contrary, the project was based on the principle that current town planning, as everyone understands it, is subject to change as the community considers the issues through the engagement process.

The focus areas of the community engagement were to be:

1. Reasons to consider the need for diverse housing; and
2. Principles upon which to consider an approach to providing for diverse housing.

1. Need for diverse housing

A major part of the project was to explore the community's views on what they think the needs and choices of housing in Fremantle are currently and what these needs and housing choices should be into the future. The project was to explore the dichotomy between the need for smaller housing types vs. the need to retain the character of existing areas and the challenges and benefits of smaller housing types vs 'big' housing types.

Key points for the engagement process established in May 2016 were:

- Focus on the purpose/reasons for the project from a local perspective as opposed to a metropolitan or state perspective.
- What the community values and would like to see in the outcomes of the project.
- What the project is/is not about.
- The capacity of the current planning framework (e.g. R-codes) to achieve the purpose of the project.
- Opportunities for an alternative approach to the current planning framework.
- Benefits of the project to the community.

2. Principles of the diverse housing project

Council had previously considered and confirmed the principles on which community engagement was to be based on several occasions. However, the principles had become quite specific and there was a need to pare these back to their main intent to allow for effective engagement on the issue. Preliminary examples provided to Council in May 2016 are replicated below in table 1.

Table 1. Preliminary engagement principle examples

Development principle	Engagement approach*
Permitting the development of a Grouped Dwelling(s) and/or Multiple Dwelling(s) that does not meet the minimum site area and/or minimum average site area specified in the Residential Design Codes, where the development complies specific requirements and is in one of the specified areas identified on the map.	A planning approach that would permit the development of smaller housing types in specific 'test' areas regardless of site area size.
Any new dwelling shall have a maximum floor area of 120sqm	What smaller housing types (e.g. up to 120 sqm) would be supported by the community in existing Fremantle suburbs.
A minimum 25% of the development site area shall be provided as a Deep Planting Zone. This area shall be uncovered and have a minimum dimension of 4.5 metres. It can be included as part of the open space for the development and 50% of the deep planting zone must be provided on the rear portion of the site.	A new idea, not currently required in planning, of a compulsory 'deep planting zone' to achieve small housing and what this means – no building on the area, always providing a large tree etc.
<p>A maximum of 1 car bay shall be provided for each new dwelling, unless the dwelling is existing when a maximum of two car bays would be allowed; and</p> <p>A maximum of one dwelling in a development, where that dwelling is no larger than one bedroom/studio size (up to 60 sqm), can be car free.</p>	<p>Explore the idea of reduced car parking requirements for smaller housing types.</p> <p>How this could work and why.</p>

*These were further refined prior to the engagement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Given the significance of the project and the complexity of some of the concepts involved, the City commissioned Creating Communities Australia (CCA) as an external engagement facilitator to run the engagement events. The City also contracted the Australian Urban Design Research Centre (AUDRC) to deliver background research, graphic design for the engagement communication materials and a physical model of a suburb and smaller housing types.

The project was branded '*The Freo Alternative – Big thinking about small housing*' and a clear graphics style, consistent message and 'non-planner' language were used in the project's engagement material. Key to the Freo Alternative branding was the idea that, while the project was about housing, the diversity of people and their lifestyle requirements were central to the discussion.

Community engagement started in August 2016 and ran until November 2016. The first communication with the community was a survey to gather housing stories to see what people thought about and were looking for in smaller housing. *The Freo Alternative – big thinking about small housing*, was officially launched at the dialogue café in September 2016. Following the dialogue café the project delved deeper with a series of seven focus groups in October 2016. The final major engagement event was the "Game of Freo LIFE"

open days in November 2016. The timeline and individual activities within the engagement process are illustrated in figure 1 below. Detail on the engagement events is provided in **attachment 1**, including dates and attendance numbers.



Figure 1. Freo Alternative Timeline

Similar questions were asked at all of the engagement events and qualitative data was compiled from the feedback received. Feedback received and main themes that came out of the engagement are discussed in the Planning Comment section of this report. CCA have produced an engagement report detailing the key events and a summary of key themes and feedback from the dialogue café and focus groups. This report is provided in **attachment 2**.

PLANNING COMMENT

The purpose of the Freo Alternative was to explore with the community the idea of smaller housing and how more diverse housing options could be provided in our suburban areas. The ideas and themes that came out of the community engagement will be reviewed against the development principles for diverse housing previously considered by Council and used to inform the final statutory planning framework.

CCA have compiled the responses from the dialogue café and focus groups in the engagement report provided in **attachment 2**. The major topics and key themes that came up during the engagement are discussed below.

Feedback from engagement events

The major topics explored during the Fremantle Alternative community engagement were:

- The future of your community.
- Benefits, opportunities, challenges and priorities.
- Guiding values for the project.

The future of your community

The purpose of this topic was to help participants think about future generations and their housing needs, not just the housing needs of the participant at that time. The analogy of thinking back to the year 1996 was used to show how dynamically the world had changed in 20 years and how the future would be different also. Participants were not given cues and answers were free-form.

The overview of findings from the engagement in CCAs report (**attachment 2**) shows that people are thinking the following about the future of living in the City of Fremantle:

- *A rapidly ageing population*
- *Future opportunities for communal and shared housing models*
- *Fragmentation and lack of connection*
- *Smaller, disconnected families with fewer children*

In considering these future scenarios, participants expressed a desire to see:

- *Shared and/or connected community spaces. A distinction between public open space and private communal space was made. The feedback showed both of these space types were equally desired.*
- *Modular houses with movable internal walls. To allow for a home to adapt form and size as lifestyle, needs, ownership or family structures change.*
- *Tiny/mobile houses. Added flexibility around providing for and allowing these housing types in the City.*
- *Long-term (e.g. 20 year) leases. To give the tenant/renter more certainty and stability in their housing choice.*
- *A sharing economy. As well as the housing itself, shared cars and facilities could form an integral part of future lifestyle and housing including cooperative housing approaches. Participants noted the success of sharing models was apparent in recent technology and social shifts towards services such as Uber and sharing groups on social media.*
- *Businesses in suburban areas. To create better and more localised access to services, as well as greater opportunities for local economic development and social engagement in local areas*

Benefits, Opportunities, Challenges and Priorities

The purpose of this topic was to explore the (sometimes conflicting) benefits, challenges, opportunities and priorities for diverse housing options with the community. The general points made at the focus groups are provided in the CCA report in **attachment 2**.

Benefits and opportunities

The dialogue café provided more qualitative feedback on this topic. Overall, CCA's report shows participants supported the provision of a diversity of housing options, including smaller houses. Some of the recurring benefits and opportunities identified included:

- *Community.* Participants recognise that although planning rules cannot plan a community, the provision of alternative housing provides more opportunities for a diverse, connected and happy community.

- *Affordability.* Smaller housing options may also provide more affordable choices.
- *Innovative design and architecture.* By encouraging developers to move away from the traditional four bedroom, two bathroom home, new and different types of designs can be explored.
- *Community housing projects.* Different tenure options may create more opportunities for houses to be built and owned by the community.
- *Incentives for sustainable/innovative projects.* Support, either in the form of subsidies, or information on best practice in sustainable and innovative design.

Challenges

The challenges commonly recognised as an obstacle to the provision of diverse housing were:

- *Changes to behaviour of building industry and developers.* It could be difficult to encourage developers to build smaller homes if they this means reduced profits. It was suggested incentives would be required to encourage landowners to develop smaller housing.
- *Ingrained expectations.* Many people have an expectation or desire that they will own a four bedroom, two-bathroom house with a large backyard. However, others recognised that there is a market for smaller homes.
- *Complexity of planning laws.* Changing planning laws is complex. It was recognised that the City of Fremantle has a history of making innovative changes to the planning system at a local and state level.
- *Maintaining green space and trees.* When encouraging development, even with smaller homes, maintaining green space and trees will be a complex issue.

The summary of responses from the Dialogue café on the benefits, opportunities and challenges of the project are included in the figure 2 word cloud below.

What might be the key benefits, opportunities and challenges in providing diverse housing?



Themes in size order based on the frequency of answer.

Figure 2. Benefits, opportunities and challenges feedback from the dialogue café word cloud.

Priorities

Participants at the focus groups specifically made comment on what they considered the priorities for the Freo Alternative project should be. Participants at the dialogue café were additionally asked to rank the priorities (refer to figure 3 below). The combined list of priorities for the Freo Alternative from the dialogue café, focus groups and surveys were

- Enhance sustainability
- Support the provision of cooperative housing
- A diversity of open spaces (public and private)
- Provide for community and social interaction
- Businesses in the suburbs and more suburban centres
- City of Fremantle to communicate directly with the community
- Affordable housing which is affordable to live in as well as to purchase
- Consider alternatives to the personal car
- Retention and provision of trees and vegetation
- The “Freo” Identity
- Provide smaller houses
- Good communication and engagement from the City with the community

What are your top 5 priorities for the Freo Alternative project?



Groups were asked to rank their top priorities. From the list of responses these priorities were ranked in importance.

Figure 3. Priorities for the project established at the dialogue café word cloud

Guiding values for the project

The purpose of this topic was to establish what the community values about the areas

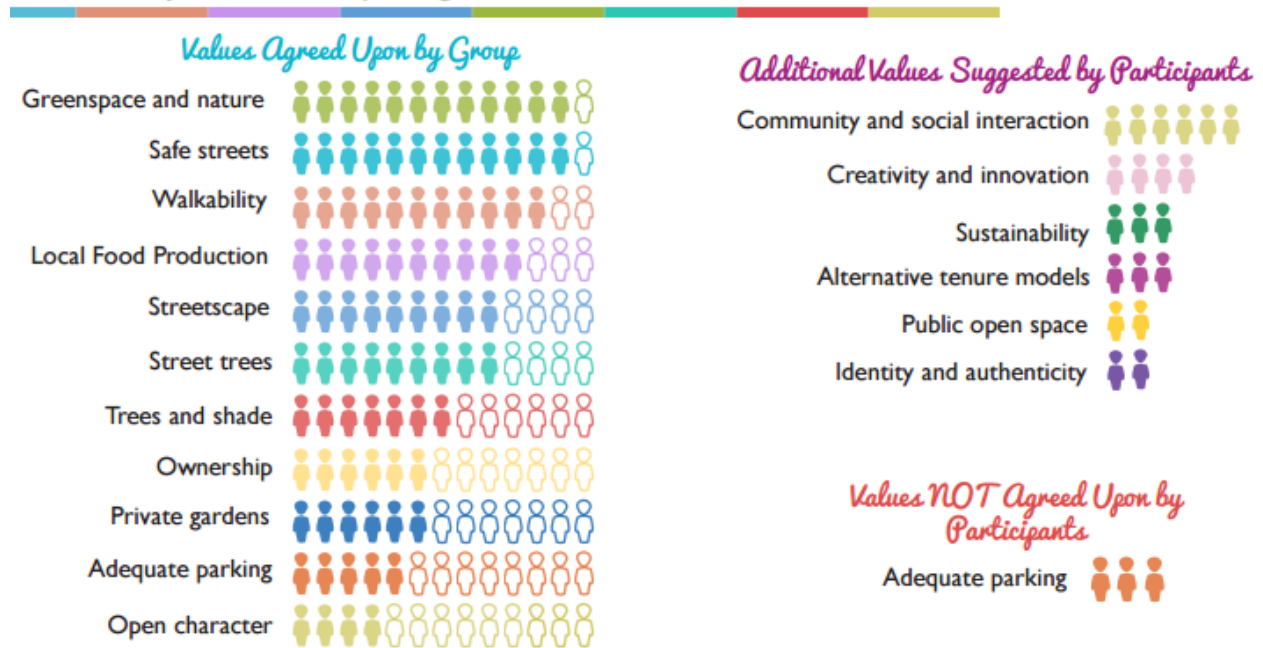
they live in. There was a general agreement that the more human-related values (such as those suggested by dialogue café participants in figure 4 below) complement the physical or built values.

The combined list of values as provided by CCA and as discussed with participants across all engagement were -

- *Trees.* There was unanimous agreement in all discussions that trees were essential and should not be lost during development. Many participants supported the idea of having a minimum required number of large trees per unit area of development.
- *A connection to nature and green spaces.* As with trees, many participants supported the idea of having a minimum required amount of open space and/or natural space per unit area of development.
- *Community and social interaction.* Most community members expressed a desire to see more vibrant neighbourhoods, more people talking to each other and a greater sense of community.
- *Safe streets.* Safety, including lighting and the concept of “eyes on the street,” was considered valuable, especially by Dialogue Café participants.
- *Different tenure models.* Ownership was considered important, but other types of tenure including renting were also considered valuable. More rights for renters and other tenants was deemed necessary.
- *Walkability, “cycleability” and public transport.* Participants were commonly divided on whether car parking and use of cars should be encouraged. However, those on both sides of this argument tended to agree that increased options including more walkable and “cycleable” streets and more frequent and reliable public transport, were desirable and would reduce the need for cars and parking.
- *Sustainability.* This was a commonly used “catch all” term used for describing a key value – but needs to be clearly defined as it can relate to environmental, economic, social or other forms of sustainability. All of these are important but must be clearly delineated.

Summary of responses to the question on identified values at the Dialogue café are included in the figure 4 word cloud below.

What identified values do you agree with?



Dialogue Cafe participants were asked to vote within their groups on values they agreed with. The results from each of the values are shown above.

Figure 4. Values agreed upon at the dialogue café word cloud.

At the game of Freo LIFE (pop-in open days) participants were asked about the values above in terms of what they considered important when fitting small housing onto their game board. The top five answers were:

Top responses from game of Freo LIFE

In deciding how to best fit the small house(s) on to your game board, how important were the following things in your decision-making?

1. Keep existing trees; and
Include sustainable features (first equal)
2. Encourage social interaction
3. Add new trees
4. Maintain open space on the lot
5. Create privacy

What other things do you think are important for people who live in a small house that couldn't be captured on your game board?

1. Diverse population
2. Safe communities
3. Location to amenities
4. Close to parks and green space
5. Strong community network

Key themes

Over the engagement period several themes consistently came up at each of the events and in the feedback officers received on the project. The focus of the engagement events was to establish and test the values and themes upon which planning responses could be based, not on detailed design solutions for diverse housing.

Some of these key themes can be more easily related to physical planning and design considerations than others. This section of the report aims to summarise the main feedback on each theme, and then provide officer comment (in bold text) distinguishing between specific points to address in the final refinement of draft planning scheme/policy provisions to facilitate more diverse housing forms (which will be the subject of a further

report to Council in the near future) and aspects of the feedback which relate to broader matters which, although important, are outside the direct scope of statutory planning mechanisms.

Theme 1 - Community

Community-centred development on a private and public scale came through strongly in all engagement events. Bringing a sense of community back into the way housing is provided was discussed at the dialogue café and all of the focus groups, and was physically included in several of the game of Freo LIFE participants' design of their own Fremantle suburb.

At the Dialogue café community and social interaction was identified as a guiding value. Sharing spaces, resources and facilities was also one of the top five priorities all tables collectively established for the project.

Participants at the focus groups discussed community in terms of being able to talk to their neighbour and knowing people in their street. Some participants asked what the City can do to help interactions between neighbours to make their streets 'friendlier'. There was also a willingness put forward by participants to share more resources within the community. On these points the focus groups suggested:

- Designing dwellings with open frontages i.e. verandahs, doors facing the street, less walls etc to help people meet and greet their neighbours.
- Community resource libraries for tools, machinery etc
- Co-housing models. One of the priorities from the focus groups was, "*To support the provision of co-operative housing which could house a mix of multiple groups including older residents, students, those requiring crisis accommodation and those with disabilities.*"

In the game of Freo LIFE, one of the additional tiles participants could choose to include on their model was a blue tile with handshake graphic that represented communal space. This tile was used in many interesting ways including:

- Communal development i.e. fences removed and housing located around centrally located communal tiles.
- Communal street development i.e. the communal tile was also used to the front of the housing models sometimes on the street verge.
- Between existing and new development on one lot.

Other participants used the 'make my own' tile to denote a community recreation area on their site or some other communal shared facility.

In the feedback survey on the game of Freo LIFE participants noted social interaction was the second most important decision when deciding how to best fit the small house(s) on to their game board.

A related issue was private space and privacy. Private areas came up in discussions at the focus groups and in the game boards completed for the game of Freo LIFE. The open question feedback in the survey indicated the provision of private space for dwellings to be equally, if not more, important than communal space.

Officer comment:

Participants at the engagement events highly valued spaces and building design that would enhance social interactions with their neighbours. The Freo Alternative initiative would likely not provide more public open space due to the small suburban scale of residential development it is intended to facilitate. However options can be explored in the planning provisions on development outcomes that would help foster social interactions between new smaller dwellings and adjoining development and the street. These may include design features or communal space between private dwellings requirements. The provision of adequate private outdoor space appears to be considered equally important.

Issues for consideration in next report on Freo Alternative planning provisions:

- **Design provisions to promote communal interaction between neighbours.**
- **Quantity and form of private open space for each new dwelling.**

Theme 2 - Trees

Valuing existing and adding new trees in Fremantle suburban areas in both public and private spaces was a theme generally agreed across all engagement events. In the discussions on what participants valued in existing areas, established trees and their contribution to the amenity of areas and streetscapes came up time and time again. The other benefits of trees, such as increasing an area's ecological network, environmental qualities, etc. was also mentioned.

At the dialogue café green space and nature was the top agreed value. Street trees, and trees and shade were also high ranking values (refer to figure 4).

At the focus groups the retention and provision of trees and vegetation in both public and private spaces came up as a priority. Some participants advocated more verge planting and canopy policies while others saw that flexibility in retaining/planting trees when it came to allowing new development may also be required. Generally participants were interested in more information on the City's tree canopy and management of trees on public land. One group specifically discussed the benefits of legislating deep planting zones on private land.

Existing trees were provided on the game of Freo LIFE game boards. In the completed models it is evident that keeping existing trees was a priority for many when considering their game board. In the feedback survey on the game of Freo LIFE, participants voted existing trees to be the most important consideration [first equal with sustainability] when deciding how to best fit the small house(s) on to their game board.

Additional 'new' trees and green 'garden tiles' were also provided for participants to add on to their game of Freo LIFE game boards. From the photographs of the game boards it is evident that most participants added a new tree (even if existing trees were removed), and the green 'garden' tile was well used when providing for new development.

In the open question feedback in the survey, participants stated:

- View of trees and green space is important to me.
- Reducing the site (footprint) of housing allows for more green space and trees.
- Provide incentives for retention of trees, native gardens.

At the development industry meeting, the building representatives were cautious of any rule that banned tree removal. They acknowledged that the community values trees, but it is not always economic or viable to retain a tree on a site where development is to happen. There was a preference towards providing for new trees in more appropriate places.

Officer comment:

The feedback from the engagement events showed trees located on public and private land are highly valued. The planning response to the Freo Alternative will provide provisions for development on private land, not public land. Accordingly, the City could consider planning provisions that prescribe space on a lot to retain or plant trees. Past experience on this topic however has shown that tree retention/planting requirements are not straightforward, especially where development is also a desired outcome. A statutory planning response to this theme therefore needs to be carefully considered.

Independent of the Freo Alternative initiative, with regard to trees on public land the City has a number of objectives and measures of success under the Environmental Responsibility strategic focus area of the *Strategic Community Plan 2015-25* including:

- **Maintain and upscale 1 000 new trees per year program.**
- **A 10% increase year on year of native verge gardens.**
- **Increase tree canopy cover by 20% by 2020 to address urban heat island effect in Fremantle.**
- **Preparation of an Urban Forest Plan (anticipated to be presented to Council and subsequently communicated to the public in 2017).**

Issues for consideration in next report on Freo Alternative planning provisions:

- **Design provisions to safeguard existing trees and/or require new tree planting on development sites, proportionate to achieving viable development of smaller housing typologies.**

Theme 3 - Car parking

Car parking was a polarising topic for participants at the dialogue café and focus groups. There was an even split between participants that considered providing car parking on site to be essential for development and those that did not.

The value of 'adequate parking' was one of the lower ranked values at the dialogue café. Parking and its relationship with other transport modes was cited as an issue to address when providing for diverse housing.

At the focus groups the notion that 20 years into the future cars may not be required as much as they are now was widely considered. Some participants were of the view that reductions in providing on-site car parking could start to happen now as the younger generation use cars less and the sharing economy becomes popular. Others reflected that reductions could only be considered where street parking, wider verges for verge parking or public transport in the area was adequate. Some participants advocated that cars are needed now and should be provided when considering new development.

A priority to come out of the focus groups was: *“To consider alternatives to the personal car including more walkable and ‘cycleable’ neighbourhoods, better access to public transport and consideration of future technologies including communal electric cars.”*

In the industry meeting builders of smaller housing generally supported providing for cars on site. The representatives called garages ‘car bedrooms’, and while they anticipate their clients would still like to provide for cars on site they suggested new development could build garages that are adaptable to changes in use into the future.

The car related issue the industry group saw as more important was the turning circle for rear lots. Currently rear lots require a large proportion of driveway dedicated to providing for a turning space so that cars entering the property can reverse on site and re-enter the street in a forward gear. The industry group considered review of these requirements to allow for a smaller turning circle or allowing cars to reverse into the street would be a better alternative.

As part of the model on the game of Freo LIFE open days, cars for existing houses and cars for new housing were provided on the participant’s game board. Some participants did not provide any car parking and others provided grouped car parking. In the open question feedback in the survey on their model two participants noted they provided car parking on the verge and one showed car sharing facilities. Overall the survey showed car parking to be the lowest priority when participants designed their model.

Officer comment:

The engagement feedback on the issue of providing car parking for new development was divided. Some participants highly valued the provision of parking on site while others did not. The City’s *Integrated Transport Strategy* acknowledges that not every household requires or wants a car space and suggests maximum car parking standards. As the Freo Alternative proposes smaller houses, officers suggest a reduction in car parking and/or maximum car parking provisions could be considered. In considering a reduction in car parking, factors such as proximity to amenities and public transport would also need to be considered.

Issues for consideration in next report on Freo Alternative planning provisions:

- **Whether draft planning standards providing reduced parking requirements for new smaller housing types, as previously discussed by Council, are the most appropriate approach to deal with parking demand and travel behaviour.**
- **Whether current planning requirements for on-site vehicle manoeuvring space could be relaxed for new types of smaller residential development.**

Theme 4 - Walkability/Public transport

Related to the theme of car parking, ‘walkability’ and quality active/public transport options to support smaller housing types was a quality participants valued about their neighbourhoods and rated as a priority for the project. Participants agreed that more walkable and ‘cycleable’ streets, and more frequent and reliable public transport, were desirable and would reduce the need for cars and parking.

In discussions participants shared their public transport stories – when/why they use/don’t use public transport. Both regular and infrequent public transport users agreed

accessibility and convenience, (e.g. location, routes and timing) are key to public transport use. Related to the car parking theme above, some participants noted they would not use their car if quality public transport was available. Some groups showed support for locating more housing near public transport routes.

Alternatives to personal car use came up in engagement conversations. There appeared to be support for car-sharing with the experiences in using the ridesharing service Uber cited several times as a positive example. The notion of car-sharing was also shown on some game of Freo LIFE game boards.

In terms of location to amenities, there was support in the focus groups for more businesses in suburban areas. There was recognition that business and customers now work on a global, internet-based market and running a business, whether it be goods or services, from home was becoming increasingly popular. Discussion within these groups suggested more flexibility in the work from home planning requirements or additional local centres or 'hubs' for these business types.

In the game of Freo LIFE, participants identified proximity to amenities and nearness to parks and green space as the third and fourth most important non-design related attributes for people living in a small house.

Officer comment:

Participants showed a preference for locating new housing near public transport and amenities. There was also support for improving active and public transport facilities in the City of Fremantle. Most of these transport issues are beyond the direct scope of the Freo Alternative project, however the City's *Strategic Community Plan 2015-25* and *Integrated Transport Strategy* already identify priority objectives relating to active and public transport, to guide action by the City and other transport agencies to improve the quality of these modes and increase their level of use.

Within the scope of the Freo Alternative project, further consideration can be given to the distribution of areas where smaller housing types may be promoted relative to access to public transport and local amenities.

Issues for consideration in next report on Freo Alternative planning provisions:

- **The level of access to public transport and local amenities required in order for an area to be considered a suitable, or preferred, location for the development of additional smaller housing typologies.**

Theme 5 - Open space

Discussions on open space were varied in that the provision of parks, such as sports fields or beach reserves, and open outdoor space on a private lot were talked about under the same theme. The discussions also crossed over into other themes such as trees, character and amenity of an area, and community. Overall, the value of open space and connection to nature and green spaces, both on private land and on public land, was rated highly by the community when thinking about their suburban areas.

One of the major priorities identified through the engagement events was: *To create – or allow for the creation of – a diversity of open spaces*. Feedback from the focus groups was that new development in suburban areas provides little open space as new houses

maximise the building on the lot. Participants viewed this development outcome negatively. Officers got the impression that some participants would prefer the traditional rhythm and configuration of buildings and garden space in suburban areas to be retained.

The game of Freo LIFE did not include a specific 'open space tile'. Instead it included a 'garden', 'private' and 'communal' space tiles. The models completed for the game of Freo LIFE showed participants used all three of these tiles well; the completed game boards appeared to provide ample open space with each new small dwelling. In the feedback survey on the game of Freo LIFE participants voted maintaining open space the fourth most important decision when deciding how to best fit the small house(s) on to their game board.

Officer comment:

It was apparent through the engagement that participants valued the open feel of traditional suburban development on private lots and public open spaces. The concern presented was that current new infill development provides little usable open space and reduces the amount of garden space and trees. This then alters the rhythm and 'feel' of suburban areas. Maintaining the traditional open feel of private lots in suburban areas, whilst at the same time allowing for viable development of smaller housing typologies, is one of the major challenges in determining the planning provisions that should be adopted at the next stage of this project. Previously considered draft provisions dealing with maximum dwelling size, open space/landscaping requirements and setbacks can be reviewed in a further report to Council.

Providing additional public open space through the Freo Alternative is not within the scope of the project. The City is, however, exploring this topic through other avenues. For example, the City's *Greening Fremantle Strategy (Green Plan)* includes an objective of providing the community with access to functional public open space within a 400m walkable catchment. The first projects to be considered under this initiative are new pocket parks in Hilton and O'Connor. These parks have undergone community consultation and their designs are currently being considered.

Issues for consideration in next report on Freo Alternative planning provisions:

- **Review of draft planning standards for open space, outdoor living area and landscaping requirements, as previously discussed by Council, in the light of the community engagement feedback.**

Theme 6 - Character and design

The responses on this topic were diverse and included:

- Identity
- Tiny housing
- Innovative and good design.

The idea of the 'Freo identity' was frequently mentioned at the engagement events. Many participants stated they want to 'keep what it means to be Freo'. To some this concept is related to character and heritage of the area and to others it relates to a sense of spirit, vibrancy and interest on the streets. While the concept means different things to different

participants, CCA note that whatever the 'Freo identify' is for community the underlying idea is that Fremantle is loved by the people who live there, as a place like no other.

Tiny houses came up in all of the engagement events and surveys. Tiny houses are homes predominantly on wheels and moveable by vehicle. Currently planning and building rules do not recognise tiny houses as 'dwellings'. Ultimately advocates of the tiny house movement would like to see more flexibility in the planning rules when providing for tiny houses.

Across the engagement events there was broad support for innovative and good design in any planning outcome on diverse housing. While the engagement events were not solution/design focused some statements did come through on innovative (comments also related to sustainability theme below) and good design. A selection of comments received on the theme is provided below:

- Consider house entrances via gardens rather than carports and 'friendlier' frontages such as verandas, doors facing the street, less walls etc. (Refer to community theme above).
- Ensure efficient and functional design
- Provide for good solar access/passively designed homes.
- Human-centred design.
- Break our love of bricks.
- Mandate two-storey on small blocks.
- Ensure good architectural design with regard to its location.
- Provide a mix of grouped and standalone layouts.
- Do not allow 'donga' development.
- Attract interesting architecture e.g. design charrette
- Better "Freo styles" of architecture but not Council telling us how to build a house.
- Allow good pre-fab design.
- Allow imaginative design.
- Design of whole blocks, rather than individual properties.
- Allow washing machines in kitchens.
- Lighting and the concept of "eyes on the street" for safe streets and safety.

Officer comment:

It is clear from the engagement that while there is support for smaller housing types the unknown 'end product' or design of smaller housing is a concern for the community. Many participants discussed good quality outcomes and opposed badly designed houses or 'transportables'. Specific comments provided on how to achieve good design ranged from the City mandating a set of design concepts for development, to allowing a free range on design so as to conserve the 'Freo identity'. How innovative and good design can be fostered and achieved through planning requirements needs to be carefully considered. Further discussion on the options for design will be presented for Council's consideration in a subsequent report to Council on the Freo Alternative.

An underlying premise of the Freo Alternative is to allow for smaller housing types on existing suburban lots to be developed, subdivided and the land and house owned in separate title. Officers anticipate the resulting development would be small-scale developments in the 'backyard' in separate ownership to the main house, or permanent 'micro village' development. Tiny house development could

be considered as part of these development types where they meet the requirements, however in discussions with tiny house advocates and considering the nature of many tiny houses – movable, and often meeting the legal definition of a caravan rather than a building under WA legislation - it appears the priority for this development type is not necessarily land ownership or planning provisions as the Freo Alternative would provide, but more certainty around legally occupying land. The requirements for caravans occupying land are specified under the *Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act 1995* and *Caravan Parks and Camping Ground Regulations 1997*. The City's duties as a local government under this legislation are primarily administered through the Environmental Health team. As a complementary action to finalising planning provisions under the Freo Alternative initiative, the City could consider providing general guidance information to the community on living accommodation that is regulated under the above legislation. Officers will provide more detail on this option as part of the next report to Council on the Freo Alternative project.

Issues for consideration in next report on Freo Alternative planning provisions:

- **The extent and form of provisions to ensure good quality design outcomes (including design that is responsive to local character and context).**

Theme 7 - Sustainability

The theme of sustainability came up in many forms including specific elements in the design of buildings (e.g. solar panels and rainwater tanks) and the broader concept of houses that are more sustainable to occupy and run (discussed in Theme 8 – Affordability below). The enhancement of sustainability came out as a priority in all engagement events, and there appeared to be across the board support for more sustainability elements in the design and construction of new housing.

Sustainability as a key concern came up at the dialogue café. Specific feedback on sustainability issues at dialogue café event included:

- Renewable energy use
- Off-grid housing
- Sustainable intelligent communities and buildings
- Ecological corridors
- Incentives for sustainable/innovative projects
- Embed sustainability into the planning strategy.

The game of Freo LIFE included a specific grey 'sustainability' tile with solar panel graphic. The majority of participants used the sustainability tile on their completed game board. In the feedback survey on the game of Freo LIFE participants voted sustainability to be the most important decision [first equal with existing trees] when deciding how to best fit the small house(s) on to their game board.

Officer comment:

The requirements for sustainability can be interpreted several different ways and mean something different to everyone. In the context of the City's One Planet Strategy, a number of high level sustainability principles such as land use and wildlife, culture and heritage, and health and happiness link closely to themes of community interaction, trees and open space and character which have already been discussed above. At a more specific level, smaller housing types which the

Freo Alternative initiative is intended to promote should be inherently more sustainable to build and run than larger houses as they involve less embedded energy in construction through being physically smaller and should consume less energy to light, heat and cool.

In the context of statutory planning provisions which will be a specific output from the Freo Alternative project, consideration can be given to the extent to which to mandate or incentivise design and construction elements which can contribute to more sustainable built development. One example of where the City has already implemented this into the planning framework is the City's *Local Planning Policy 2.2 - Split Density Codes and Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Schedule*. Under this policy development must attain a minimum seven star energy rating and additionally provide solar panels and water tanks. Similar requirements could be considered for development under the Freo Alternative provisions.

Issues for consideration in next report on Freo Alternative planning provisions:

- **The extent and form of provisions to encourage or mandate higher than 'business as usual' sustainability standards in building design and construction.**

Theme 8 - Affordability

Affordability of housing came up in the discussions in many forms including:

1. Housing affordable to buy/rent.
2. Housing affordable to run (related to sustainability theme above).
3. The provision of different tenure models to allow for owners (including co-ownership) and renters.

In the question on the future of housing in Fremantle participants shared a concern that in the future housing in Fremantle will not be affordable to buy or rent, and the market will continue to offer large houses despite households in suburban areas becoming smaller. Participants considered one of the benefits of smaller housing options may be that they provide more affordable choices in Fremantle for home owners and renters alike.

Affordability of living in a house was also a matter that was raised consistently. Smaller housing in general should be more cost effective to run than larger housing. As already referred to under Design and Sustainability themes above, participants suggested efficient and solar passive design could be considered as part of developing smaller housing ideas.

There was a lot of curiosity in the focus groups about co-ownership models as the focus groups took place the week the City launched its expressions of interest process for a 'Baugruppen' model development at No. 7 Quarry Street. Many of the focus groups discussed co-ownership in a positive sense as a more affordable and community focused way for people to enter the housing market, an in general this housing type was supported.

Officer comment:

Through the engagement events it was evident that there is interest in the community around different housing models that would provide for more

affordable options to rent or buy a home. These options include financial mechanisms for providing affordable housing e.g. for key workers or low income households and co-ownership housing models. While the Freo Alternative will not directly provide these options it would not prevent such financial models being applied to development built under the Freo Alternative planning framework. The primary purpose of the project is to allow for smaller houses to be built in suburban areas, and by increasing the diversity of housing size and type in these areas contribute to the supply of comparatively affordable alternatives to housing currently delivered by the market. Outside of the Freo Alternative project, there are a number of current initiatives that address housing affordability through other mechanisms, including the City's Baugruppen EOI and a similar proposal at LandCorp's WGV development.

Officers do not consider there are any specific issues arising from this theme of the engagement process which require further examination in the next report on Freo Alternative planning provisions.

Next steps

Officers propose that the next step for the project will be to draw on the information in this report, and specifically the 'Issues for consideration' dot points in the officer comment sections above, to review the draft planning provisions for diverse housing previously agreed by Council in its resolutions of September 2015 and March 2016. This review will be reported to the next appropriate Planning Committee and Council meetings, with a recommendation on how to proceed with the commencement of formal planning processes to introduce statutory provisions that would facilitate development of housing types envisaged through the Freo Alternative/diverse housing project.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of *The Freo alternative – Big thinking about small housing*, engagement process was to generate a shared community discussion and vision on the future of housing in Fremantle. This report outlines the consultation undertaken discusses the key themes that came out of the community engagement events and surveys.

The main high level conclusion that may be drawn from the findings of all the engagement events is that the City's proposal to introduce an innovative approach to provide for diverse housing forms has been positively perceived, and is garnering interest in the community. Beyond this high level message of broad support from community members who participated in one or more elements of the engagement process, eight key themes (some of which overlap with one another to some extent) emerged as matters which participants regard as the most important to address in developing specific planning provisions to facilitate the development of more diverse housing in suburban parts of the City of Fremantle. These themes have been discussed in the Planning Comment section of this report, and will provide a focus for further work on the project that will be presented to a future meeting of the Planning Committee, as outlined under 'Next steps' above.

COMMITTEE AND OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION/COUNCIL DECISION

MOVED: Cr J Strachan

- 1. That Council receive the information on the *Freo alternative – Big thinking about small housing* community engagement process and outcomes as presented in this report and in the report produced by Creating Communities Australia provided in attachment 2 of the Planning Committee agenda 11 January 2017.**
- 2. That officers prepare a report to the next appropriate Planning Committee meeting on:**
 - a. A review of the draft development provisions considered by Council in September 2015 and March 2016 in the context of the eight key themes identified during the Freo Alternative community engagement process. These themes are: community, trees, car parking, walkability/quality transport options, open space, character and design, sustainability and affordability. The review of draft development provisions should specifically address the following matters:**
 - Design provisions to promote communal interaction between neighbours.
 - Quantity and form of private open space for each new dwelling.
 - Design provisions to safeguard existing trees and/or require new tree planting on development sites, proportionate to achieving viable development of smaller housing typologies.
 - Whether draft planning standards providing reduced parking requirements for new smaller housing types, as previously discussed by Council, are the most appropriate approach to deal with parking demand and travel behaviour.
 - Whether current planning requirements for on-site vehicle manoeuvring space could be relaxed for new types of smaller residential development.
 - The level of access to public transport and local amenities required in order for an area to be considered a suitable, or preferred, location for the development of additional smaller housing typologies.
 - Draft planning standards for open space, outdoor living area and landscaping requirements.
 - The extent and form of provisions to ensure good quality design outcomes (including design that is responsive to local character and context).
 - The extent and form of provisions to encourage or mandate higher than 'business as usual' sustainability standards in building design and construction.

b. Recommendations on how to proceed with the commencement of formal planning processes to introduce statutory provisions to facilitate development of smaller, more diverse housing types having regard to the review of matters referred to in recommendation 2a. above.

SECONDED: Cr I Waltham

CARRIED: 13/0

For	Against
Mayor, Brad Pettitt Cr Doug Thompson Cr Bryn Jones Cr Andrew Sullivan Cr Jon Strachan Cr Rachel Pemberton Cr Simon Naber Cr Hannah Fitzhardinge Cr David Hume Cr Dave Coggin Cr Ingrid Waltham Cr Sam Wainwright Cr Jeff McDonald	