

RP3008

SHAPING SUBURBIA – THE FORM AND FUTURE OF OUR SUBURBS

Problem

Our growing cities have created pressure on the need to house more people in limited space.

In existing areas, increases in residential density are usually attempted via development bonuses - an approach typically results in either high-rise development or in nothing at all. Additionally, high rise development has a number of barriers:

- lower market acceptance/ cultural issues
- poor carbon performance,
- land-title / physical limitations, and
- is an economically un-viable development model in all but the best parts of our cities

Further, there is increasing evidence that low levels of activity and car dependent places are associated with poor health for citizens.

Opportunity

Existing low-rise residential areas occupy a vast land area in our cities. Yet middle-ring suburbs are typically overlooked as areas for change.



Figure 1 Significant proportions of our cities are low-density suburbia

Solution

This PhD will determine how our existing low-density suburbs can evolve via an unconventional development model and instead play a significant part in our cities' growth, can increase citizen's incidental activity, reduce per-citizen ecological footprint and create living communities with Low Carbon intensity.

It will do this by highlighting new connections

between "settlement patterns" (i.e. the built environment) with "behaviour patterns" (including the way we get around and walkability metrics) as a way of unlocking/ legitimising a new approach to city making.

How can our existing low-rise suburbs evolve to create great communities and walkable low-carbon places

Most changes that are proposed to suburbia are radical and often do not work with existing resident's values. Gradual, evolutionary change is atypical but can be an effective strategy in delivering city growth.

Benefits

Walkable, low-carbon, connected communities have multiple end-user benefits:

- city growth – a new development model
- delivers a range of housing types
- assists with affordability
- demonstrates leadership in LCL
- individual & population health benefits
- supports strong and safe communities

Showcase a new way for our cities

Improving health, and living with significantly lower carbon footprint, will increasingly become desirable as new housing types become available and home buyers seek living in affordable, safe, healthy, vibrant, connected and walkable communities.

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