

Oaks Estate News

Oaks Estate Progress Association

-Vol.2, No.2, April 2012



OEPA OPEN COMMITTEE MEETING

ALL WELCOME

**7.00pm, Thursday 12 April
at the Community Hall.**

The main agenda items will be:

- Community response to initial draft design plans from consultants
- Determine OEPA position on dual occupancy.
- Agreed position on front fences and front gates.

Please bring something to share for supper

**Second Oaks Estate public consultation:
The Design Workshop,
6-8.00pm, Wednesday, 18 April,
at the Community Hall.**

**Design options for the draft master plan
will be tabled and discussed.**

**Oaks Estate residents are encouraged to
attend.**

SUCCESSFUL MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

About 40 Oaks Estate residents, ACT Government and Queanbeyan City Council officers, two master planning consultants and two local dogs participated in the first Master Plan Ideas Workshop at the Community Hall on 14 March. The residents were outspoken and passionately expressed their concern for conserving the unique village atmosphere and open spaces of Oaks Estate. The officials & consultants gave us a sympathetic hearing. Peter O'Dea, Michel Starling and Karen Williams were confirmed as Oaks Estate's representatives.



Participants at the first Master Plan Ideas Workshop.

OEPA COMMITTEE DRAFT RESOLUTIONS ON OAKS ESTATE MASTER PLANNING

Following the first Master Plan Public Consultation the OEPA Committee formulated a set of draft resolutions as a guide to our representatives for the Oaks Estate Master Plan Reference Group meeting held 5 April.

1. That Oaks Estate be recognized and maintained as a unique urban village:
 - (i) an oasis – emphasising the importance of maintaining open space in Oaks Estate and a buffer of open space around Oaks Estate.
 - (ii) focused on sight lines between The Oaks (1838), the Queanbeyan Railway Station (1887) and the Robertsons' House (c.1913),
 - (iii) of historical significance to Canberra, Queanbeyan and the wider region, like Hall and Tharwa,
 - (iv) in a rural landscape,
 - (v) bounded by the confluence of the Queanbeyan and Molonglo Rivers,
 - (vi) comprised of a mix of predominantly single residential dwellings and also single commercial buildings on large to medium sized blocks.

The emphasis in point 1(vi) is to oppose consolidation of vacant land-release blocks. There should be no more large blocks used for commercial development and there should be no more blocks used for industrial development. There should be better lease exclusions to ensure empathy with residential blocks. Existing and

future commercial/ industrial activity should be held accountable for providing off-street parking and landscaping.

2. That the historical land survey and sub-division of Oaks Estate be maintained (no splitting of titles is the central emphasis of this point, encouraging empathy with the existing character of Oaks Estate) and to that end there be:

(i) no more multi-unit medium density or greater development;

(ii) no consolidation of titles of existing residential blocks, now or in the future, and no consolidation of blocks to be released in 2015, now or in the future;

(iii) no separate title dual occupancy and no sub-division of titles to existing residential blocks;

(iv) controlled development of secondary housing on existing residential blocks, *eg.* granny flats, studio-residences, workshops & sheds.

3. Development of an art, artisan, craft and cultural precinct in part of the heritage area between Railway Street and Hazel Street, and adjacent areas, to accommodate workshops, studios, studio-residences, galleries, professional suites and similar activities which would create a positive image of Oaks Estate, together with:

(i) additional parking facility in the area, and

(ii) native re-vegetation of the landscape of that precinct.

4. ACT Housing to commit to reviewing Oaks Estate public housing and emergency housing in order to bring it into conformity with current social housing standards and the revised Canberra Social Plan 2011, particularly in relation to lower density, proximity to services and greater social mix. Emphasis should be on reducing the scale and density of public housing in Oaks Estate, a more sustainable and 'greener' standard of housing, with a better-managed outcome. This point is meant to focus discussion on ACT Housing's role and accountability in the context of the priority stated in the ACT Government's Social Plan (revised 2011, p.38) – Delivery Diverse and Sustainable Housing: "the focus is on development of sustainable, universally designed apartments and town houses to enable aging in place. Well designed infill housing in locations that will support access to services and sustainable public transport will encourage greater social mix and the richness of local neighbourhoods."

OAKS ESTATE MASTER PLAN REFERENCE GROUP MEETING, 5 March 2012

Oaks Estate's representatives met with Government representatives, and afterwards with the Oaks Estate Master Plan (OEMP) project team and consultants.

Raising Issues with Agency Reps. Agency representatives were senior management level officers from ESSD (Strategic City Planning and Design), TAMSD (Molonglo river corridor), ACT Heritage Unit, EDD (future land release), CSD (Public Housing), CMCD (cross border issues), and ESDD (Eastern Broadacre Study, Land and Infrastructure Policy). The meeting was facilitated by Petra Oswald, the Consultation Manager for the OEMP, and Aimee Davidson, the OEMP Project Manager. It was chaired by Gay Williamson, Manager Strategic City Planning and Design.

The main idea was to share information, create common understanding of planning issues and to explore what the Master Plan can achieve. The following items were discussed.

Land Release. An initial study of Oaks Estate found that land available for release in 2012/2013 could potentially support up to (indicative figures only) 50 new dwellings. Land release officers have recommended that release be delayed till 2015. There was some uncertainty about whether any of these blocks have been consolidated, and the officers concerned will advise us.

Eastern Broadacre Study. The study is particularly looking at what land should be retained as broadacre and what could be zoned for development. Area F (Harman and Beard) is adjacent to Oaks Estate. The investigation of land near Oaks Estate in Area F covered only the area bounded by Mountain and Nimrod Roads and Railway Street. An outcome of the Oaks Estate master planning recommendations might be that the Eastern Broadacre Study could be expanded to include the rural blocks on the northern side of the river (opposite Oaks Estate) and the Kowen area.

Cross Border Issues. The Eastern Broadacre team has raised concerns with Queanbeyan Council about the proposed railway land development adjacent to Oaks Estate.

The ACT Chief Minister's Department and the NSW Government are in discussion about a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The discussion is focused on sharing services including health, education and transport requirements. The Oaks Estate Master Plan may inform the discussion. The MOU is looking at setting up an administrative portal for cross-border concerns on an issue-by-issue basis. For example, NSW planning maps leave the Oaks Estate side of the border as white space and do not show the full context and impact of NSW proposals.

Proposed Queanbeyan Northern Ring Road. Preferred alignments will be discussed at a later meeting. The matter of the prolonged closure of the Oaks Estate Road Bridge, due to flooding, was raised. This matter is to be raised with TAMS who were not present at the meeting.

Fyshwick Ring Road. There has been a study of traffic problems in Fishwick and the feasibility of a ring road around Fishwick linking to Pialligo Ave. A potential route would be behind Tennent Street to cross the river near the Brindabella Park development. The proposal would require a major intersection of the scale of Canberra Ave and Hindmarsh Drive, to be constructed near Harman. Planning authorities considered that there would be no direct impact on Oaks Estate.

Oaks Estate public housing. Housing ACT classifies public housing units in Oaks Estate as 'hard to lets'. Should the time come the Government would probably look at selling the complexes rather than redeveloping. Peter O'Dea told the meeting that a lot of tenants like living in Oaks Estate and would feel betrayed if the units were sold to the private sector and rented back to them. Housing ACT said that if units were to be sold in the future, tenants would be re-located. However, there was no intention to either sell or redevelop Oaks Estate complexes in the current housing asset strategy, for 2012-2017. It was put to ACT Housing that 'Oaks Estate public housing deserves some priority'. Housing ACT acknowledged the comment.

The age and condition of the housing stock was raised. We said that we support integrated housing and would be interested in a discussion on scaling down the density of the blocks.

An opportunity might come out of the OEMP process for further discussion of public housing policy. This current meeting could be seen as the starting of a dialogue.

Oaks Estate Heritage. The OEMP will progress current Oaks Estate nominations to the ACT Heritage Register. Nominations include 13 individual places, a precinct nomination (the Oaks Estate heritage study prepared by Eric Martin for the ACT Heritage Council in 2001) and a broader landscape nomination (prepared for the ACT National Trust by Karen Williams in 2000).

River Corridor. TAMSD (our river corridor falls under the Inner South area) has relationships with other agencies including Parks and Conservation. They agreed that cross-border cooperation would be a good thing. We raised the idea of a pedestrian/cycle path along the river from Oaks Estate to Fishwick/Pialligo area.

The MOU was looking at sharing mapping information across borders. River water quality issues (siltation and pollution, etc.) that cross borders could also be raised in that forum.

Infrastructure (electricity, cycle/pedestrian paths, parking). Additional infrastructure studies for Oaks Estate are not useful until further planning information is available. Cycle-ways will be looked at in the context of broader ACT strategy.

Parking issues have arisen since the redevelopment of Gillespie Park. There is no capacity for street/off-street parking on McEwan Ave. The intersection of McEwan Ave and Railway Street needs improving as increased development, a pseudo by-pass, the Beard development and the growth of Queanbeyan have increased through traffic, and heavy vehicles in particular.

The OEMP can look at more intensive planning to improve both the current and future situations.

Exploring some ideas for the future of Oaks Estate.

This part of the meeting looked at the future. We were asked to think about what happens if nothing is changed. We stated that the aim of the planning process should be to 'touch Oaks Estate lightly'. We also put to the meeting that the population of Oaks Estate should stay roughly around the historical figures of 250-300.

Infrastructure. Land release won't occur until infrastructure has been upgraded as necessary, once the planning process is complete. In the short-term, traffic calming measures can be used to slow traffic and discourage people from using Oaks Estate as a by-pass route.

Dual occupancy. Given that we argued to maintain the general 'one house-one block' character of Oaks Estate the community needs to discuss the desire for dual occupancy in terms of design, loss of character, access requirements, population increase and traffic that results, crowding of housing (building/land ratio), maintaining neighbours' options for chicken coops, trees, vegetable gardens, etc. Dual occupancy and maintaining open space are contradictory and we need to come to a consensus.

General understandings. We presented the planners and consultants with the draft OEPA committee resolutions – these draft resolutions will guide their thinking.

We identified the area between the Community Hall in the east and The Oaks in the west (between Railway and Hazel Streets and between Hill and Florence Streets) as a precinct that could withstand the development of small-scale mixed commercial/studio/workshop/residences (perhaps duplex-type), building height to be generally limited to no higher than tree canopy level, encouraging small scale, good quality, low-income/affordable and environmentally sustainable building.

The precinct would also feature Gillespie Park, the community garden, and the urban open space to the north of the garden and opposite the station. We suggested closing the southern end of River Street. The

precinct could have off-street parking spaces, integrated workshop/residence, gallery spaces, cultural education centre (training opportunities of the unemployed, students and the general public), to complement social and cultural programs at the community hall; provide a focus on the railway station and the Robertsons' house; locate professional suites; and commercial business activities in existing and potential commercial premises.

We discussed extending the existing walking track (along the river between the community hall and River Street) to Hill Street and potentially to Oaks Estate Road.

It was agreed that the consultants would forward some draft plans (based on our comments) for discussion and comment at the Progress Association committee meeting on 12 April.

RAILWAY LAND REZONING – QUEANBEYAN LAND AND ENVIRONMENT PLAN

Later in April Queanbeyan City Council is to consider a recommendation of its Draft Land & Environment Plan (LEP) to rezone part of the railway land in Oaks Estate, between the railway line and Railway Street. If the rezoning from special uses to light industrial use goes ahead then buildings up to 12 metres high can be built on the railway land. The requirements of NSW Light Industry zoning are different to the ACT.

The OEPA has lodged an objection to proposed rezoning of Railway Land. The key concerns of the OEPA are:

- the LEP has not used an integrated process and does not support the Oaks Estate Master Plan
- the proposed rezoning will have a major impact on the ACT – NSW border, presenting Oaks Estate as a low value industrial suburb of Queanbeyan
- the proposed rezoning will significantly degrade the heritage characteristics and environment of Oaks Estate
- the proposed rezoning of lands along Railway Street is entirely incompatible with the character and predominant land uses (single dwelling residential) and amenity of Oaks Estate, due to associated noise and other environmental pollutants and traffic issues
- the existence of a sensitive heritage and residential area, containing also community open spaces, children's playground, community gardens and recreation areas, two National Trust listed properties and a proposed 20-unit residential development
- the strong objection by the Oaks Estate community to the proposed industrial development, proposed land uses and allowable operations managed by the DCP's; noting that those proposals and allowable operations are themselves constrained by the fact that the subject land is contaminated

- the lack of evidence regarding the existence of a buffer adjacent to Oaks Estate, given the range of activities granted by the rezoning that would conflict with the interests, safety and amenity of current and future Oaks Estate residents and neighbouring area
- development in the cross border region places demands on ACT-supplied infrastructure, as well as significant traffic for work, business, recreation, education and other aspects of daily life.

NEW OEPA COMMITTEE

About 20 OEPA members enjoyed a BBQ at the Community Hall before the AGM on 18 March.

Giving the President's report at the AGM Peter O'Dea said that 2011-12 had been a fantastic year: the OEPA had a hardworking committee and there had been good achievements, especially the renovation of Gillespie Park. Peter added that the OEPA is now well positioned for Oaks Estate master planning and hoped that the Committee would be as strong or stronger in the year to come. He thanked the out-going Committee.

There was a strongly contested election for the position of President. The two candidates, Peter O'Dea and Karen Williams, gave talks about what they had in mind for the OEPA and the Oaks Estate master planning outcomes. There was a brief question time and then the Returning Officer, Garry Tongs, ran a secret ballot.

The new Committee was elected as follows:

President: Karen Williams

Treasurer: Judith Saeck

Secretary: Ewan Maidment

General Committee Members:

John Bruggeman, Bernadette Fitzgerald, Francis Lethbridge, Alex Saeck, Nick Saeck, Michael Starling

Public Officer: Ewan Maidment

The meeting thanked Peter for his work as President over the last two years and especially for the way in which he had kept the community well informed. Garry Tongs commented that the new Committee is strong and that it would be effective for Oaks Estate.