



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL

Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair)

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Mr James Milligan MLA, Mr Mark Parton MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Draft Variation 345 - Mawson Group Centre: Zone changes
and amendments to the Mawson Precinct map and code

Submission Number: 001 - Klovdahl

Date Authorised for Publication: 25 July 2018

[REDACTED]

From: Committees
Sent: Friday, 8 June 2018 4:30 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal - Mawson 1 Klovdahl [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Attachments: Curtin Group Centre Revised Draft Master Plan (2018) Klovdahl 1r - General (165).pdf
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 8 June 2018 3:42 PM
To: Committees <Committees@parliament.act.gov.au>
Subject: Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal - Mawson 1 Klovdahl

re: Mawson -

attached is the first of two documents related to your enquiry on the Mawson Group Centre Master Plan, entitled ...

'Curtin Group Centre Revised Draft Master Plan (2018) Klovdahl 1 - General (164)'.

although Curtin is the main focal point, references are made to potential effects on Mawson if the revised Curtin Draft Master Plan (2018) is approved.

the second, in an email that follows, though it also is focused on Curtin, it compares 17 Group Centres listed in the relevant 2012 document, so relates more closely to Mawson, and gives Mawson as a relevant example, including photos.

this is entitled: 'Curtin Group Centre Revised Draft Master Plan (2018) Klovdahl 2 - Density - Numbers 5 June 2018 (47)'.

sincerely, al klovdahl

Curtin Group Centre Draft Master Plans 2015 & 2018 - Representation

Canberra: From utopian ideals to dystopian realities

(Dr) Alden S. Klovdahl [Ph.D.]¹

The original *Curtin Group Centre Draft Master Plan* [November 2015] was a world-class attempt to plan a Group Centre of which all Australians could be proud. It was a draft, it was not perfect, it could be improved, but the recent revision (2018) raises many questions.

Importantly, the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) has serious implications for Australia's national interests.²

Context is critical: It does not devalue the importance of sound planning for all centres in Canberra and elsewhere in Australia, to emphasise that the Curtin Group Centre has greater significance – locally and internationally - than most. It is within a few minutes of the Parliament of Australia, of the official residence of the Prime Minister of Australia, of the Governor-General's residence (the residence of Australia's current Head of State when visiting), and of the main embassy areas of Canberra (Yarralumla and Deakin).³

Importantly, as this Group Centre serves as a key shopping centre for many diplomats and diplomatic staff members it affects the message about Australia's capital city – about Australia - these men and women take home. Hence, if one looks closely at the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018), if it is approved in future will we get diplomats who rise to be influential in their governments' decisions affecting Australia's national interests, or will we get those who accept a posting to Canberra only because no one else wants to come? ... Will Parliamentarians find opportunities to meet and interact with diplomats who walk – or will walk – the corridors of power in their national capitals, who can link them to the most informative officials when visiting a nation vital to Australia's interests? Or, in future will key allies and trading partners have to pay Third World salary supplements to entice even the lowest level diplomats and diplomatic staff members to come here?⁴

As well, this Group Centre serves many of the professionals who keep Parliament running at its best. As such, it affects the message about Australia's capital city – Canberra - these men and women take home to other parts of Australia.

The revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) appears to cater to the wishes of one, two or a few developments rather than to prioritise the need for an effective, aesthetically pleasing Group Centre to serve the area for the next 50 years or more. Yet, in view of the importance of this Centre, the issues involved stretch far beyond the financial interests of local developers (or shopkeepers) and – indeed – beyond those of any members of the local community content with a quick fix to the current situation.⁵

Another critical question must be raised: Should responsibility for planning decisions in an area so crucial to Australia's national interests remain with local Canberra government - the Environmental, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate [EPSDD], a local Minister and the ACT Legislative Assembly - **or** should this responsibility be handed over to the federal National

Capital Authority [NCA]?⁶

Put euphemistically - with a great deal of sympathy for the professional planners and local public servants mandated to produce a final plan by the end of this year (2018) - the current *Plan* proposal does not rise to a level taken for granted in many great capital cities around the world ... London, Paris, Amsterdam, Washington, D.C., Ottawa, Stockholm, Oslo, and so on, ... to name but a few.⁷

Put bluntly, at the same time appreciating the local pressures, which must affect local planners and public servants, the present plan is parochial and pedestrian. It is not suitable in its present form for an area of Canberra so proximate to our national institutions, for an area so significant for our national interests.

One possible explanation given for the rush to judgement is the adverse financial effects on the Centre's remaining retailers faced with declining patronage resulting - at least in part - from the closure of one block of shops ('44 Curtin Place').⁸ This is an important concern.

Yet, it should be a simple matter - at least in most jurisdictions - to allow a 'popup' village to be built on adjacent Government land to provide, for example, an array of food outlets, to pull users back into the Curtin Group Centre and greatly reduce adverse financial effects on small retailers in the Centre.

Implicit in my comments above and below, and made explicit now, is the widely accepted understanding that planning is a political process at its core, fraught with complexities and competing interests. No comments or opinions expressed here should be taken in any way to reflect adversely on the integrity or competence of anyone involved in the planning discussed. My comments, views, personal opinions, and so on, are intended to focus on plans, not persons.⁹

If I have made any errors, of commission or of omission, I welcome corrections.¹⁰

This said, a pragmatic planning outcome to serve this area over the next 50 years or more would include:

- A sunny central courtyard maintaining a village character on a human scale.
- A redevelopment that draws in residents of the whole catchment area.
- A larger number of shops, food establishments and service providers.
- A provision for a supermarket of a size appropriate for a Group Centre.
- An overall design that yields favourable financial returns for shopkeepers and other businesses.
- A Centre that encourages more localized living so as to reduce trip distances and increasing traffic congestion on adjacent arterial roads.
- A neighbourhood centre that stimulates and sustains community.
- A Centre that displays the Nation's capital at its best to the many visiting diplomats, diplomatic and Parliamentary staff for whom this is their closest Group Centre.¹¹

These are neither idealistic nor unrealistic goals.

If nothing else redevelopment of the Curtin Group Centre will speak to a wider national and international audience about the future of Australia's capital as a world-class liveable city than any other development in Canberra. Locally, it will have implications for development that will reach far beyond this one Centre.

Regarding the views of 'the community', some call for 'people power'. Indeed, on a *per capita* basis the population of Canberra has the highest level of education in Australia, and its denizens – on average – probably have lived in a greater variety of cities – here and overseas – than the residents of most other cities around the world. As well, those whose principal experience is local 'life experience' often make contributions of higher value than those of their more well travelled neighbours who have spent a greater number of years in educational institutions. Nevertheless, I believe it was 'people power' that prevented the felling of the pine forest adjacent to the suburb of Duffy, which later - when the fire storm hit Canberra in 2003 - contributed significantly to the number of homes incinerated. People power – although it must be valued and respected - is not always the be all and end all sometimes asserted.¹²

Hence, there is the eternal problem of finding an optimum point between authoritarian planning and anarchistic development.

What is probable if this revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is approved and implemented as it stands, without meaningful change? ... A second-rate Group Centre that confirms Australia's spiral down in international stature and world rankings. ... A national capital more suited to the Third World than to Australia.

What is possible if this Master Plan is improved in relatively minor ways? ... An aesthetic and rewarding design – rewarding financially as well as in terms of community amenity – one that leads to the kind of extraordinary place that pulls in more customers and clients, even during construction phases when many are attracted to shop and observe progress as a trend-setting redevelopment advances towards completion.

I would not presume to speak for residents of Curtin (though I have incorporated some insightful comments of Curtin residents). I trust my good neighbours in the Curtin Residents Association [CRA] – who devote so much of their private time to striving for public good - would not presume to speak for all residents of the Curtin Group Centre area, residents of the suburbs of Deakin, Hughes, Lyons and Yarralumla ... in addition to those of Curtin.

Instead, my aim is to provide arguments for consideration on their merits (or otherwise). Indeed, if governments and the planners cannot consider arguments on their merits the inevitable result will not be what social scientists and statisticians refer to as 'regression towards the mean' but rather a regression towards mediocrity.¹³

All of this said, one potential outcome many might see as beneficial for Canberra if this revised *Draft Master Plan* is approved without meaningful modification:

Increased momentum for establishing a Royal Commission to examine the status and future direction of Australia's national capital in terms of its planning, in terms of its present form of governance, in terms of seemingly widely held perceptions of endemic corruption (perceptions

one hears expressed in informal conversations and which can have the unfortunate consequence of tainting those who carry out their responsibilities with integrity and professionalism).¹⁴ In my opinion, in view of Canberra's status as Australia's national capital and the nature of development over the past several decades, if Canberra continues along its present path it is hard to see anything other than a Royal Commission as the inevitable destination. For some, this could be the best contribution triggered by approval and implementation of the current revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) for the Curtin Group Centre.¹⁵

Some Initial Questions

We begin here with an orienting statement from the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015):

Curtin was designated a group centre to be anchored by a supermarket, have 4000m² to 6000m² of retail floor space, and located to serve between three and five suburbs within walking distance. The centre currently services Curtin and the neighbouring suburbs of Yarralumla, Deakin, Hughes and Lyons. However, it operates more like a local centre. [p. 15]

A Final Master Plan for the Curtin Group Centre will affect the local Curtin area, its wider catchment area (and beyond), for at least 50 years into the future ... a fact that cannot be overemphasised. Hence, nine initial questions about this revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) (a tenth question, perhaps the most important, will follow at the end):

1. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of serving the catchment area as a whole, thereby reducing trip distances, ever increasing traffic congestion on adjacent arterial roads, by encouraging more localised shopping and providing more local service provision?
2. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of providing a window to Canberra, to Australia's national capital, that presents Australia in an advantageous light to the foreign diplomats and diplomatic staff for whom this Centre is their nearest Group Centre?
3. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of providing appropriately located medium density residences so as to yield social equity and environmental benefits?
4. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of providing retailers, service providers and other businesses with the most favourable returns on their investments over the long term?¹⁶

5. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of providing maximum revenue (land sales revenue and on-going rates over 50 years or more) for the A.C.T. Government?

6. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of anticipating the need for a larger supermarket to cater for residents of the whole Group Centre catchment area so as to reduce trips distances and traffic congestion?

7. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of enhancing community amenity, increasing liveability in the areas served?

The answer to each of these questions is 'No' ... for reasons spelled out below.

Two critical additional questions are difficult to answer:

8. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of allowing the current small supermarket to maintain its economic viability (... and without increasing traffic congestion and risk to pedestrians, including school children and cyclists, resulting from changes to supply vehicle access)? Indications are that if this revised Draft Master Plan is approved and implemented it would have adverse effects on the economic viability of the present supermarket.¹⁷

9. Would a Curtin Group Centre based on this revised *Draft Plan* achieve the important goal of preserving and increasing property values of ordinary residents in the suburbs in its catchment area? There is a glaring contradiction in tolerating - if not encouraging - self-interest in those promoting development while at the same time expecting selflessness in ordinary Australians in suburbs around Canberra. In view of the central location of Curtin, property values are unlikely to decline in monetary terms. Many of us may feel that in the more limited time we are likely to have in the area this is a question of little import. For young couples and families with huge mortgages this is a very pertinent question. Do new residents of the catchment area - of any Canberra catchment area - want to live where their property values - at minimum - keep pace with other areas, or do they want to live in an area where so few of their needs can be met locally that long trip distances often are required, that they face increasing traffic congestion ... so as time passes fewer and fewer are interested in purchasing or renting in the area of their Group Centre?

As noted, a tenth question will follow at the end.

Without devaluing the work of those involved in the task of preparing the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) for the Curtin Group Centre, it is worth repeating that this revision gives the impression of catering to the desires of one, two or a few small developments at the expense of the Group Centre as a whole, at the expense of the wider community of the five suburbs this Group Centre is intended to serve, at the expense of Canberra as the Australia's national capital.¹⁸

The Problem

The revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) largely sets in concrete a layout suitable for a relatively small population of Curtin in the middle to latter part of the 20th Century but one wholly inadequate for dealing effectively with a 300% increase in the population the Curtin Group Centre could serve over the decades ahead in the 21st Century. It must be redeveloped to serve the whole catchment area to encourage more localised shopping, to shorten trip distances, to mitigate increasing traffic congestion, to lower liquid fuels consumption, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to enhance community amenity ... all of which also would increase business income and ACT Government revenue.

The choice is simple: Extra time for planning now ... or 50 years or more of increasing trip distances, traffic congestion, stress, horn blowing, aggressive driving, road rage, accidents, adverse environmental impacts, turnover of shopkeepers, small business bankruptcies, community dissatisfaction, potential 'populist rebellion' at the polls, and so on?

Implicit in what follows is the view that redevelopment for a 21st century national capital of Australia cannot be successful if lease boundaries drawn in the 20th century are allowed to set planning templates in perpetuity. Importantly, any justifiable change in the boundaries of a commercial lease (e.g., land swap) should be required to result in an unimproved capital value [UCV] equal to or greater than the current value of the original lease (taking into account the value of any approved variations). It defies credulity to see some unable to recognise that relatively minor changes to original lease boundaries in appropriate instances in the Curtin Group Centre would lead to significant increases the long term value and on-going income for the leases surrounding its 'town square' ... for landlords, tenants, the ACT Government. With some changes this Group Centre can become a very attractive place to shop or rent for many more customers or lessees, as well as to socialise and hold community events, ... all of which would benefit the local community (and Canberra) greatly. None of this would occur if the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) were accepted without meaningful modification.

It may be disheartening for planners (for whom I have great sympathy) - who put thought, effort, and resources into the initial *Draft Master Plan* (2015) - to encounter obstacles set in their path. This said, the setbacks have created an unrivalled opportunity to produce a groundbreaking plan to provide a new standard for planning centres in Canberra - a new template - thereby saving much time in future planning, in preparing and dealing with development proposals.¹⁹

Of critical relevance: If this revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is approved and implemented the A.C.T. Government will be foregoing many millions of dollars in future revenue ... \$100 million or more over the lifetime of a redeveloped Group Centre? This foregone revenue would have to be recouped from other sources, such as increased rates for ordinary residents across Canberra.²⁰

Premises

My comments the Curtin Group Centre *Draft Master Plan* (2018) are based on a number of premises, including ...

1. Redevelopment of the Curtin Group Centre will occur and appropriate development should be welcomed.

2. It is important for Australia's national interests that a Group Centre so proximate to the principal embassy areas of Canberra, frequented by diplomatic staff (including those who reside in Curtin or in suburbs served by the Curtin Group Centre) often representing Australia's key allies and trading partners, be a showpiece for Australia. If the ACT Government together with EPSDD cannot achieve this then the relevant planning/approval responsibilities should be transferred to the National Capital Authority.²¹

Beyond this, if a well-designed and implemented plan cannot be developed for an area so significant for Australia's national interests, what hope does any other area in Canberra have? The answer is clear: No hope.

3. With Australia's liquid fuels (e.g., petrol, diesel, aviation fuel) challenge back in the limelight, and costs of living increasing continuously without compensatory income increases for most, we are reminded it is essential Group Centres allow for more localisation of as many daily activities as possible, to meet the needs of any unanticipated fuel shortage, to deal with predicted rises in fuel prices over the years ahead, and to help residents (/voters) cope with day-to-day living costs.²²

4. In terms of layout Canberra is becoming an increasingly inequitable city. Those in higher socioeconomic groups (many of whom bought houses earlier) tend to occupy lower density areas in more central locations (often with reduced numbers of household members, having moved beyond child rearing years). In contrast, those in lower socioeconomic groups (many of whom have purchased homes more recently) tend to live in more remote, higher density areas (often being in child rearing ages with more household members). What this means is that those higher socioeconomic groups, many of whom could better afford higher transport costs, tend to have the lowest costs at the same time as many of those who can least afford transport costs tend to have the highest costs. This has social equity implications that need to be considered in decisions about appropriate urban densities across Canberra, a challenge that can take much persuasion to bring communities along.²³

5. Densification of Curtin and the suburbs served by its Group Centre should be fostered where appropriate. For example, Curtin itself has an average residential density of about one person per quarter acre block (1.01) [*Population and Residential Density in Canberra*, ACT Government Environment and Sustainable Development, 2011, p. 13], lower than the archetypical sprawled city, Los Angeles (at 2.3 persons per quarter acre block) [*Demographia World Urban Areas*, 14th Annual Edition (201804), p. 40].²⁴

6. Any densification (e.g. medium density) should be based on suitable designs and require exemplary – safe, soundproof and environmentally suitable – build quality, together with easy access to ample green space.²⁵

7. The Curtin Group Centre can – and should - to be designed to serve a much larger population in the future [including as a result of new residential developments (built at higher densities), such as at the Yarralumla Brickworks and the proposed development in Hughes, near the Telecom Building at Carruthers and Kent Streets], as well as in areas surrounding the Curtin Group Centre.

As indicated in the initial *Draft Master Plan (2015)* for the Curtin Group Centre, the population in the catchment area this Centre was earmarked to serve is on the order of three times the population now served, i.e., capable of increasing the number served from about 5400 to over 16,500:

The centre primarily serves the residents of Curtin. It only partially performs its intended role to partly serve the suburbs of Hughes, Lyons, Yarralumla and Deakin. This potential catchment area has a population of approximately 16,500 people. [*Draft Master Plan (2015)*, p. 24]

This means an increase of at least 300% in the population that should be served by this Group Centre if an aim is reducing trip distances, traffic congestion and - in general - reducing adverse social and environmental effects for the Canberra community.

It follows a larger population served by the Group Centre will require a greater number and variety of retail and service establishments, as well as adequate provision for community facilities (outdoor plus a centrally located indoor community centre). If a Final Master Plan does not achieve these goals redevelopment will increase trip distances and traffic congestion as more are required to drive farther to deal with their needs, which can have cascading effects on virtually the whole of the Canberra street network.

That is, many will suffer from increased/increasing traffic congestion if those who live in the Curtin Group Centre catchment area are to be required to drive farther, more often, to meet needs such as grocery shopping, takeaway, dining, community centre use, and so on.

8. Following on, as an important aim of densification (where appropriate) is to reduce trip distances, which has social, economic and environmental benefits, one has to take demographics into account:

There is a significantly higher proportion of adults aged 45 and above living in Curtin when compared to the whole of the ACT (Figure 15). There is a significantly lower proportion of adults aged between 20 and 34 when compared to the rest of the ACT. With an estimated median age of 41 years, Curtin has a much older population than the rest of the ACT, which has an estimated median age of 34 years (Figure 16). [*Draft Master Plan (2015)*, p. 22]

Put simply, as the population of Curtin (and doubtless of the wider catchment area of the Curtin Group Centre) is older, those presently living in the area are more likely to travel shorter distances to shop, etc. *But*, as a 'demographic transition' occurs, bringing in younger residents to the catchment area, these newcomers are likely to be willing and able to drive farther to fulfil shopping and other needs. A Final Master Plan for the future Curtin Group Centre should not encourage or require longer trip distances, thereby adding to increasing traffic

congestion. The present ripple effect of increasing trip distances resulting from the closure of one block of shops in Curtin [‘44 Curtin Place’ (Section 62 Block 7)] should not be allowed to become a tsunami effect that floods surrounding arterial roads and more distance centres due to impediments preventing future increases in the number and diversity of shops/services in the core of the Curtin Group Centre.

9. More retail, service and community facilities will enhance the Curtin Group Centre as a viable (medium tier) public transport hub (with or without the extension of light rail south to the Woden Town Centre).

10. A Centre that will serve an area for 50 years or more should be designed to deter crime against persons and property.

11. As noted at the start, any appropriate change to status/boundaries of a lease for which commercial tenancies were originally granted [taking into account any approved variations (however, why or whenever approved)] should result in an unimproved capital value [UCV] equal to or greater than the value of the land within the original boundaries (and/or require compensatory payments – potentially including land - to leaseholders).

12. The ACT Government has a fiduciary obligation to raise as much revenue from commercial land sales and rates as practicable for the financial viability of businesses. This premise does not contradict the premise immediately above as if a lease boundary change led to a UCV greater than the value of the land within the original boundaries this would have to occur in a situation in which the overall Government revenue of a commercial area within which the lease was located compensated for the increased value of a commercial lease with redrawn boundaries.

13. Proposed new developments adjoining community spaces should be required to add sunlight ... to add sunlight. Or, provide compelling arguments why this is not possible.²⁶

14. Any variations to concessional leases should be for purposes that enhance non-profit community use. If a proposed new use is to be – in whole or in part – for-profit use, then the concessional lease should be declared non-compliant with the purposes for which it was granted, paid out at its concessional value and sold at public auction for its commercial value (with the prior lessee welcome to compete for the new lease). In short, no individual or institution granted a concessional lease at minimal cost (if any) and subsidised by the community (often for decades) so as to provide non-profit services to the community should be allowed windfall profits (that may be exported from Canberra) at the expense of the community, at the expense of Government revenue, and at the cost of increased rates for residential ratepayers across Canberra (including effective double taxation of those who subsidised concessional land for decades with their past levels of rates ... higher levels to compensate for rates revenue lost from concessional leaseholders).²⁷

15. The ‘Community Consultation Panel’ process to which reference has been made in the materials associated with the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) was fatally flawed as a consultation process. For example, clearly it framed the Curtin Centre as a ‘local shopping centre’ not as a Group Centre intended to serve five

suburbs, including Canberra's main embassy areas. ... Who on this Panel represented the other suburbs this Group Centre was intended to serve ... the suburbs of Deakin, Hughes, Lyons and Yarralumla? Although the contributions of those involved in the Panel should be appreciated and valued, the outcome of their discussions cannot be taken as representative of all legitimate views, as constraining the redevelopment of this Group Centre for the next 50 years or more. From some informal feedback I formed the opinion that the Panel was dominated by persons with financial interests – legitimate financial interests to be sure – and in the end the EPSDD largely deferred to these interests. It is for others to form their own personal opinions of this process. [See Appendix for more detail (available on request).]

16. There is an overarching goal: Liveability. The ultimate outcome of the planning and development process should be a Group Centre that enhances the area it serves as a world-class place in which to live, whether for short-term (e.g., diplomatic staff, Parliamentarians, Parliamentary staff members, visiting medical specialists, visiting academics, and so on) or long-term residence. The outcome should be a Group Centre that provides quality, diversity and attractiveness of commercial activities, professional services and community amenity and which – in so doing – provides ample financial returns to commercial lessees and to ACT Government revenues. At the same time, a redeveloped Curtin Group Centre should encourage a range of healthy activities (e.g., walking, cycling, sports, outdoor family and neighbour gatherings, personal meeting opportunities, support networks, and so on) to enhance community and reduce health costs.²⁸

Comments on revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018)

If implemented the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) would entrench the planning of 50 years ago rather than provide a plan adequate for the next 50 years. There are beneficial features of the revised *Plan*, but more is needed if a redeveloped Curtin Group Centre is to make the contributions of which it is capable to a more liveable Canberra ... or – put bluntly – it will become an example planning professors around Australia and around the world can use to teach their students how not to do urban planning.

With the population capable of being served by the Curtin Group Centre catchment area to be substantially (at least 300%) greater than at present, and more over coming decades, coupled with the concomitant need to reduce average trip distances and traffic congestion, to increase community amenity, some principal requirements for this Group Centre redevelopment are ...

1. *A greater number and variety of shops, eating establishments, entertainment venues, office spaces, and so on, rather than more or less the same number as in the past, to allow a greater degree of local 'self-sufficiency';*
2. *A larger central courtyard rather than one based on the small population served over the past 50 years ... to accommodate larger numbers of people and more community events;*
3. *A '44 Curtin Place' redevelopment (one apparent stimulus for the original *Draft Master Plan* reconsideration) that does not prevent expansion of the central courtyard [the local 'town square'], that does not*

prevent the addition of more, a greater variety of, retail establishments, that does not block future land sales thereby reducing Government land sales revenue ... and future rates revenue over the next 50 years or more;

4. If the Curtin Group Centre is to be a magnet that pulls residents from its catchment area rather than forcing them to travel farther to meet their daily needs, an essential requirement is a larger (i.e., commercially viable) supermarket.

5. If the Curtin Group Centre is to be a showpiece redevelopment for our national capital, 'the rubbish problem' has to be addressed. With 'strip malls' (or their equivalent), such as the Yarralumla Shops, the Griffith Shops, Lyons, Chifley or shops with alleyways running through them, such as the Manuka Shops, rubbish bins usually are largely out of sight (except perhaps on collection days). In the Curtin Group Centre, with its present layout, there are few places to conceal the rubbish bins so these are now located around the core area, visible to virtually all who enter. This does not promote the inviting frontages planners seek, much less provide an appealing window to Australia for overseas visitors (including diplomats).

6. Future redevelopment of the Statesman Hotel (one apparent stimulus for the original Draft Master Plan reconsideration) has to be considered. On a positive note, the Statesman Hotel currently is one of the few businesses in the Curtin Group Centre in which the rubbish bins are less visible (and would require only a small effort to make them 'invisible'). There are, however, serious issues with the proposal in the revised Draft Master Plan (2018).

Importantly, the fact that the revised Draft Master Plan (2018) proposes a land swap of land now leased by the Statesman Hotel for public car park land owned by the ACT Government makes it crystal clear it is not unrealistic to propose land swaps where these would benefit the Centre as a whole.²⁹

7. At least one designated, appropriately located parking structure to serve the needs of a larger population using this Centre in the future. A Group Centre that offers sufficient attractions so as to reduce trip distances needs adequate parking. As well, extension of light rail to Woden would be accompanied by a need for commuter parking for those wishing to use public transport (e.g., the council parking structure in Revesby, NSW, within a short walk of a train station at the outer edge of Sydney). This will be required over the decades in which low-density residential living is likely to remain the predominant form of residential accommodation in this Group Centre catchment area (and in some adjoining areas, e.g., Garran).³⁰

8. A provision for an accessibly located community centre sufficient to serve the population of the catchment area.³¹

9. Other issues, a few of which will be discussed here:

- a) Curtin Concessional Lease [Section 15, Block 1] – triangular area bounded by Carruthers Street (to the north), Theodore Street to the west, and Martin Street to the south. The current leaseholder appears to be the Uniting Church. Most of the leasehold is not build*

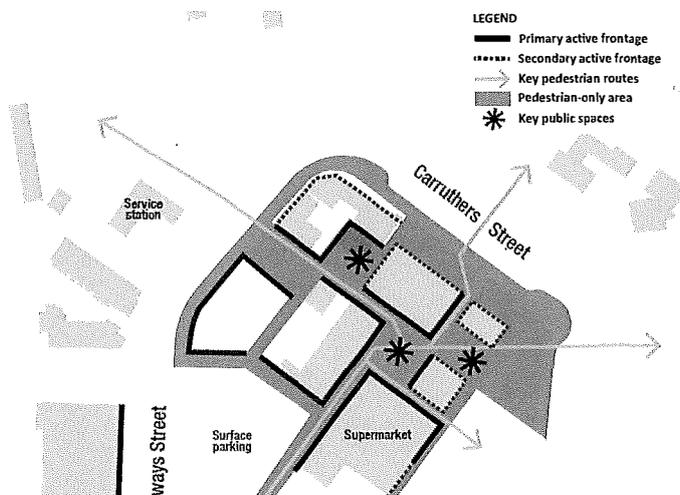
upon. The lease has been subsidised by the community [presumably both in terms of the original lease payment (if any) and subsequent rates (if any)] for decades. It has become prime real estate, and will be even more valuable if light rail is extended to Woden. The revised Draft Master Plan (2018) suggests development up to 21 metres/six storeys be allowed on this site.

- b) Curtin Concessional Leases [Section 13 Blocks 22 & 23] addresses 155 and 157 Carruthers Street, respectively. The current leaseholders appear to be the Uniting Church and the Anglican Church, respectively. . The revised Draft Master Plan (2018) suggests development up to four storeys be allowed on this site.
- c) Curtin Lease [Section 61 Block 2] - 22 Theodore Street, Curtin. The current leaseholder appears to be Australian Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church [ABN 76 000 665 958]. This lease was subject to a de-concessionalising Development Application during the recent Christmas-New Year period, followed by an application for a lease change to allow construction of a childcare centre with a capacity of 160 children, the notice for which appeared on the same day (15 December 2017) as the period for public comment on the application for de-concessionalising closed.

Each of these will be considered below in light of the original Draft Master Plan (2015) and the revised Draft Master Plan (2018), accompanied by suggestions for enhancement (if time permits).

1. A greater number and variety of shops, eating establishments, entertainment venues, office spaces, and so on: the 'west car park'.

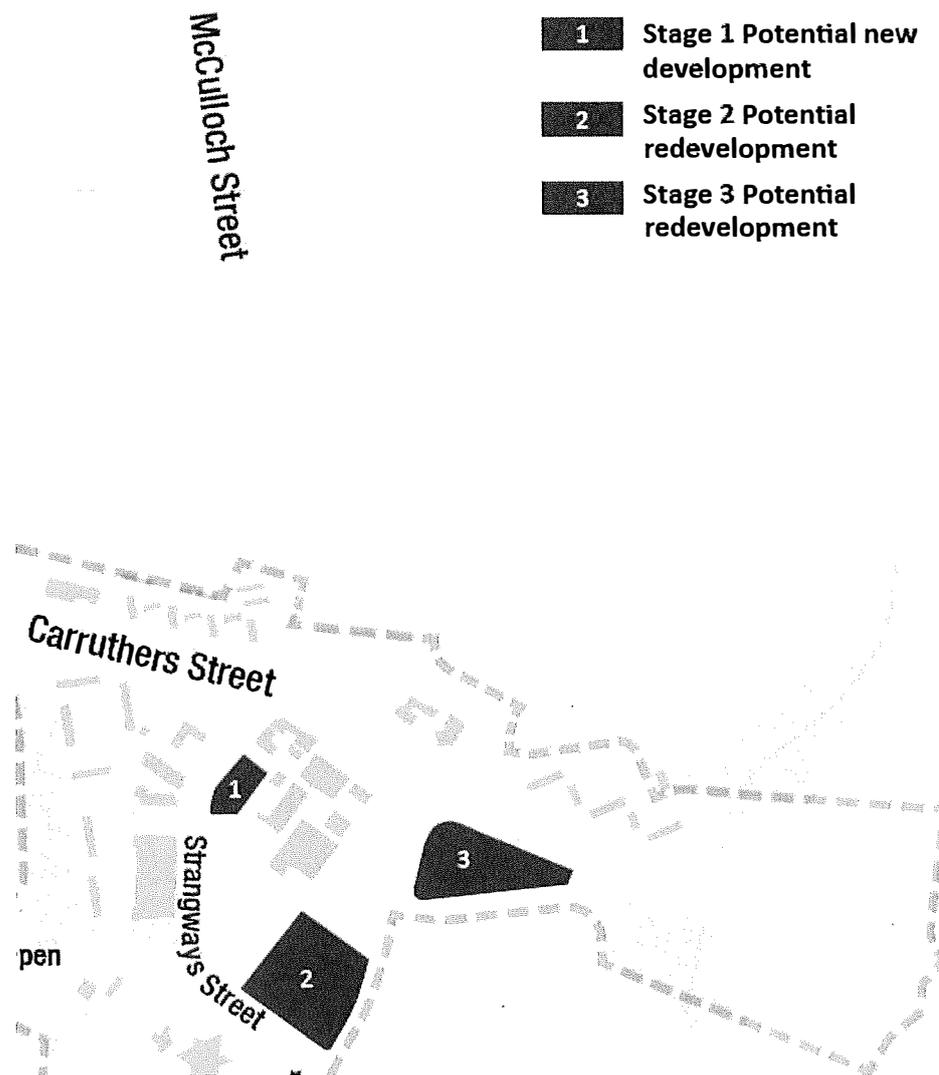
The original Draft Master Plan (2015) displayed foresight in planning for the Curtin 'local' shops to fulfil the intended purpose as a Group Centre for a whole catchment area (not merely for one suburb), for a catchment area that has an unfavourable multiplier effect on traffic congestion on surrounding arterial roads:



Source: The original Draft Master Plan (2015), p. 63:

One can see in the initial *Draft Master Plan* (2015) (above) planners recognised the need for a greater number and variety of shops to cater for a (minimum) 300% increase in population that should be served by the Curtin Group Centre over coming years. In particular, planners allowed for – and the community welcomed – the development of more shops in what is currently the ‘west car park’ [i.e., west (left) of ‘44 Curtin Place’, southeast (down right) of the service station label, above the ‘Surface parking’ label] which had the much needed added benefit of increasing ACT Government land sales revenue, as well as its commercial rates revenue for 50 years or more into the future.

Also, the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015), p. 72) ...



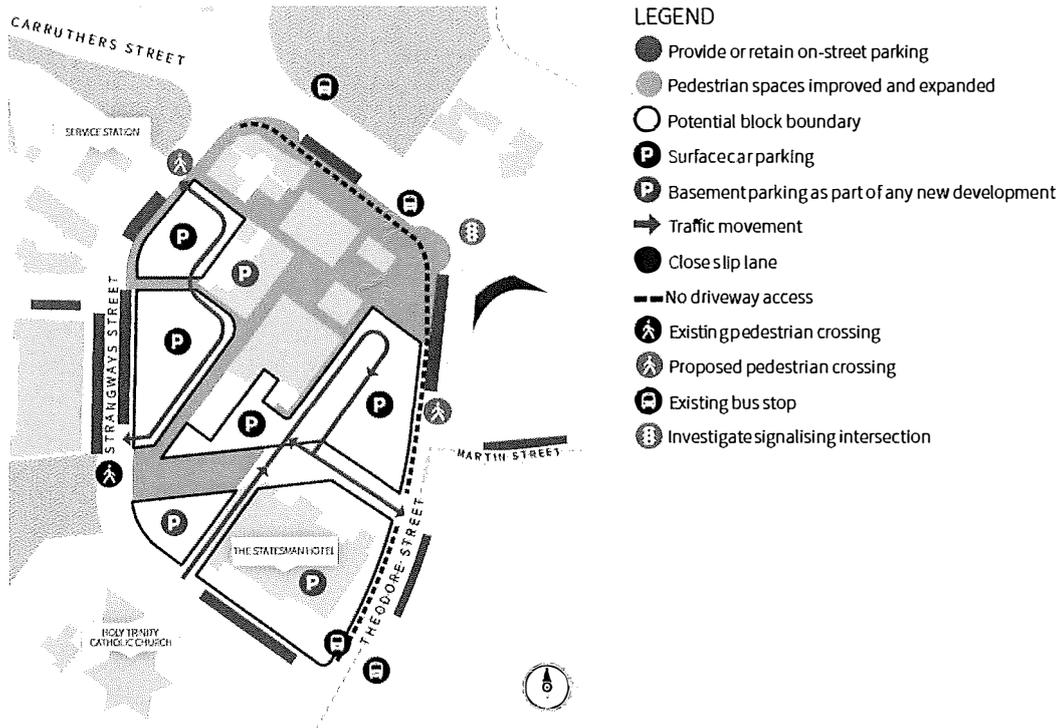
called for early addition of extra shops and other businesses [item 1 in red above] to allow the Curtin Group Centre to begin to move towards its originally designated function of serving as a Group Centre rather than as a local shopping centre. This initial *Draft Master Plan* – though not without potential for improvement – was forward looking.

Indeed, a spokesperson for the ‘44 Curtin Place’ development team was quoted as agreeing:

... while members of the community see Curtin as a local shopping centre it was 'essentially a group centre that serves a catchment of 16,000 people'. ["Community concerns for six-storey Curtin shops redevelopment", *allhomes*, Jan 11, 2017.]³²

Compare these earlier plans to add more retail shops allowing this Centre to fulfil its intended role as a Group Centre with the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) (p. 7) below:

PROPOSED PARKING

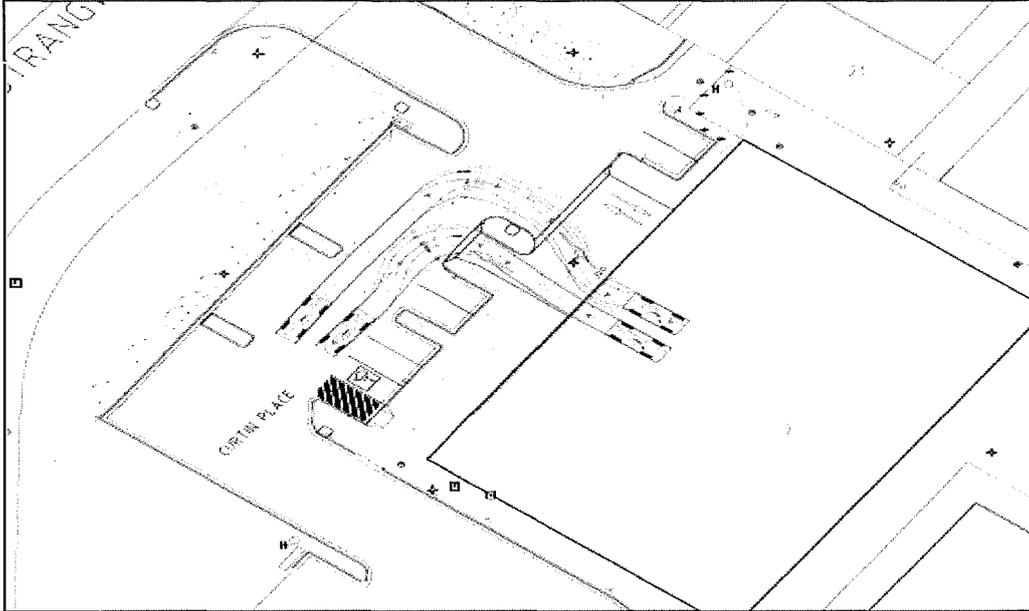


In this recent *Draft Master Plan* (2018) (above), the west car park (across from the service station, with the black circle around the 'P' symbol indicating surface parking, west (left) of '44 Curtin Place' with the purple circle around the 'P' indicating underground private parking) would remain a parking area for a small number of cars. Clearly, this would deprive the ACT Government of significant land sales and rates revenue. Although this area could be converted to pay parking, leaving aside potential election-losing protests by residents at the ballot box, it would take very high fees in this car park to compensate the ACT Government for lost land sale revenue ... and commercial rates revenue lost over the next 50 years.³³

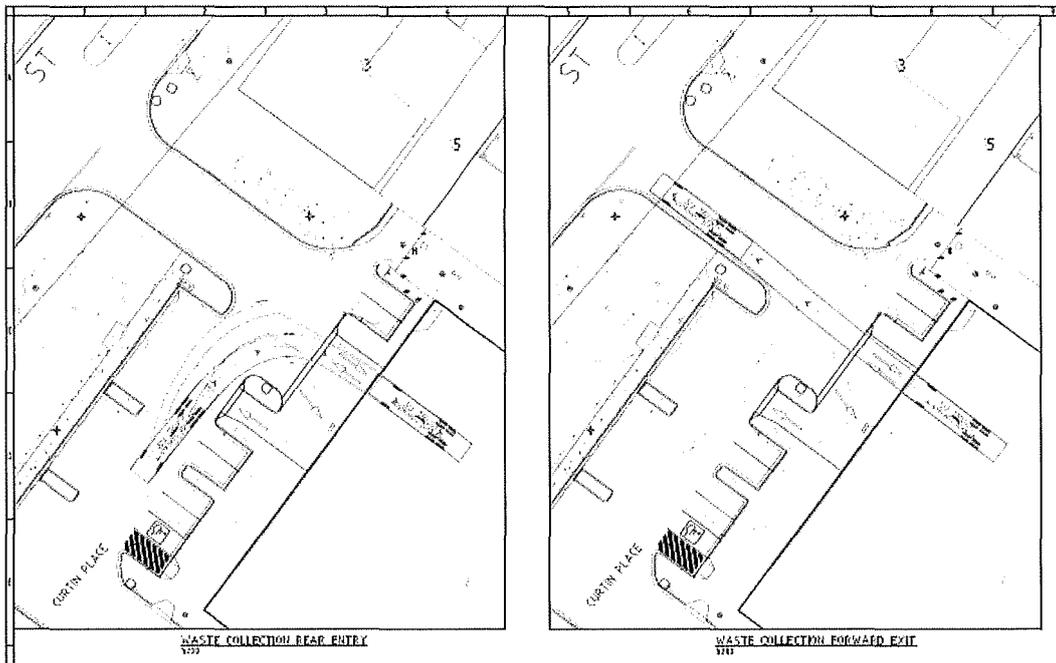
In short, if the lease boundaries of '44 Curtin Place' remain unaltered, and service access is as - or similar to - that proposed in the original DA [201630437] [i.e., via the centre of the west (left) side of the current Block], this would prevent any future sale of this west car park for future development of a significant number of additional shops, eating establishments, and other services.

An explanation for the proposed removal of this area - the *Draft Master Plan* (2015) originally planned to be sold by the ACT Government to boost revenue and allow for an increased number of retail shops to serve the population of the

whole catchment area - was given at an EPSDD information meeting. ... By retaining this area as parking for a few cars, the service access proposed in the original '44 Curtin Place' Development Application [201630437] could be retained.³⁴ See below:



Source: PLAN-201630437-TURNING_DEMON-01



Source: PLAN-201630437-TURNING_DEMON-02

The 'turning' images above come from the original '44 Curtin Place' development application so this does not mean the same entry/exit locations would appear in a new '44 Curtin Place' development application. Yet, when a Government official states this as the reason for dropping the original plan to sell this ACT (car park) land for the development of additional shops, it is difficult not form an opinion

that in Australia's national capital development teams propose and the ACT Government complies. This said, we do not have a Final Draft Master Plan and we do not have a new development proposal for '44 Curtin Place' so it would be inappropriate and unfair to draw any conclusions at this stage.

With these qualifications, we can ask some important questions: How many future shops could be added with development made possible on this (car park) block as proposed in the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015), how much land sales revenue would be forgone, and how much long term rates revenue for the ACT Government be lost (revenue that otherwise will have to be provided by residential ratepayers in one manner or another)?

Leaving the latter two questions for accountants, an approximate answer to the first question – the number of new shops (etc.) blocked by the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) – is possible. That is ...

If we take the current land area of '44 Curtin Place' as at present, the ground level shops have a customer floor area of about 468 m² in total (ACTmapi 'line measure' tool). Averaging this over the present five ground level shops [no new shops were proposed for the basement car park levels], we get about 94 m² per shop on average. We double this to take into account the back (stock/service) half of these shops to get roughly 188 m² per shop on average.

Next consider the area proposed in the initial *Draft Master Plan* (2015) for development of the 'west car park' as roughly 1,100 m² (ACTmapi 'line measure' tool). If we divide this figure by 188 m² per shop, we get about 6 (5.85) possible new shops (etc.) per storey in the west car park area if sold and developed. As the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015) proposed two storeys for this block, the sale and development of this 'west car park' Block could add a minimum of 11 shops, eating establishments, and professional offices, at the same time as enhancing community amenity and having valuable ancillary benefits, e.g., by serving Group Centre functions of reducing trip distances, traffic congestion, fossil fuel use, greenhouse gas emissions, and so on. [Plus increased commercial rates revenue.]

Thus, the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) would allow, at most, 10 shops in '44 Curtin Place' [as proposed in the original '44 Curtin Place' DA], at the same time as potentially blocking the addition of at least 11 additional shops to the west of '44 Curtin Place' (if the previously proposed entry/exit routes are maintained).

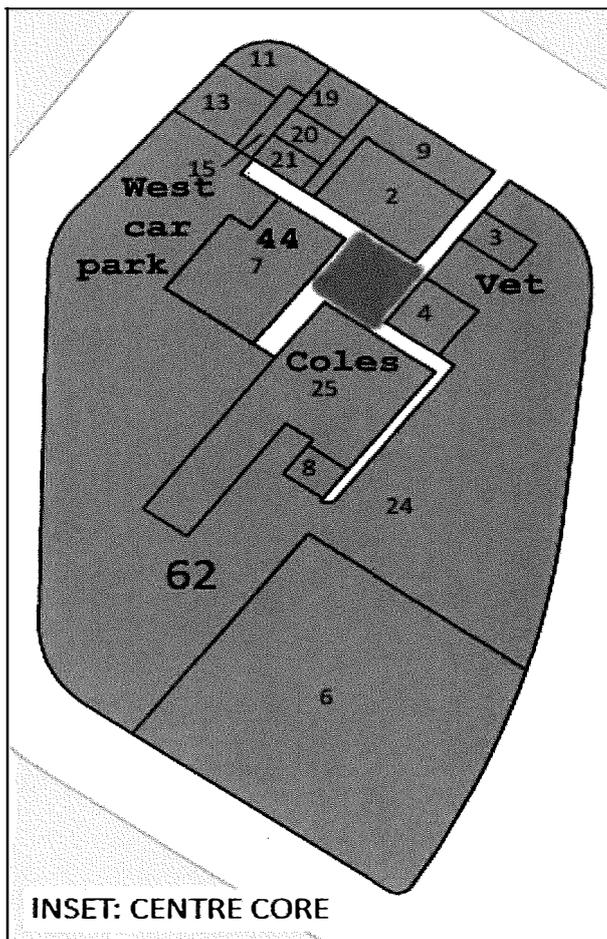
In sum, in attempting to provide for a catchment area population of 300% more than catered for at present, the revised Draft Master Plan (2018) would lead to an increase of (at most) three additional shops/offices, whereas if the land to the west of '44 Curtin Place' was allowed to be developed - as proposed in the original Draft Master Plan (2015) after extensive community consultation and thoughtful, long-term planning considerations - a minimum of 21 [10 + 11] shops, eating establishments, and professional offices could be added ... coincidentally a 300% increase in the number of shops available to serve the catchment area relative to the number at '44 Curtin Place' when it was closed down [i.e., 7, 5 ground level and 2 basement].³⁵

2. The Curtin Group Centre courtyard – the catchment area's 'town square'.

An enlarged central courtyard capable of permitting safe use by the population of the whole catchment area is possible without losing human scale, and is essential.

The present courtyard has served the population of Curtin well for the past 50 years. Although one cannot deny a nostalgia factor, on a rational basis the current dimensions of the central courtyard/square clearly are not adequate to accommodate an increase of 300% in the population capable of being served. This not merely a matter of aesthetics; it is a matter of public safety as well.

Current layout of the core area of the Curtin Group Centre (courtyard in Green):



Source: *Draft Master Plan* (2015), p. 6 [Labels and green (courtyard) added].



Photo source: original *Draft Master Plan* (2015), p. 16.

The photo above from the 1960s suggests this little courtyard was quite suitable for the Curtin centre as 'local shops' ... when relatively few people lived in the suburb and there was little reason for those in other suburbs in the catchment area to visit these shops in preference to their own local shops.

For comparative purposes, consider a photo taken more recently (in 2014):

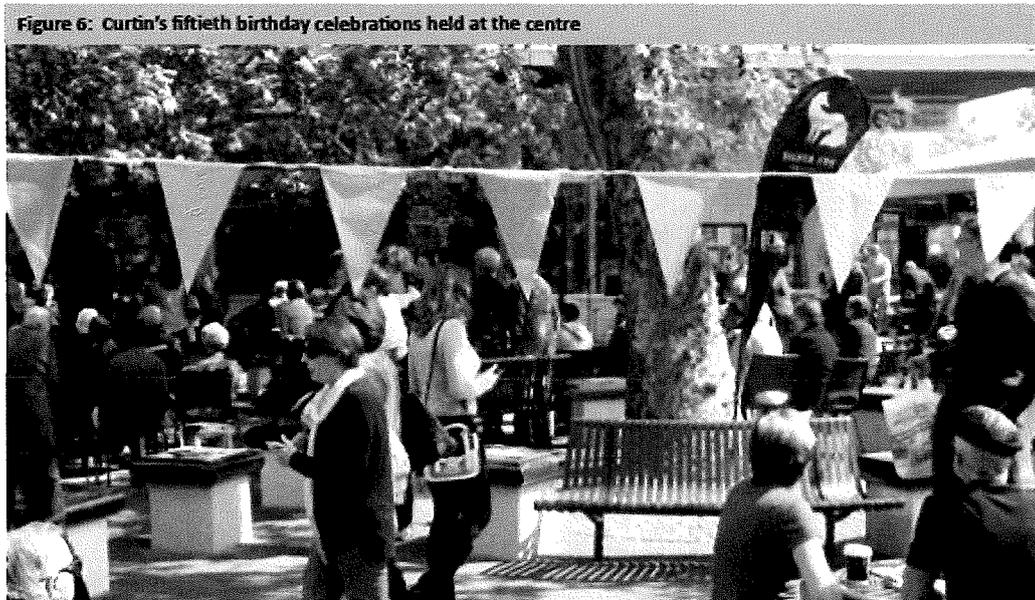
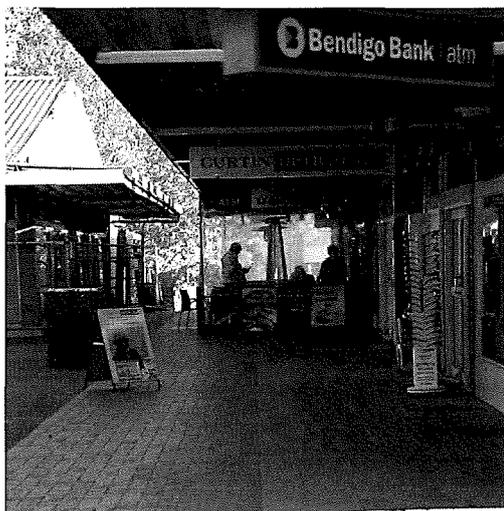


Photo source: initial *Draft Master Plan* (2015), p. 13.

If the Curtin Group Centre has difficulty fitting a small portion of 5,400 local residents into its present small courtyard how could this area possibly be sufficient to accommodate (safely) even a fraction of the 16,500 residents using this Group Centre in the future? It would not be able to do so, with the inevitable result being greater trip distances to other Centres, increasing traffic congestion, higher levels of personal frustration and stress, and so on.

If we leave aside the requirement to enlarge the public courtyard to cope (safely) with the larger number of people this Group Centre should serve, retaining '44 Curtin Place' within a footprint suitable for the 1960s would not be acceptable in terms of 21st century needs ... this would have adverse effects on access to the courtyard (from the west) and on some businesses.

As shown in the following photograph [by author, 17 May 2018] ...



businesses on the south side of Section 62 Block 2 (right side in photo) have found it necessary to expand its cafe seating south into the access walkway to maintain economic viability. The Office of Regulatory Services approved this outdoor expansion into the courtyard.³⁶ At present, there is hardly room for two people coming into, or going out of, the courtyard area to pass side by side along this key passageway. If '44 Curtin Place' (left side in photo) is redeveloped within its present footprint, it seems likely anyone willing to pay commercial rents also – assuming an aim is to have the kind of active frontages found around public squares in cities around France, Italy, Greece, and elsewhere in the world - would want to expand seating outdoors (north) to be financially viability. What could be a rational basis for the Office of Regulatory Services declining to approve an application of this nature if required for business viability? ... Planning based on retaining a 50-year-old layout prevents this? Yet, such an extension northwards from the current '44 Curtin Place' footprint would make it difficult for even one person at a time to use the western passageway into, or out of, the main Curtin courtyard. And, ... what about women with prams or strollers? ... Cyclists wishing to walk bicycles into the courtyard through a designated main connection passageway? ... Cyclists wishing to walk bicycles with baby carts attached?³⁷

Following on, “5.4.2 Promote the centre as a convenient and accessible place for people of all abilities” of the initial *Draft Master Plan* (2015) [p. 55] highlights the importance of a world-class national capital catering for people with disabilities. One wonders if even a single wheelchair or mobility scooter (much less two trying to pass) could get through this key entry/exit passageway if '44 Curtin Place' is redeveloped within the footprint laid down over 50 years ago.³⁸

Note also how much of this area is already in shadows, in the morning with the sun up, more that a month before the winter solstice. In other words, although the revised *Plan* proposes retention of more sunlight than the original '44 Curtin Place' Development Application [201630437], this more recent *Draft Master Plan* (2018) would still permit a reduction – not require an increase - in sunlight to the courtyard.

Importantly, we are talking about an effective loss of natural light not just at the winter solstice but over a lengthy winter period, two months or longer, during which time many local retail businesses would suffer significant reductions in revenue as compared to the Centre being laid out to allow more winter sunlight into a central courtyard.

One also has to ask, if this pedestrian pathway is to be in shade for so much of the day, for so much of the year, how can the planning principle enunciated in the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015)

Encourage nighttime activities to make the centre feel safer and be more vibrant after dark, particularly the central courtyard and its connections. [p. 55, item 5.4.4]

... be achieved even in daylight hours, much less at night?

Parenthetically, the photo from the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015) depicts an even darker scene:



[p. 34, cropped screen shot. saved as JPEG. Cropped to show roughly same perspective as photo above. Resized. No other alterations to photo.]

What we also have to keep in mind is that the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) proposed building heights on either side of the narrow passageway (photo above) up to five metres. Hence, this could become an even darker narrow principal passageway (especially in winter). This raises questions about planning layouts in relation not only to pedestrian flows but also about opportunities for criminal activities (e.g., muggings, drug deals).³⁹

Will this become a main passageway into the Group Centre women, children, the elderly and others must avoid for their personal safety?

In sum, it is essential to plan to enlarge this central courtyard public space for (safe) use by a grater number catchment area residents in the future, to ensure an adequate distance between the northern building [Block 2, Section 62] and '44 Curtin Place', ... or look forward to 50 years of artificially limited Group Centre use, declining retail sales and community amenity, decreasing catchment area liveability, coupled with increasing resident dissatisfaction. Results of not making the required changes to the Master Plan now likely would include accelerating shopkeeper turnover, small business bankruptcies, longer resident trip distances, even more traffic congestion, adverse community and environmental effects, and so on.

3. A '44 Curtin Place' [Block 7 of Section 62] redevelopment.

The '44 Curtin Place' proposed redevelopment in 2017 was one apparent stimulus to a reconsideration of the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015). At public meetings sponsored by the development team, some appeared supportive of any redevelopment of this site, some seemed opposed to any redevelopment, and many gave the impression of being open to suitable redevelopment. At the same time, the Development Application [201630437] was viewed as problematical for a variety of reasons resulting in many representations (etc.) opposing this Development Application.

Most problematical is proposed redevelopment within historic lease boundaries. Many of the objections heard were in the context of loss of winter sunlight and the disproportionate size of the proposed development relative to the widely agreed goal of maintaining a village character on a human scale. The root cause of these objections, in my view, was the assumption that the footprint of '44 Curtin Place' was set in concrete, so to speak, incapable of alteration. Thus, a

fundamental question is whether a layout of 50 years ago is appropriate for the next 50 years, for a 300% increase in the population this Group Centre should be redeveloped to serve.⁴⁰

If '44 Curtin Place' were redeveloped within its current footprint, within its original lease boundaries, a number of adverse consequences would be likely, including (in addition to the narrow main passageway problem) ...

- a) Blocking future development of the car park west of '44 Curtin Place';⁴¹
- b) Depriving the ACT Government of significant revenue from the sale of the land west of '44 Curtin Place', proposed in the initial Draft Master Plan for commercial development;⁴²
- c) Depriving the Curtin Group Centre of on the order of (at least) 11 additional, new commercial businesses ... shops, eating establishment, professional offices, and so on, essential for a Group Centre to serve its catchment area (thereby reducing the need for residents to travel longer distances to meet their daily needs);⁴³
- d) Depriving the ACT Government of substantial commercial rates revenue for the next 50 years or more;⁴⁴
- e) Requiring the ACT Government to make up the potential loss in land sales and commercial rates revenue with increases in rates charged ordinary residents across Canberra, and/or reduce services (e.g., hospital, police, and so on);⁴⁵
- f) Depriving Canberra of a showpiece development in the Group Centre most proximate to the diplomatic areas of the nation's capital, frequented by diplomats and diplomatic staff members;
- g) Blocking an essential and logical enlargement of the central courtyard ('town square') at the same time as retaining its human scale and enhancing public safety, in an areas where substantial future public (and cafe) use can occur if the 'Curtin Shops' are redeveloped to group centre capacity;
- h) Potentially resulting in a structure of a scale and visual dominance out of character with even a redeveloping Group Centre ... an 'in-your-face' structure that gives the impression of a out-of-proportion tower dominating a postage-stamp-sized courtyard;
- i) Potentially resulting in residential accommodation that looks down on deteriorating buildings and rusting rooftops, advertising years of demolition, construction and harsh noise to come.
- j) Potentially creating pressure to prevent community events from taking place in the central courtyard ('town square'), to prevent the community from using this courtyard, due to complaints from residents living in the proposed apartments overlooking the courtyard, leading to years of on-going social and political conflict.

Leaving aside the various adverse effects of retaining the historic lease boundaries for a '44 Curtin Place' redevelopment - on ACT Government revenue, on community amenity, and so on - it does not seem to be appreciated that

building within the current footprint, in my view, would make any residential development unattractive to many prospective renters or buyers. That is, residents would have – for the foreseeable future - a local supermarket too small to meet their needs, few nearby eating establishments, be subject to courtyard and construction noise, decaying buildings within eyesight, and so on.

It is not clear why someone would rent or buy in the Curtin Group Centre if redeveloped as proposed in the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018), be willing to pay at or above market rates. ... Especially with new residential developments in the Woden Town Centre, expected to be completed within a year, more isolated from street level noise, at the same time as within easy walking distance of two large supermarkets, a greengrocer, a butcher, many eating establishments (including a food court), free Wi-Fi, a cinema (at the moment showing 19 new releases in its modern theatrettes with large screens and enhanced sound, without a need for nearby residents to pay hefty fees to park). Many other contemporary shops and services are also within short walking distance of the Woden Town Centre, including a transport hub (proposed to include a light rail terminus) as well as hospitals, medical specialist offices and diagnostic/treatment services.⁴⁶

In sum, many (not all) of the likely adverse consequences of redeveloping in the current '44 Curtin Place' footprint could be averted – for likely benefit to all - if the historic lease boundaries of '44 Curtin Place' were 'moved south' so that the northernmost façade of a redevelopment lined up with the northernmost façade of the Coles supermarket.

4. The Group Centre Supermarket.

The centre does not attract a great deal of expenditure from adjacent suburbs, likely due to the smaller size of the existing supermarket. [*Draft Master Plan* (2015), p. 24.

There is a significant shortcoming in the initial *Draft Master Plan* (2015). On the one hand the *Plan* recognised the current supermarket is too small for the catchment area the Curtin Group Centre was intended to serve. On the other hand, other than the following note,

Additional supermarket retail floor space (up to 1600m²) could be viable in the long term [*Original Draft Master Plan* (2015), p. 44]⁴⁷

... no attempt appears to have been made to deal with this impediment to increased utilisation of the Group Centre by the whole catchment area. There does not seem to be recognition of the longer trip distances and greater traffic congestion over many years ahead if a plan for enlargement of the supermarket is not built into a Final Master Plan.

Although many of us enjoy the uniqueness of local shops, whether in Canberra (e.g., IGA), Sydney, Melbourne, Paris, Stockholm, New York City, Washington, D.C. and many other cities around Australia and around the world, large supermarkets are powerful magnets that attract business to centres, such as the new Woolworths and Costco (and soon Bunning's) in Majura Park in Canberra, the Coles and Woolworths in Moonie Ponds in Melbourne, and so on.

Importantly, unlike many other Canberra suburbs, if residents of the Curtin Group Centre catchment area are required to travel outside the local area to meet their supermarket needs, the traffic generated has a disproportionately greater effect on increasing congestion. For example, the principal exit/entry points for Curtin and Yarralumla are on to (or off of) the Cotter Road and on to (or off of) Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen and Melrose Drives. This adds to traffic volumes not only on these thoroughfares, but also multiplies congestion already caused by traffic from elsewhere going on to (or coming from) the Tuggeranong Expressway, as well as traffic heading to or from the city (or Russel Offices) using Adelaide Avenue and Melrose Drive, which has cascade effects (including down Yarra Glen) on at least two already congested Hindmarsh Drive intersections⁴⁸.

In addition, it is not clear if the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) would compound 'the supermarket problem'. If a land swap between the portion of the Statesman Hotel land that cannot be built upon (due to an easement) and the portion of the existing (Government owned) car park adjacent (to the west) occurs, there is the question of the width and capacity of the public access between the two portions of a modified Statesman Hotel leasehold. [See 'Proposed Parking' figure above.] Would access for large Coles trucks that now use this route (i.e., via the 'southwest car park') continue to be viable to supply the supermarket? [The revised *Draft Master Plan* is lacking in detail so it is difficult to determine measurements.] If access were to be blocked this would mean either large supermarket resupply trucks would have to reverse into the Coles loading dock from Theodore Street via the 'northeast' car park (which would create safety hazards for pedestrians, including school children), or Coles would have to switch to a greater number of smaller trucks (which would further reduce the economic viability of this supermarket). One would hope planners have done their homework so that neither would occur, but lacking measurements or an indication that this issue has been considered makes it difficult to know.

In sum, for the Curtin Group Centre to serve its intended purpose of serving (at least) 300% more users than it has in the recent past, provision for a larger supermarket has to be included in a Final Master Plan for this Group Centre. Such a supermarket would have to cater for at least two groups: Area residents with lower disposable incomes (such as older residents and younger couples/families with large mortgage repayments) and those with more disposable income accompanied by more cosmopolitan tastes. Like the duopolistic chains or not, on present experience either a Coles or a Woolworths seems much more likely to be able to cater to such a bimodal demand distribution than either an IGA or an Aldi.

5. The 'rubbish problem'.

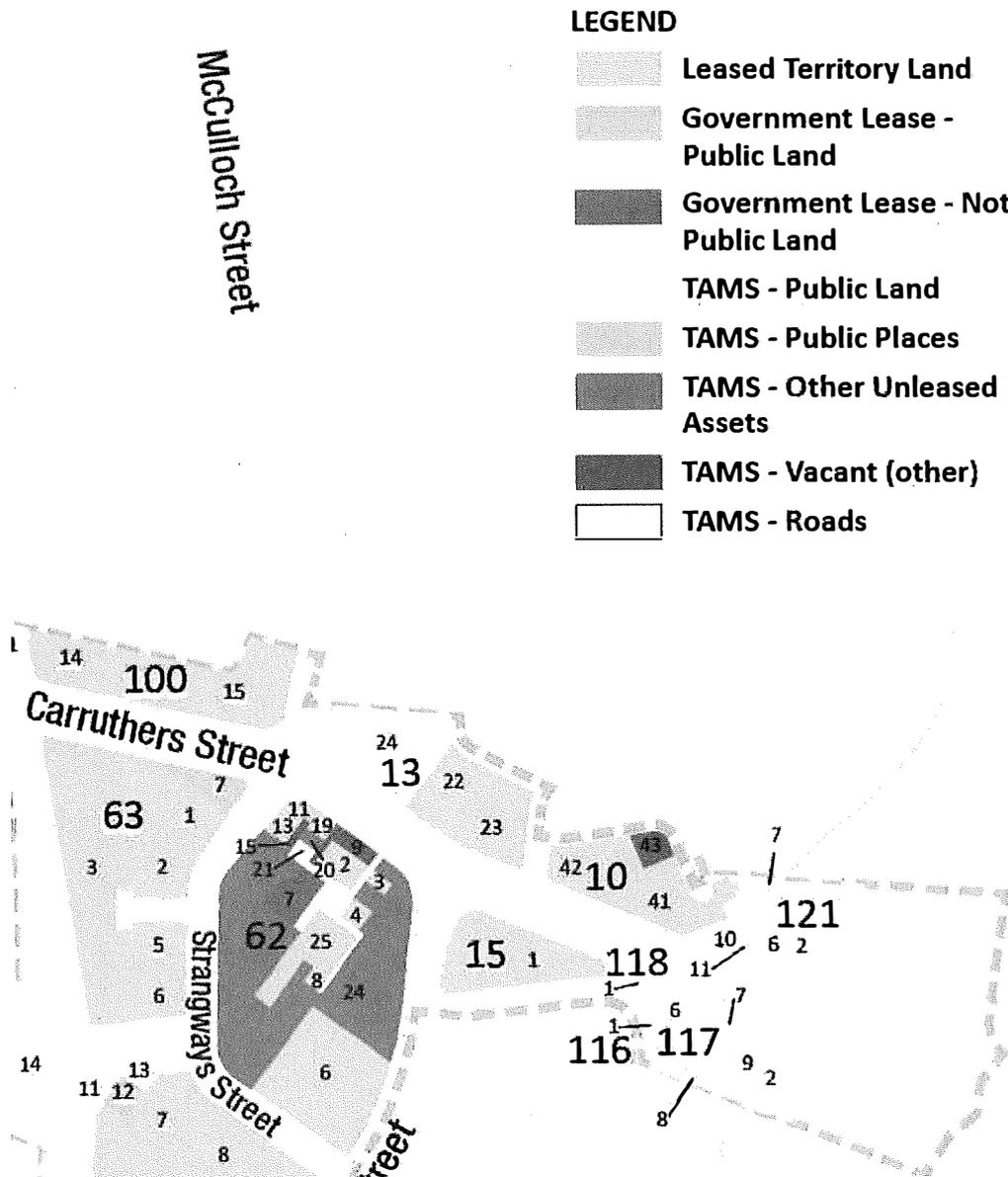
As another Curtin resident has done an excellent evaluation of the rubbish problem, I simply note the issue and refer you to his representation discussing this unsightly issue. Alternatively, just walk around the Centre to view all the rubbish bins of varying sizes with few places to conceal them.

The basic problem is that rubbish bins did not appear to be catered for in the original layout of the Curtin shops, perhaps because of the low level of use at the time.

In sum, the Curtin Group Centre 'rubbish problem' needs to be addressed in a Final Master Plan.

6. The Statesman Hotel.

The site of the current Statesman Hotel lease [Section 62 Block 6] can be seen in the initial *Draft Master Plan* (2015) [in grey (towards lower right), east (right) of the present (turquoise) 'southwest' public parking area and south (down) from the 'northeast' public parking area]:



Draft Master Plan (2015), Figure 17, p.25.

The history of Curtin, *Curtin Turns 50: The story of a Canberra Suburb 1964-2014* (2016, Eds. C. Brody, P. Forster, M. Acker) notes 'A new controversy 2016':

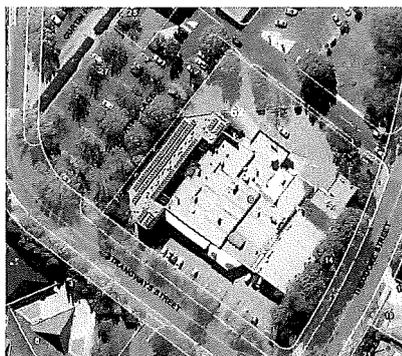
In response to the ACT Government draft master plan for the Curtin group centre ... , the Statesman Hotel put plans to the Government for a twelve-storey building on its site at the Curtin shops and another on the neighbouring car park, including units, serviced apartments, underground car parking and shopping. The twelve-storey proposal was contrary to the proposed height restriction in the draft master plan of six storeys but the owner ... believed that a six-storey restriction would not be viable financially. He was not prepared to spend money on pursuing the project unless the height restrictions were changed. His representative stated that ...

If you want to make Curtin vibrant and you want people off the roads, using public transport, then you turn it into a hub, and the only way to do that is to make your planning arrangements attractive as well (*The Chronicle*, 12 January 2016). [As quoted in *Curtin Turns 50*, p. 158].

Who could disagree with this statement, this premise? But, with all due respect to the Statesman Hotel spokesperson, the conclusion that this is best done by building high-rise hotels or apartments over public parking space within the core of the Curtin Group Centre does not follow from the premise.

That is, by redeveloping any one, two, or a few developments considered more or less in isolation without reference to an overall Master Plan suitable for a 21st century Group Centre seems very unlikely to result in an integrated overall Centre design that will 'make Curtin vibrant' and pull 'people off the roads'. Indeed, one wonders if the reised *Draft Master Plan* (2018), if implemented, would actually achieve the best short-term revenues for leaseholders without – to repeat - an overall Master Plan suitable for a 21st century Group Centre. Stated another way, there is the question of whether a smaller, less 'in-your-face' development would yield greater returns (and future resale value) by contributing to a more aesthetically attractive Group Centre, indeed one that might replace the old Embassy Motel as desired accommodation for visiting diplomatic staff (among others). Does it make financial sense to have a large hotel (and/or serviced apartments) with low occupancy rates, or a moderately sized version with high occupancy rates?

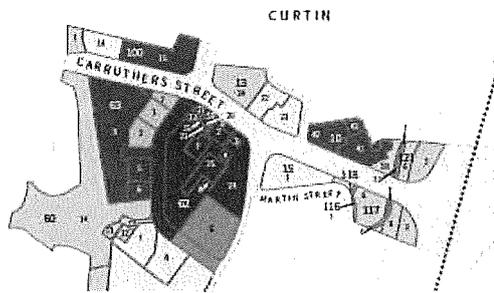
Moving on, the recent *Draft Master Plan* (2018) proposes to exchange the easement part of the Statesman Hotel lease for the shady public parking area to the west (left). The relevant easement (shown in green) that would be given by the Statesman Hotel to the ACT Government in exchange for an area now used for public parking is best seen at the ACTPLA site, ACTmapi:



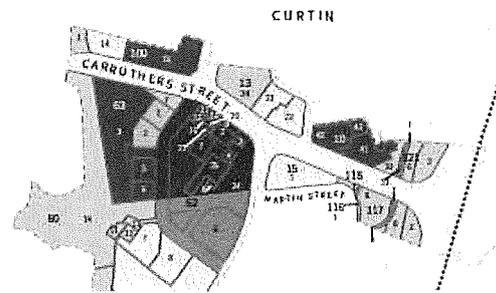
See: <http://app.actmapi.act.gov.au/actmapi/index.html?viewer=bwi> (... and zoom in on the Curtin Group Centre) [Green colouration in original].

The revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) shows a comparison between this new proposal and the proposal in the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015):

EXISTING LAND USE ZONES



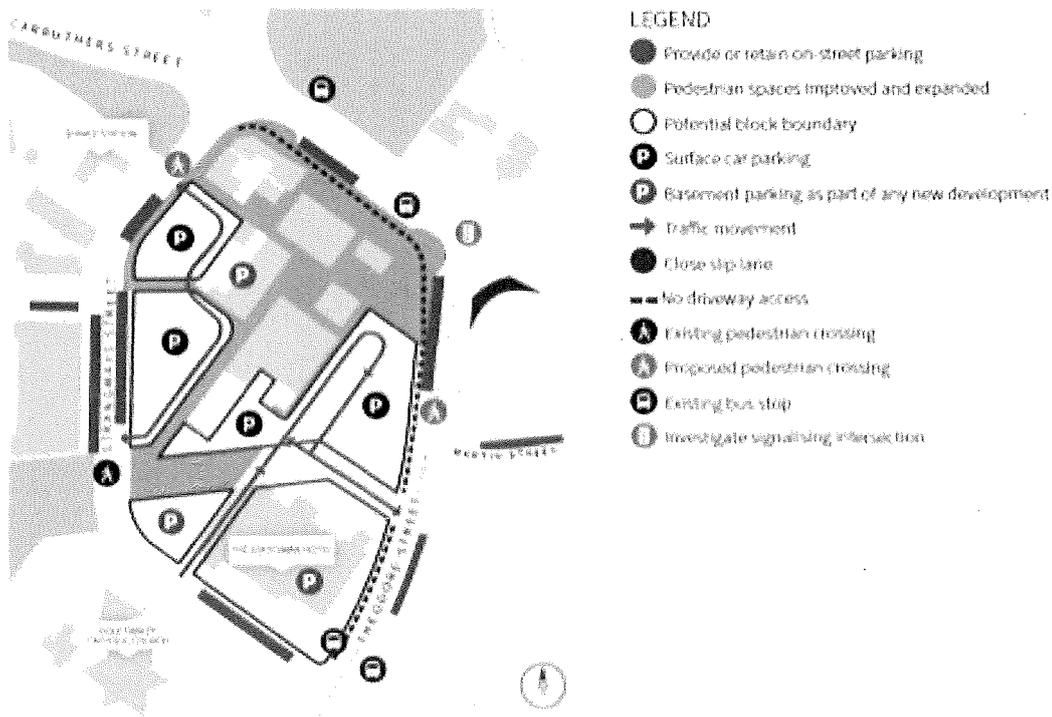
PROPOSED LAND USE ZONES



Draft Master Plan (2018), p. 7.

The revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) does propose new underground parking below the land to be swapped with the Statesman Hotel (as seen in an earlier illustration) but it is not clear to what extent this would be public parking, nor whether - if so - it would viable public parking for many who currently use the surface parking:

PROPOSED PARKING



Draft Master Plan (2018), p. 7.

The particular land swap proposed in the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is problematical for a number of reasons, including ...

First, there is the question of like for like, value for value. *If* an exchange (land swap) would be to the benefit of the Group Centre as a whole perhaps many people (including me) would be happy to leave questions of values to accountants. Personally, I would not be troubled if this led to a greater UCV for the Statesman Hotel property... again, *if* this was of benefit to the Group Centre as a whole and to the community).

Second, as also noted earlier, there is the question of adequate access for the vehicles that supply the current Coles supermarket.

Third, there is the Holy Trinity Catholic Church question. As noted in the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015), p. 21:

Designed by architect Kevin Joseph Curtin in 1975, the Holy Trinity Catholic Church is constructed of brickwork with a steel frame and steeply pitched, pyramid shaped tiled roofs. A parish office was built in 2010 and faithfully replicates the form, materials and details of the church building. The steel bell tower complements the forms of the adjacent structures and completes a pleasing townscape composition. This group of buildings are an architectural landmark in the Curtin area and the site represents social significance due to its value as a functioning church.

Aside from its architectural characteristics this church is on a concessional lease, provided for the worthwhile purpose of allowing use by members of the community who so wish to practice their religious beliefs. The church is used for a non-profit activity for the benefit of the community, which should be supported and encouraged (whatever one's spiritual or religious beliefs may be).

Moving on, what is one important use of a church? ... To allow religious funeral services. Who are the people for whom such funeral services are held? ... Typically elderly people. Who attends such services? ... Disproportionally more other elderly persons.

Herein lies one problem. Where do the elderly persons who attend funeral services at the Holy Trinity Church usually park? ... In the surface public car park on which the Statesman Hotel proposes to develop into residential accommodation.

Even if adequate space for underground public parking was written into a new Statesman Hotel lease, and enforced, how would elderly people wishing to attend a funeral of make the trip from underground parking to the surface, with a cane in one hand (or one in each hand), pushing a walker, in a wheelchair, and so on?

Or, are these elderly citizens expected to park farther way, and traverse what some might believe an impossibly long distance to and from the church ... or not be able to attend the funeral of an old mate or loved one at all?

There is another problem as well. The Holy Trinity Church operates a childcare centre. So, who else parks in this surface level public car park closest to this centre now? ... Fathers walking their young children across the street to the childcare centre. ... Mothers carrying their infants in front (or rear) facing baby carrier 'kangaroo pouch backpacks' strapped to the front of a mother (father). If the revised Draft Master Plan is implemented would these parents be expected to try to make their way up from underground parking with their priceless cargo?⁴⁹

And, what about ordinary weekend church services? Does Canberra expect these elderly and 'mobility-challenged' people to give up trying to attend church?

Finally here, there is the issue of potential overshadowing of this Church.

In sum, the original lease for the Statesman Hotel allowed a building up to two storeys. Thoughtful anticipation (by some NCDC architect) ensured the bottle shop was the other side of the building, i.e., not facing the concessional area where the Catholic Church later would be built, the Catholic primary school, nor the residences on the other side of Theodore Street. The original Draft Master Plan (2015) allowed for redevelopment up to six storeys. The leaseholder then expressed a wish for a 12-storey building, or alternatively a swap of land that could not be built upon (easement) for a portion of a public car park that could be built upon. The leaseholder's latter proposal was accepted in the revised Draft Master Plan (2018). In my view, there are serious problems with this proposal.⁵⁰

7. Parking Structure(s).

If a redeveloped Curtin Group Centre is to cater for three times as many users as at present - in order to promote shorter trips, less traffic congestion and greater liveability in the area - there is a pressing need for a parking structure. If Curtin becomes a light rail stop on a route extension to the Woden Town Centre there is need for an added parking structure for those who live too far to walk - most especially in inclement, cold or hot weather - to a light rail stop (a structure that includes protected, secure parking areas for bicycles).

It defies credulity that a *Draft Master Plan* [both 2015 and the revised 2018 versions] to be used for the next 50 years or more does not include provision for a parking structure. Fossil fuels may become too expensive for cars, but whatever the modes of transport in the future most people are not likely to be any more willing to walk fairly long distances in the rain, or arrive at work hot, sweaty and wet after a long cycle ride.

If a parking structure was planned for what is currently the 'southwest' car park (i.e., south of '44 Curtin Place'), for example, this raises the possibility for two (commercial) story shops/offices (etc.) adjacent to the current shops, potentially connected by walkways to a second as well as to the first (parking) levels. A parking structure would relieve pressure on the Woden Town Centre, which is likely to increase with planned high-rise residential developments, as well as on the Weston Creek Group Centre, which is likely to remain the main shopping destination for many in new, developing suburbs for some time to come.

In sum, in developing plans to serve a Curtin Group Centre for the next 50 years or more, it is essential to specify the location(s) of any future parking structure(s) available for public use so as to facilitate redevelopment plans and provide potential investors with sufficient information to make sound financial decisions.

8. Community Centre ... accessible location, encouraging public transport use.

The absence of a community centre in the Curtin Group Centre is becoming increasingly problematical, and this has many adverse effects, not least in terms of increasing trip distances and adding to traffic congestion.

The Hughes centre is highly utilised already, and demand for use of this centre will only increase as the population living in the Woden Town Centre grows. If one talks to the elderly in Curtin, one hears of driving long distances to go to

other community centres, such as in Belconnen for U3A courses [‘University of the 3rd Age’ for retirees and the elderly]. ... Or, if they cannot drive, staying home and living in isolation of social support provided by community activities.

This problem is becoming increasingly incapacitating as more concessional land is converted to commercial land, effectively ruling out potential new community centres because of land costs. One easily could be led to believe the ACT Government is of the view community support is provided for adequately if there are Clubs with ‘pokies’ that residents can use, in isolation, watching their pay checks and savings drain away.

In sum, there is a pressing need for an accessibly located community facility in the Curtin Group Centre, one that can cater for the whole of the Group Centre catchment area.

9. Other issues (Briefly).

There are a variety of other issues that raise serious questions about the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018), which will be outlined very briefly below. The three discussed here focus on de-concessionalisation, in which concessional leases subsidised by Canberra residents can be converted to – essentially – for profit use for payments to the ACT Government that – in my view – do not represent their true commercial value nor take into account public subsidies over decades.

We begin with three examples in which concessional land has been converted:

1. The Uniting Church in Civic [69 Northbourne Avenue]. Apparently, without access to the original leases, it can be hypothesised that the Church at one time held the lease for the whole city block on which the current Church now occupies a very small portion. Presumably it sold the remainder of the block though it is not known to what use any profits from this sale were put.

2. Unitarian Church in Central Sydney. It is not clear whether this land was granted originally on a concessional basis, as “Thomas Jefferson’s spiritual home” must have been in Sydney for a very long time to own land so close to the Sydney CBD. In this case, a high rise was built later on the site, with the Church retaining a portion of the ground level for spiritual purposes. It is not known to what use any profits from this sale were put.

3. St Columba’s Uniting Church, Braddon [Section 23 Blocks 29 & 30] 7 Farrer Street and 10 Fawkner Street, respectively. Apparently this Canberra Church once held the lease on what are now adjacent Blocks (1, 2 and 28) of Section 23, and was told by Government of the day: Use it (for the charitable purpose for which the lease originally was granted) or lose it. In the event, community housing was constructed for elderly - mostly women - who could not afford to bonds and fees required by Australia’s increasingly for-profit aged ‘care’ industry.

Time permits only few questions at this time:

When an application is made to de-concessionalise a lease the Canberra community has subsidised for decades, should it be the sole prerogative of the concessional leaseholder to determine the use(s) to which a new (non-concessional) lease will be put?

When an application to de-concessionalise a lease is proposed but will continue to be used for non-profit community purposes should independent studies be carried out to determine the most essential community needs at the time together with the leaseholders capacity to meet such needs?

When a lease is to be de-concessionalised for income generating purposes, who should decide how – and where - this new income will be spent? For example, should there be requirements that revenue in excess of outlays be retained in Canberra in proportion to Canberra community charitable needs, not exported from Canberra using the rationale that ‘Canberra is rich’ and accordingly there are no needy persons in Canberra?

When a lease is to be de-concessionalised for income generating purposes is it sufficient that two valuations form the basis of the price paid to de-concessionalise, i.e., ignoring the subsidies contributed by the Canberra community in various forms over decades, or should the lease be declared non-compliant with the purposes for which it was granted and sold at commercial auction?

In my personal opinion, the most egregious recent example of this issue – of the pressing need to consider this issue - is firstly the proposal by the Australian Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church [ABN 76 000 665 958] to de-concessionalise a former nun’s convent lease on Theodore Street in Curtin, followed by – on the same day comments on this application closed – an EPSDD notification sign of a Development Application by the Australian Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church [ABN 76 000 665 958] to construct a childcare centre on this site with 160 places.

The date of this EPSDD Development Application notification sign for a new childcare centre was 15 December 2017, the same day the Royal Commission Report (17 Volumes plus ancillary material) was submitted, indicating *inter alia* ...

We heard more allegations of child sexual abuse in relation to the Catholic Church than any other religious organisation

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse Report, Final Report, Religious Institutions 1,

https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_volume_16_religious_institutions_book_1.pdf (p. 13).

Leaving aside the potential adverse (e.g., bankrupting) effects on the 20 or more smaller childcare centres currently nearby in the area, and other important issues, the two valuations submitted in the de-concessionalisation lease application were on the order of \$2 million each.

Looking at the fees charged by the Holy Trinity Early Learning Centre next door, assuming two parents are working full time and require ‘long day care’ for one child, at \$105 a day, for 11 months each year, this adds up to \$23,100 paid to this childcare centre per year.⁵¹ Further if we assume all 160 places will be taken by parents requiring ‘long day care’ this means a potential gross income of over \$3,500,000 per year for this childcare centre. To be sure, there would be construction costs as well as running costs, and there could be a distribution

across different levels of childcare, but – be this as it may – a potential for \$3,500,000 or more gross income per year after an ostensible payment of \$2 million to de-concessionalise is probably not what ratepayers/voters signed up for when paying higher rates for decades to subsidise such concessional leases.⁵²

This raises the issue of what will happen to other concessional leases in the area if the revised Draft Master Plan (2018) is approved and implemented, but time limitations do not permit discussing these here.

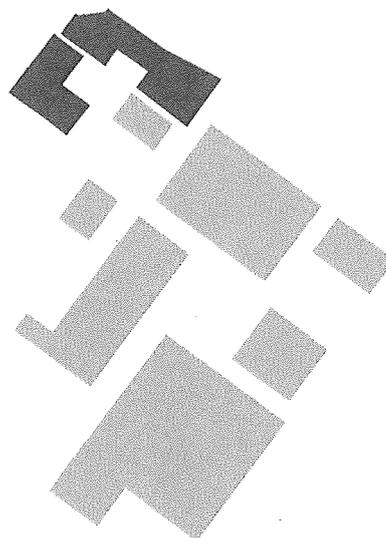
Suggestions for Improvement to the Draft Master Plan for the Curtin Group Centre: Food for Thought

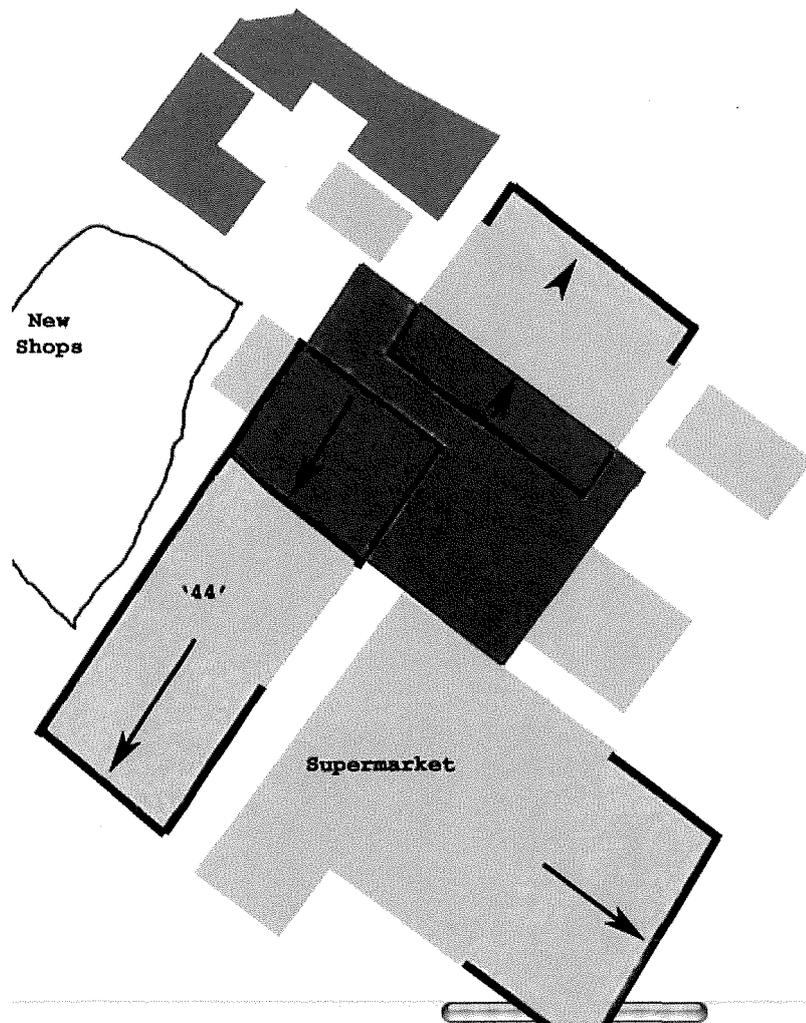
As it is easy to criticise, hard to create, we offer suggestions to stimulate thoughts for improvement ... to help make the Curtin Group Centre the extraordinary place it is capable of becoming.

To reiterate a few important points made earlier: The 'Curtin shopping centre' is a Group Centre and as such was intended to – and should – serve the population of five suburbs (including Canberra's major embassy areas). To the extent redevelopment achieves the goal of encouraging more localised shopping and service provision, this will assist greatly in reducing lengthening trip distances and mitigating increasing traffic congestion ... over the next 50 years or more. To the extent a Master Plan sets us on a path to achieving this goal, the ACT Government will be the beneficiary of greater revenue, from land sales and from annual commercial rates. To the extent a Master Plan sets us on this path, shops and other businesses in the Centre should enjoy greater, more stable incomes. To the extent a Master Plan sets us on this path, the Curtin Group Centre will reflect well on Canberra for the diplomats and diplomatic staff for whom this is their closest Group Centre.

The Curtin Group Centre can become a showpiece for Canberra, for the Nation's capital, for Australia. But, whether this will be the outcome is up to the Environmental, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate [EPSDD], the relevant Minister and the ACT Government.

Here, within the limited time available, it is only possible to sketch conceptual ideas. We begin with an outline of the Curtin Group Centre core area as presented in the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015) p.40.





The buildings in question should be identifiable to anyone familiar with the Centre, Carruthers Street being the northern (top) border, Theodore Street the east border (right) and Strangway the west (left).

Brief explanation:

1. The area in green represents a central community courtyard expanded (over time) to deal (safely) with the 300% more residents of the wider catchment area the Curtin Group Centre was intended to serve, at the same time as retaining the village character at a human scale. One or more architecturally aesthetic wind barriers would need to be designed for the 'west' main entryway and provision made for adequate shading in summer (e.g., trees, 'sails'),

2. '44 Curtin Place' is shifted south with a land swap so as to permit an expansion of the central community courtyard, to cater for the larger local population this Group Centre is intended to serve. The northern boundary of the original site remains (indicated with black lines) to leave open the possibility of including the land under an expanded courtyard as part of a modified '44 Curtin Place' leasehold, subject to relevant negotiations and structural requirements.

Frankly, with no disrespect intended to the person involved (who will remain anonymous), it is annoying to hear an ACT public servant at an information meeting say the EPSDD is trying to develop a framework to allow a land swap with the Statesman Hotel (exchanging Statesman land that cannot be built upon for Government public car park land that can be) and at the same meeting say a land swap involving '44 Curtin Place' would not be feasible because it would take years to work out. What possible need exists for an EPSDD if – as would appear

in my opinion – planning decisions are made on the basis of desires of developers rather than on the basis of world class planning principles?

Note that the land to the west (left above) of '44 Curtin Place' remains as intended in the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015) to allow a sufficient number and diversity of new shops, eating establishments and other businesses required if the Group Centre is to serve its whole catchment area, allow more localised shopping (etc.), thereby reducing trip distances, traffic congestion, and so on.

3. The 'Bendigo Bank' building on the northern (top) boundary of an enlarged central community courtyard is shifted northwards towards Carruthers, at least in terms of an allowable lease change should redevelopment occur. Given multiple owners, redevelopment seems unlikely in the near future. The point is the space between this building and Carruthers is dead space, and accordingly sees a constant turnover of tenants. A lease change that allows space under an enlarged courtyard, within the current footprint of the building might provide an incentive for earlier rather than later redevelopment. Also, it would be a relatively simple matter to shift 'John Curtin' from this dead space to a position more suited to his critical role in Australian history as the nation struggled to survive during World War 2. As for the ultimate use of the space between this building (shifted closer to Carruthers), if Curtin is allowed to develop as a 'food centre' (with small domestic and international takeaways) with 5 minute parking immediately on Carruthers these might survive better than other businesses in the past. This would take a great deal of pressure off Woden and Weston Creek, as well as remove traffic congestion caused by drivers seeking takeaway meals at these more distant Centres.

4. The supermarket. It is hard to find a single resident who does not agree this Group Centre needs a larger supermarket. This need has been noted many times. The simplest way to achieve this is to allow a supermarket to extend eastwards from the present site, towards Theodore Street. This would take up one row of car park spaces, which could easily be replaced with another row between the current top row and Theodore street (rerouting flow so entry becomes what is now the exit for this car park).

5. There is a need for a parking structure. This could easily fit south of either '44 Curtin Place' with its shift south, or south of the supermarket, the latter extending to Strangway Street. Either way, a sufficient number of surface parking spaces west of the Statesman Hotel site (and above Strangway) should be reserved for handicapped and seniors to park close to Holy Trinity Church, and for parents using the current childcare centre there. Also, it is hard to believe there is no pedestrian – zebra – crossing between the Holy Trinity Church and the car park across Strangway as this crossing is used by so many elders, seniors, parents with children and infants, as well as by school children attending the Holy Trinity primary school.

In my view, the proposed Statesman Hotel land swap should not proceed: What kind of society, what kind of city, would allow barriers – physical barriers – to be constructed so as to make it difficult – if not impossible - for persons to attend their chosen place of spiritual worship (in this case the Holy Trinity Church)? Perhaps if I had spent more time in Third World countries I could point to such examples.

Enough for here ... time does not permit more details.

The tenth, most important. question, mentioned at the start. Time constraints mean this too will have to wait.

Conclusion

The Curtin Group Centre can become a tipping point for planning in the Nation's capital. It can become a stepping-stone to better planning across Canberra, or, it can steer a course downwards to another unique Australian contribution to international planning ... "Clayton's planning".⁵³

Put bluntly, with no disrespect intended to the professionals who struggle to deal with the politics of planning in present-day Canberra, the ultimate question is whether the Environmental, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate is able to fulfil the goals of national capital planning, or – indeed – whether the EPSDD should be wound down, its employees given generous severance payments, thanked for their efforts in trying to deal with unenviable challenges, and this little experiment with urban planning consigned to history.

In short: Is there really a need for a local planning authority in Canberra if 'urban planning' has deteriorated into 'building planning' so the Nation's capital only requires a small agency to approve plans for buildings considered in total isolation of their surrounding urban context?

What makes the Curtin Group Centre the point of reference for the future is that a original *Draft Master Plan* (2015) was developed after considerable consultation, published for discussion, available for review by the community, by leaseholders, and by developers. It was followed subsequently by at least one development application [DA 201630437] that seemed to ignore – in key elements – what planners at the time considered the best path forward for a 21st century Canberra Group Centre.

On a positive note this DA [201630437], together with the many well-argued community objections to it, as well as the proposal for the construction of a light rail route via Curtin to Woden, opened up the initial draft plan for reconsideration and – one would hope - enhancement.⁵⁴

... In the end, though, this may be a planning decision that lives in infamy ... on and on and on.

6 June 2018

cc. [Various ... time limitations do not permit listing.]

Endnotes:

¹ When once asked by a somewhat concerned Ph.D. student at a world famous university if I was offended that she was not calling me 'Dr' or 'Professor', I replied that I was very offended when someone did not call me by my preferred title: Al or Alden. Yet, one person involved in all of this, for whom I have the greatest respect, told me that I should include this information. Since then, I have

done so at the same time as retaining a deep-seated belief that arguments should be considered on their merits (or otherwise).

² Notes have been added in an 'Endnotes' section so as not to disrupt the flow. These are mostly in the form of additional comments, observations and sources. Throughout some points are repeated for emphasis.

³ The Curtin Group Centre is important for more distant embassies as well. That is, Canberra's only Duty Free Shop (in the Curtin Centre) draws in diplomats and diplomatic staff members to obtain supplies for their official entertainment needs.

⁴ Ironically, after this had been written the *Canberra Times* published an editorial stating, *inter alia*:

It is hardly a triumph of diplomacy when Australians find out a senior American politician, and former high-profile Trump adversary, has knocked back the role of ambassador to this country before we even knew he had been offered it. [23 May 2018, p. 14.]

Although each diplomatic appointment is unique, made in the context of various factors beyond our control, one has to wonder how many potential high-level diplomatic appointees from key allies and trading partners politely decline the offer because they do not find Canberra an attractive place to live, ... even for a couple of years?

⁵ It would be difficult to for anyone not to have sympathy for the shopkeepers and other businesses affected by the closure of '44 Curtin Place'. At first glance, those who wish for appropriate redevelopment of this site might be seen as the ones to blame for delay and loss of income. The issues are more complicated. One could, for example, move on to blame the development team for the nature of the redevelopment proposed, ultimately rejected as out of character with these shops. At the same time, though others might disagree, the development team had the best community consultation I have attended (which is not to say it was perfect, for example, inviting Garran residents who were not in the catchment area to attend and excluding Yarralumla residents, who were). Beyond this, one would have to look to the ACT government decision made some time after 2011 to allow the '44 Curtin Place' site to have apartments above the ground level shops ... as well as the initial *Draft Master Plan* (2015) proposing up to two stories on the west side of the central courtyard. In my view, both of these were inappropriate government decisions and should be corrected now rather than permitting 50 years or more of such a significant Group Centre repelling rather than attracting (other than students from around Australia and around the world who want to study an example of planning blunders). [Cf. *Curtin turns 50*, pp 189-192, and *Draft Master Plan* 2015, Figure 41, p. 62]. But, we are still left with the shopkeepers and other businesses affected. A popup village would mitigate adverse effects. In my view, shopkeepers (and other business) affected by the closure of '44 Curtin Place' should be allowed to apply to have their rates cut – on an ex-gratia non-precedent basis – at the very least until this Group Centre is up and running again ... provided any reductions in rates are passed on in full to sub-lessees. I also would apply these rate reductions – on the same conditions – to any shopkeeper or other business forced to move from the Curtin

Group Centre due to the closure of '44 Curtin Place' if there has been a demonstrably significant cost of moving and/or (audited) significant loss of income.

Preposterous as this may sound, there are a number of relevant factors to be considered in this case, factors unlikely to arise again, including: 1. The significance of this Group Centre in terms of Australia's national interests (e.g., used so heavily by the diplomatic corps); 2. The greatly enhanced revenue that will flow to the ACT Government from land sales and commercial rates revenue over 50 years or more if this Group Centre is redeveloped to world-class standards; and 3. The impetus this would provide to various government bodies to get planning decisions right in the first place so as to avoid future disasters ... as this redevelopment will surely be if it continues along its present path.

It would be naïve to ignore that some in other locations might see such a (rates reduction) move as a precedent; yet, very few would be able to satisfy strict criteria for such a claim to be successful.

⁶ With appropriate transfer of budget resources and relevant professionals expressing a desire to transfer to an NCA with responsibilities more appropriate to maintaining the larger central core – context - of Canberra within which national institutions are located.

⁷ This is not to say that there are no admirable features in the *Draft Master Plan*, especially in the original version of November 2015.

⁸ The reason given for the closure of '44 Curtin Place' was that it was no longer economically viable to maintain. The leaseholder indicated an intention to board up this block if a previously submitted Development application was rejected. It was rejected as out of character with the village nature of this Group Centre, which has been one of its most charming characteristics.

See: <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/act/curtin-shops-fenced-off-as-stalemate-continues-over-highrise-redevelopment-plan-20180110-h0g5fb.html>

Another potential reason for a decline in patronage of the Curtin Group Centre was the loss of the Beyond Q second-hand bookshop, café and live music venue, ... from within '44 Curtin Place' when tenants were evicted. Beyond Q was one of those 'fantastic places' planners aspire to have in Centres they plan, one that acted as a multiplier magnet pulling in business to a Centre as a whole.

Ironically, in Canberra at the same time as we see Beyond Q is forced out of the Curtin Shops we see the rise of second hand neighborhood bookshops/cafes in other parts of the world, in cities with more forward thinking plans.

See <https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2017/12/05/plot-twist-for-bookstores/7U6qgeWtbw18iIBOSHoUdO/story.html>

⁹ Although in so doing at times it is not possible to avoid quoting or paraphrasing some individuals.

¹⁰ If one were doing a manuscript of this nature for a professional journal one would have more time as well as the benefit of the comments of peer reviewers/referees prior to publication. This is not the case here.

¹¹ Some time ago I shared a quiet dinner at home with some relatives. He was a high level diplomat from one of our major allies and trading partners, visiting with his wife (both of whom, of course, will remain anonymous). He walked the corridors of power in a leading world capital city (as well as in many other national capitals). During the course of our conversations, I (very diplomatically) tried to draw out of this very well travelled couple their views of Canberra. They (very diplomatically) declined to be drawn out. Yet, over the period that followed I could not help forming the impression that they could not get out of Canberra fast enough. Do we need additional reasons for such persons to stay away from Canberra?

[On a positive note, I learned not to ask diplomats and diplomatic staff members about their views of Australia's national capital.]

¹² At the same time, motivated and organised people power can decide the fate of politicians at the polls.

¹³ Some would say a continued regression towards mediocrity in planning and construction in Australia's national capital.

¹⁴ Although not speaking of this revised *Draft Master Plan*, nor of anyone connected with it or any development or proposed development, in an informal conversation a long-time Canberra resident offered a personal opinion that – in my own opinion also – seemed to express an increasingly common view:

“In Canberra you get what you bribe for.”

As someone else later opined:

“... a friend of mine has been telling me how much corruption goes on in Canberra and he often cites it as the explanation for decisions in Canberra ...”

“ ... I used to think he was a bit stuck on the issue but I've finally been persuaded because there is no other possible explanation for certain decisions ...”

One hears many similar opinions expressed in different words.

I am not expressing a view on the validity of these opinions. They may not be valid. But if these and similar opinions have any validity it is easy to think beyond to the current banking Royal Commission that seems to have exposed a mindset characterising more than a few in recent years:

One little compromise will not hurt, one more little compromise will not hurt, ... , one small chip off my integrity will not matter, one more small chip off my integrity will not matter, ... , one more decision, one more day, one more week, one more month, one more year, ... and what we are doing will continue to be tolerated so we do not have to worry about being caught, about losing our careers, about being charged, about going to prison.

¹⁵ Unthinkable? ... Who in their wildest dreams ever would have imagined high-level financial executives being grilled before a Royal Commission, then toppled from their lofty perches? ... Who would have dreamed a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church would have to face charges of alleged criminal conduct in an Australian Court. Or, ... who - only a few years ago - in their even wilder dreams could ever have imagined members of the constabulary being charged with crimes, for (alleged) conduct that if proven tarnishes the reputations of the many police officers who carry out their responsibilities with respected rectitude

Indeed, there are perceptions of corruption in the nation's capital. There also is a strong argument for dealing with these sooner rather than later, an argument - if warranted - for taking a big hit all at once, so to speak, rather than continue to watch each smaller hit bring Australia's ranking on the international perception of corruption index slide down and down. [For example, 7th in perceived corruption 1995 dropping to 13th in 2017.]

See: https://www.transparency.org/files/content/tool/1995_CPI_EN.pdf

See:

https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017 [Scroll down to Table, within Table scroll down to 'Australia'.]

¹⁶ Lessees and sub-lessees, who find current revenues down, and others expecting increased revenues as the Curtin Group Centre redevelops, may believe speedy approval of the revised *Draft Master Plan* and the redevelopments likely to follow will achieve their goals, legitimate goals. Perhaps. But, there is a credible alternative possibility: Customers and clients have started to move their business elsewhere not because of the current state of the Group Centre but rather because they do not like the direction in which the proposed redevelopment is heading and hence will not be attracted back - much less more new customers and clients attracted - if the Group Centre continues down the path followed in this revised *Draft Master Plan*.

¹⁷ The Curtin Coles supermarket is significantly smaller than supermarkets (roughly 1,400 m² floor space, including checkout area) at other Group Centres [e.g., Mawson, Weston Creek (which has two)][Coles calculation using ACTmapi 'line' tool; the initial *Draft Master Plan* gives its floor space as 1444 m², p. 24]. The group Westfarmers has indicated its intention to sell the Coles supermarket chain. A new owner would be expected to cull 'non-performing' assets and likely consider the Curtin Coles for off-loading, given its limited variety of stock, and low turnover at times when larger supermarkets thrive. The current aim of the Coles/Woolworths (/Safeway) chains appears to be supermarkets on the order of 4,000 m². Indeed, Woolworths pulled out of a planned 1,500 m² supermarket build in Giralang when the ACT Government imposed a 1,000 m² limit.

See <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-16/wesfarmers-to-demerge-its-coles-supermarket-chain/9554658>

See <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/shops-outgunned-in-land-of-the-giants-20120724-22nsn.html>

See <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/supermarket-50-apartments-proposed-in-giralang-shops-redevelopment-20180425-p4zboa.html>

If sold, what would the 'supermarket site' become? ... An IGA? There is already an IGA in two of the local shopping centres of the local shops in the Curtin Group Centre catchment area (Deakin and Yarralumla) and 'Friendly Grocers' in another two (Hughes and Lyons) so could one expect another small supermarket in the area to pull shoppers away from the more distance, increasingly more crowded, Woden Town Centre, the Weston Creek or Mawson Group Centres? The alternative, ... an Aldi supermarket? ... If so, would an Aldi cater for the cosmopolitan tastes of a catchment area with an increasing number of young couples who have travelled more, deferred settling down, as well as provide an attraction other than duty-free alcohol for Canberra's diplomatic community for use at official functions? ... Or, would the site be left vacant, awaiting larger capital gains from a future sale, its owner sleeping undisturbed in the knowledge the ACT government never would declare any commercial or concessional lease non-compliant and resume it?

¹⁸ One example of a challenge is rubbish removal. With 'strip malls', such as the old Yarralumla shops (and including variants such as the Chifley and Griffith shops) the solution is fairly straight-forward: Rubbish goes in bins in an alleyway at the rear and is removed periodically by trucks mostly out of sight of shoppers and with little risk to pedestrians. In contrast, the Curtin Group Centre has shops facing a central courtyard, together with current or potential shops at the rear of these facing two busy streets (Carruthers and Theodore), and another with increasing use by cars and pedestrians (Strangway). To this mix an additional 100 or so residential apartments are proposed, and at a time when rubbish exports to China have been banned. This a problem would challenge skilled planners anywhere in the world.

¹⁹ I am reminded of an article by Stephen Sales. From memory his research examined a situation in which employees had the ability to perform each required activity very well but had so many activities to perform within the time available that few, if any, could be carried out to the standards an employee was capable of achieving. This stressful situation increased risk of coronary heart disease for employees. It should go without saying that I hope sincerely no ACTPLA or EPSDD employee (or anyone else involved in this) suffers a heart attack, however mild. At the same time, one wonders if ACTPLA itself is headed for what might be described as a fatal 'organisational heart attack' [Cf. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 'Organizational role as a risk factor in coronary disease', Vol. 14, No. 3 (Sep., 1969), pp. 325-336].

See http://www.jstor.org/stable/2391126?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

²⁰ Already we have seen impacts of need for more ACT Government revenue, such as the recent increase in rates for apartment dwellers.

See: <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/act/apartment-owners-call-for-act-government-to-reverse-rates-increase-20180214-h0w29q.html>

[See also comments on this article.]

The argument for increasing these rates has been challenged and the fact that the ACT Government announced massive increases for apartment dwellers

suggests desperation on the part of the Government to increase its revenue by any means possible.

See: *Canberra Times*, 2 May 2018, p. 14, "Rates impact unfair" ...

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/politics/act/government-must-address-owners-battle-to-recover-repair-costs-20180501-p4zcrn.html>

²¹ A simple example of the conflicting priorities of the ACT Government and the Federal Government (as represented by the National Capital Authority) is the dog park in Weston Park in Yarralumla. Yarralumla is one of the suburbs within the Curtin Group Centre so this dog park in questions attracts dog owners from Curtin and other catchment area suburbs. Recently, according to press reports, some \$200,000 was allocated to the up-grading of four dog parks, including one in Duffy. The Yarralumla dog park received a new bench for dog owners (seats two or three people), a couple of trees knocked down (though when the ACT Government pays for tree removals no one seems to check if stumps are removed as well), a drinking fountain intended for dog and human use, and an attempt to remedy persistent flooding. The new bench was welcomed and possibly extra funds were paid to remove a stump not removed by a previous sub-contractor. One person with construction experience across Australia described the water fountain as being beyond comprehension: the concrete pad on which it sat was below standard specifications and there was no water drainage provided for. The person in question never had seen a drinking fountain installed without provision for drainage, which in this case creates an unsightly mess. The construction person with extensive experience commented that Canberra had the worst building/enforcement standards ever seen across the whole of Australia. As for the attempt to deal with excess water from the adjacent golf course, instead of the logical solution of requiring the golf course to deal with the problem or piping excess water underground through the park to the adjacent storm water channel a shallow trench was dug, a mat laid down and covered with bluestone rubble. In theory, the idea was not unreasonable: slow the runoff water down and allow it to seep into the ground. In practice, a problem was that the bluestone rubble created a hazard for dogs and children ... at the same time a warm home for snakes in summer when the park is used most intensively. Apparently the dog park in Duffy was a higher priority for resource allocation (though in Canberra probably not for validation that work was to an acceptable standard). Bottom line: from an ACT Government point of view, it made sense to allocate resources to locations where there were more voters. The suburb of Yarralumla, adjacent to the dog park, probably has a higher proportion of those who do not vote in Canberra elections (e.g., foreign diplomats, diplomatic staff members and Parliamentary staff registered in other electorates). But, from a national interest point of view, one would want to ensure adequate resources were allocated to this Yarralumla dog park, as it is the closest dog park to the diplomatic areas of Canberra (e.g., Deakin and Yarralumla). If one uses the Weston ('Yarralumla') dog park, one encounters diplomats from time to time, who presumably come not only to let their dogs play but perhaps also to meet a few ordinary Australians. From personal experience, diplomats come to this dog park once. The impression I have gotten over the years is that after one visit they take home with them the view that the

dog park is a dust bowl, not suitable for recreational use (... and perhaps that Canberra/Australia is a planning/governance dustbowl). The point is that the ACT Government and the NCA should be required to co-operate in areas affecting our national interests (which extend beyond the Parliamentary Triangle and a few other areas).

²² Currently Australia has about one-half the number days of liquid fuel reserves mandated by agreement with the International Energy Agency (roughly 45 days rather than 90 days). Perhaps unlikely, though not impossible, an interruption in supply from overseas (such as might be caused by problems in the Middle East, the South China Sea or elsewhere) would mean private vehicles would at the bottom of a list of prioritised uses for available fuel stocks (petrol/diesel). In turn, this would mean residents would be dependent on locally available food (etc.) supplies, such as are available, as well as having sufficiently developed neighbourhood communities so the more mobile would be able to identify and help those less mobile.

See: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/how-long-could-australia-survive-if-fuel-supplies/5866738>

See also: John Black (Ed), *Liquid Fuels in Australia: A social science research perspective*, 1982.

Following on, a classic CSIRO study of Melbourne suggested it would take on the order of 50 years to increase urban density to levels that significantly reduce dependence on liquid fuels. Had Canberra started along this path when the monograph referenced above was published, i.e., in 1982, we would be well on the way to lower liquid fuels dependence (and lower greenhouse gas emissions).

In fairness, some decades back the powers that be in Canberra proposed 'infill' (increases in medium density) for 20 sites identified as suitable. 'People power' blocked any development on 19 of these sites. Paradoxically, the one area that proceeded as medium density development was in one of Canberra's higher socioeconomic areas (Red Hill).

At the same time, one has to wonder about some of the currently proposed 'infill' plans, such as in O'Malley, wherein (without having studied the proposal in detail myself) local residents appear to have a strong case in opposition.

There is another paradox here: As we move away from a 'Garden City' in Canberra we move away from local self-sufficiency in food supplies. As we move towards a city of McMansions, medium density and high density living (without at minimum establishing community gardens to keep pace) we theoretically lower fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions by private vehicles (except insofar as people may use these private vehicles more - over longer distances - on weekends to escape urban stress) but at the same time we become dependent on food that must be transported over longer distances by large, fuel-using, polluting trucks.

In short, what makes all of this a very difficult challenge for planners, politicians and people is that Canberra seems to attract (to its 'Garden City') residents/voters who prefer low density living, Australia is largely dependent on overseas sources of liquid fuels for vehicles, the question of reliable future

sources of power for such vehicles remains unanswered (e.g., hydrogen? electricity?), space for new urban development is not unlimited (nor inexpensive) and competes with other potential uses (e.g., market gardens) ... at the same time as there is little (if any) build quality control in Canberra (which deters purchase of medium and higher density residences).

There may be some obvious answers but there are no easy answers.

²³ We see the same in some other national capitals. For example, in Paris middle and upper class Parisians tend to live within the central core of Paris, in solidly built apartments of mostly four to six storeys, at the same time as *Maghrebians* [from North Africa or descendents of North Africans] tend to live in the banlieue [suburbs] at the edges of Paris in crowded, low-quality, high-density high-rise apartments. These were the areas torched in the 2005 Paris riots.

Cf.

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e7/Paris_riots_satellite.jpg

[Of course, this is not to suggest Canberra is heading for riots. Here the discontented are more likely to take out their displeasure at the polls ... or – in the interim – with road rage.]

As another example, in Quito Ecuador, the middle and upper classes historically have tended to live in the central areas, within walking distance of cultural and daily needs, while the descendents of the original inhabitants (e.g., the Otavalo Indians) were pushed up nearby hills to the edges of the city and forced to bear all the extra costs of daily transport needs.

²⁴ This said, the nature of future densification in Curtin might vary in different parts of a suburb, such as being higher closer to centres, lower in areas farther removed. Beyond this, in view of Curtin's interconnected green spaces, which allow pedestrians and cyclists to traverse the whole of the suburb – and beyond – without needing to cross a road, there is an argument to be considered for allowing greater densification over time throughout the whole of such a centrally located suburb rather than only in the area surrounding the Group Centre. For example, the eastern area (i.e., closer to the stormwater drain and proposed future light rail route) might be zoned to allow aggregated blocks for two-storey duplexes or town house builds. Would four two-storey duplexes or townhouses (for four families) with reasonable front and adequate back gardens on two blocks be more efficient in moving towards a more compact, liveable city with adequate community open space than two four level McMansions, each built fence to fence on these same two blocks and restricting solar access to one or more neighbouring homes? This said, it is for others to determine if Curtin (or any suburb in its catchment area) is best served by more densification, including gradual expansion of the areas of permitted, taking the aesthetics of a core area of the nation's capital into account, as well as social equity issues. [Parenthetically, if a gradual expansion of moderately increased densification was planned to occur in Curtin over decades, this would reach my home long after it has been sold, most likely for a knock-down-rebuild (of a McMansion).]

²⁵ Higher density living, although it conjures up images of outer Melbourne slum high-rises and Canberra's former Melba Flats, works when separate residential units are *very well* insulated acoustically from each other and from street noise [as well, as noted, there is easy access to ample green space]. Also, it is beyond belief (at least to anyone unfamiliar with Australia's national capital) that in contemporary Canberra a prospective off-the-plan (higher density) apartment buyer who expressed a willingness to pay extra for double-glazed windows is told the (EPSDD approved) building structure would not support the extra weight. The alternative to good planning and quality builds comes from path-breaking 'Chicago School of Urban Sociology' research (in a growing Chicago in the 1920s) indicating size, density and heterogeneity led to social pathologies (e.g., more crime, mental illness). These adverse consequences are likely to follow here when new builds of today become the slums of Canberra's future. A more extreme view of the adverse effects of higher density living is Calhoun's classic article on 'population density and social pathology', published in the *Scientific American*, in 1962.

See http://www.jstor.org/stable/24937233?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Although Calhoun's research really relates to (household) crowding, as distinct from (urban) density, and does not recognise that quality design and (enforced) building standards can mitigate adverse effects of higher density living, slums do tend to lead to crowding.

²⁶ It is beyond my comprehension, having lived in cold climates placing a high value on winter sunlight, that in Australia's coldest major city the ACT Government, Canberra planners and developers seem to focus on how much sunlight they can remove from public places. Does not anyone appreciate the absolute absurdity of requiring Canberra residents to travel to snowy Alpine areas, such as Perisher, Thredbo, or Hotham in Victoria, to enjoy a weekend of more sunlight in public places winter?

²⁷ What has been occurring in Canberra for some time now is what might be described as a modern 'enclosure movement' in which public land is transferred to private use for a cost that does not take into account years – often decades - of public subsidies. The reference is to the Enclosures in pre-modern England and Scotland in which the Lords of the Manors 'enclosed' what had been common land used by peasants, thereby depriving the latter group of a community asset.

²⁸ The Curtin Group Centre and surrounding areas also serve as a location where diplomats find opportunities to meet and form relationships with their counterparts from other nations, outside cocktail parties, official dinners, and national day celebrations, as well as to meet ordinary Australians. Hence, amenity provided by the Curtin Group Centre has substantial added value for Australia's national interests. It would be very short-sighted not to preserve this value with a well-designed and well-implemented redevelopment of the Curtin Group Centre.

²⁹ Unless the present ACT Government and EPSDD only consider land swaps proposed by commercial leaseholders, not by ordinary citizens.

³⁰ The reality is that Centres are more economically viable if parking is close to shops (and so on). Providing at least one parking structure is not at odds with trying to reduce trip distances and traffic congestion, it would help to mitigate these. That is, if the Curtin Group Centre is redeveloped to serve its whole (group centre) catchment area, then this Centre could be accessed by 'locals' via roads such as Carruthers, Kent Street, Theodore and so on. Even before the closure of '44 Curtin Place', as the 'Curtin Shops' has not provided group centre functions, e.g., a supermarket of group centre size, residents most likely contribute significantly to traffic congestion on the Cotter Road (to access the Weston Creek Group Centre), Adelaide Avenue and Melrose Drive (to access the Woden Town Centre) and Yamba Drive (to access the Mawson Group Centre). It mind-boggling to contemplate the contribution to increasing congestion this catchment area will make over the next 50 years if redevelopment leads to a Centre which repels rather than attracts.

³¹ As the Woden Town Centre lacks a community centre, and with the population in this Town Centre area likely to increase with new high-rise residential developments, these new residents will place increased demand on the Hughes Community Centre, which already has difficult coping with demand. This makes a Curtin Community Centre essential, to cope with not only the needs of Curtin, Deakin, Lyons and Yarralumla, but also anticipated overflow from the Hughes Community Centre.

³² See: <https://www.allhomes.com.au/news/community-concerns-for-sixstorey-curtin-shops-redevelopment-20170110-gtowu0/> [Author of article, Rachel Packham.]

³³ As noticed elsewhere, what makes difficult commenting the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is that conflicting visual representations of potential future uses of the Centre's (CZ1) core are presented. Hence, if one points to problems with 'Diagram A' (p. 4) the Government can argue it is 'Diagram B' (p. 5) that is relevant; if one points to problems with 'Diagram B' the Government can argue it is 'Diagram A' that is relevant. Orwell would love this approach.

³⁴ From notes taken during meeting.

³⁵ Coincidentally ... unless this figure corresponding to the projected population served increase of 300% represents foresight of planners who did the original *Draft Master Plan* of 2015.

³⁶ See: *Curtin Turns 50*, p.145.

³⁷ Note how the solid, cantilevered awnings almost touch, how they block winter sunlight from a very (too) narrow passageway. Ironically, in the coldest major city in Australia, on the continent with the most sunlight, zooming in shows artificial heat sources are being used to give (potential) customers some warmth. It is difficult to comment in a restrained (and respectful) manner on how absolutely ludicrous planners and residents of many cities in the northern hemisphere would find the current proposal for a 21st century redevelopment.

³⁸ Even laneways planned in 19th century Melbourne are usually wider than what this key connection pathway is likely to become in the 21st century if '44 Curtin Place' is redeveloped within its present footprint.

³⁹ And, there are the many schoolchildren – of all ages - who frequent the Curtin Group Centre. From time to time by chance one may notice a ‘questionable’ person (for some intuitive reason does not appear to look like a parent or grandparent) hanging around one of the schools near the Group Centre as one drives past on one’s daily business, ... as one is ‘all eyes’, so to speak, when children are going to, or coming from, school, as one slows down well below 40 kpm and tries to be hyper alert in case of some unpredictable behavior (e.g., a child darting into the street).

See: <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/act/man-tries-to-lure-child-into-car-with-promise-of-puppy-20180524-p4zh6n.html>

⁴⁰ One incentive for a leaseholder to agree to move the footprint of a building abutting the current small courtyard would be to allow retentions of the land within the original footprint, under an enlarged courtyard. As a relevant example, in the 1960s a plan to build a car park under the courtyard in front of the famous Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was stopped when an archeological site dating back to early Roman times was uncovered. This was turned into museum under the courtyard. The point is that a courtyard need not be inconsistent with the use – including commercial use - of space underneath (provided appropriate building standards are followed).

See: <http://thewanderbug.com/2014/11/03/archaeological-crypt-notre-dame-roman-ruins-paris/>

⁴¹ If the previously proposed entry/exit routes are maintained.

⁴² If the previously proposed entry/exit routes are maintained.

⁴³ If the previously proposed entry/exit routes are maintained.

⁴⁴ If the previously proposed entry/exit routes are maintained.

⁴⁵ If the previously proposed entry/exit routes are maintained.

⁴⁶ Here my personal point of reference is the (conservatively) over 25 or so different kinds of accommodation in which I have lived, for varying periods [shorter term (often multiple stays) collaborative research/consulting and longer term residences), in cities around the world over many years [with Canberra as my home for the past 45 years]. For example, if the intended clientele were to be those who visit Canberra from time to time for business - say with Parliament or with non-profit headquarters - what would these people be most likely to want in a ‘home away from home’? ... A good local supermarket with prepared fresh and/or *quality* microwave meals, a variety of eating establishments within walking distance, a pharmacy, a bottle shop for those who drink (and/or entertain), places close at hand to socialise (such as *Beyond Q*, *Club Lime* and so on), weekend local community events as nearby as possible, as well as – perhaps above all – a quiet place to sleep. The reality is that more of these needs could be met elsewhere if ‘44 Curtin Place’ is redeveloped within its present footprint.

Major leaseholders and sub-lessees doubtless feel the unenviable financial pain caused by delays in anticipated completion dates for redevelopment, and – understandably – may blame delays for losses or added costs. What they do not

seem to appreciate is that delays could prevent greater losses, for example, if planned new developments elsewhere very adversely affected their anticipated gains, i.e., greatly reduced their returns on investments, when locked into a non-competitive redevelopment plans for 50 years or more. Delays may turn out to be a godsend by allowing time to reconsider what kind of development would yield the highest returns in light of recent market changes.

⁴⁷ This 1600m² figure is not realistic. It does not take a great deal of thought to recognise there would be little incentive incur the costs required to add about 150 m² floor space to a supermarket [1600 m² – 1449 m² ≈ 150m²]. If at least 2000 m² floor space was allowed, and required to conform to reasonable modern access aisle widths (e.g., to accommodate wheelchairs), it is unlikely there would be any more competition with smaller supermarkets in the catchment area than there is now, as local residents currently drive farther to other Group or Town Centres, or to Majura Park, for weekly shopping trips.

⁴⁸ That is, to the Melrose Drive - Hindmarsh Drive intersection, the Yamba Drive (past the hospital) - Hindmarsh Drive intersection, and to a lesser extent the Callum Street/Athllon Drive – Hindmarsh Drive intersection.

⁴⁹ For examples, see: <https://babycarriersaustralia.net.au/infant-carriers/>

⁵⁰ Information from *Curtin Turns 50: The story of a Canberra Suburb 1964-2014* (2016, Edited by C. Brody, P. Forster, M. Acker) (pp. 156-158), and the revised *Draft Master Plan 2018*.

⁵¹ Effectively, to the extent parents qualified for a childcare subsidy, there would be a transfer of taxpayer funds to the childcare centre rather than a cost to each family.

⁵² However, there is a strong argument that the leasehold held by the Australian Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church [ABN 76 000 665 958] – which the community has subsidised for decades - should be used for essential non-profit community needs, such as housing for lower income older residents in the catchment centre (especially elderly women who have had lower lifetime incomes as a result of past sex discrimination or time out of the workforce for childrearing, and have much more limited superannuation savings), or as a site for a community centre.

⁵³ For the uninitiated, “Clayton’s” is a beer with no alcohol. Its name has been adopted as an adjective.

See: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/clayton%27s>

⁵⁴ This should not be disheartening to the planners who put so much work into the original *Draft Master Plan 2015*. It is similar to preparing a manuscript for publication in a professional journal. That is, one prepares the manuscript, one goes over it innumerable times, polishes it as best one can, and finally – perhaps believing no other improvements are possible - sends it to a journal. The editor then sends the manuscript out for review by referees. Invariably, the manuscript is rejected, hopefully with a ‘revise and resubmit’ recommendation ... suggesting (but not promising) that if the author takes into account the comments and suggested improvements of referees the manuscript will merit reconsideration.

Almost always there are suggestions the author accepts as improving his or her manuscript despite earlier beliefs the manuscript was 'perfect'. As a result an improved publication is the outcome. So also for Draft Master Plans ... if the aim is world-class outcomes.

Estimating future numbers of new residents (and cars)
in the Curtin Group Centre Core (CZ1) area
... with implications for other Canberra Group Centres.

(Dr) Alden S. Klovdahl [Ph.D.]¹

Estimating the future residential density of the Curtin Group Centre if the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is approved is challenging. What makes this particularly difficult is this revised *Plan* presents two different visual representations of potential future uses of the Centre's (CZ1) Core. Hence, if one points to problems with 'Diagram A' (p. 4) the Government can argue it is 'Diagram B' (p. 5) that is relevant; if one points to problems with 'Diagram B' the Government can argue it is 'Diagram A' that is relevant. This suggests planners and lower level Government officials are under great pressure to get any Master Plan approved, regardless of its long-term, adverse consequences for this Group Centre ... and for other Centres around Canberra. Be this as it may, here we look at heights and mixed use proposed for the core of the Curtin Group Centre in the relevant diagram (p. 4) of the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018). We start with some useful comparisons ... estimated future residential densities within the Curtin Group Centre if the revised *Draft Master Plan* is approved as well as densities in the top 10 most crowded world cities.² We also estimated cars added and later discuss implications for other Canberra Group Centres.

I note the conditions applying when I write: Implicit in my comments above and below, made explicit now, is the widely accepted understanding that planning is a political process at its core, fraught with complexities and competing interests. No comments or opinions expressed here should be taken in any way to reflect adversely on the integrity or competence of anyone involved in the planning discussed. My comments, views, personal opinions and so on are intended to focus on plans, not persons.

If I have made any errors, of commission or of omission, I welcome corrections.³

My assumptions in calculating projected possible densities for the Curtin Group Centre, and for other Group Centres are provided below.

[Note: Density per square kilometer / 100 = density per hectare; density per hectare / 10 = density per quarter acre block].

Two relevant Tables follow:

Curtin Group Centre Core (CZ1) Residential Densities				
if revised Draft Master Plan 2018 approved				
Estimate:	Low Estimate		High Estimate	
	Residents			
	per Hectare	per Quarter Acre Block	per Hectare	per Quarter Acre Block
Allowed:	500	50	625	62.5

It is useful to compare these potential density figures to the world's most crowded cities:

**"The world's most crowded cities" (Top 10)
Residential Densities**

City/ Country	Residents	
	per Hectare	per Quarter Acre Block
Dhaka, Bangladesh	445	44.5
Mumbai, India	317	31.7
Medellin, Columbia	197	19.7
Manila, Phiippines	148	14.8
Casablanca, Morroco	142	14.2
Lagos, Nigeria	133	13.3
Kota, India	121	12.1
Abuja, Nigeria	105	10.5
Siingapore	102	10.2
Jakarta, Indonesia	96	9.6

Data documenting residential densities in world cities above, assumptions and methods for these 'most crowded cities' come from World Economic Forum at:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/05/these-are-the-world-s-most-crowded-cities/>

In short, the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) for the Curtin Group Centre suggests possible residential densities in this small Canberra Centre at rates higher than found in the whole of the 10 most crowded world cities ... all in Third

World countries (except Singapore). This has implications not only for Curtin but also for all other Group Centres around Canberra (as will be shown below).⁴ It has even more important implications for Canberra as Australia's national capital.

Moving on, we use the Group Centres listed in the *Group Centres Development Code* NI2008-27 (Effective 13 April 2012) in which 17 Group Centres were listed.⁵ This document provides detailed drawings of each of the listed Group Centres, showing zoning within each. As an example, the Curtin Group Centre diagram is shown as:

Group Centres – Woden/ Weston Creek

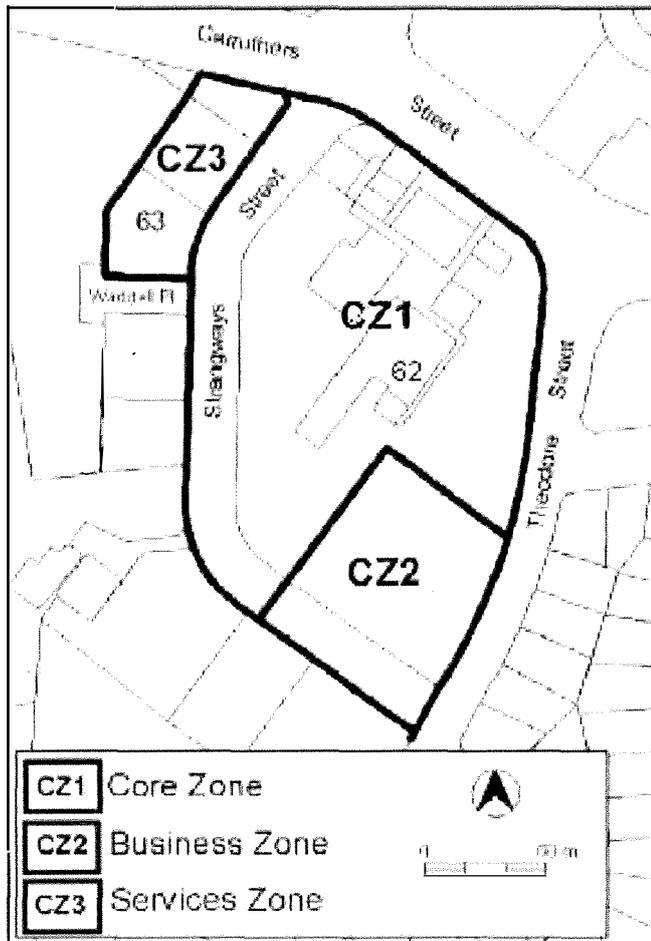


Figure A15 Curtin Group Centre Zones

Source: *Group Centres Development Code*, 2012, p. 14.

The list of all Group Centres in this document is shown below, together with the description of the stated intent of the code:

The Group Centres Development Code applies to development within Group Centres CZ1 – CZ3 Zones (Figures A1-A17) as listed below:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| Calwell | Charnwood |
| Chisholm | Conder |
| Curtin | Dickson |

Erindale Hawker
 Jamison Kaleen
 Kingston Kambah
 Manuka Kippax
 Weston Mawson
 Wanniassa

This code is intended to ensure that the type and form of development within the Group Centres is responsive and sympathetic to the character, or proposed character, of the locality. [Source: *Group Centres Development Code*, 2012, p. 1.]

“ ... sympathetic to the character, or proposed character, of the locality.” [Emphasis added.]

From the figures in this document and ACTmap it is possible to estimate future residential densities and numbers of additional residents (and cars) within the core (CZ1 zoned) of the Curtin Group Centre if the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is approved as well as residential densities and numbers of added residents (and cars) possible within other Group Centres if this revised *Draft Master Plan* becomes the precedent used elsewhere.

As with all modeling, this involves a number of assumptions:

1. We start with Curtin. We assume the development team for '44 Curtin Place' was charged with getting the maximum number of apartments likely to be approved in the previously submitted development application [DA 201630437], as it is a commercial leaseholders right to attempt to maximise returns on investment (as it is the right of community members and others to challenge what is proposed).



2. We then take the floor layouts of levels 2 to 6 of the '44 Curtin Place' [Level 5 shown] redevelopment as originally proposed, i.e., the proposed residential levels about the ground level (retail) [DA 201630437 'FLOORREG-201630437-LEVEL_5-01' (or any other residential level)].

3. We allow that - in attempting to reduce potential community opposition - two possible apartments on each residential level (northwest corner, lower right above) were excluded to reduce (though not eliminate) loss of winter sunlight to the central community courtyard. This removed 2 apartments per level.

4. The simplest way to allow for this reduction (i.e., if an area the size of the entire current '44 Curtin Place' site could be build upon) is to mirror the western half of the each residential level of the proposed building. That is, the western (top) half proposed four two-bedroom apartments and two one-bed room apartments for each level. Mirroring this to fill each residential level of the whole of a '44 Curtin Place' sized site footprint (at the allowed 1:1 100% plot ratio) means eight two-bedroom and four one-bedroom apartments would seem a reasonable configuration for each level on a site of this size (*cet. par.*).

5. Following on, this means for the five residential levels on a site of this size - as originally proposed - an estimate of a total of 40 two-bedroom apartments and 20 one-bedroom apartments (for a total of 60 apartments) would not be unrealistic.

6. Estimating the number of persons who could live in such a mixed-use residential development likewise is challenging but not impossible. That is, Canberra - as all other Australian cities (and most other Western cities, including Paris) is very car dependent. Most singles in one-bed room apartments are likely to have a car, as assumed in planning regulations that require one car park space be provided for each one-bedroom apartment (though a one bedroom apartment could host a couple with two cars). Most couples with two-bedroom apartments likely would have a car each (at the same time it is possible some two-bedroom apartments could host three people, meaning potentially three cars). In the case of two-bedroom apartments, the planning regulation requirement is 1.5 car park spaces per two-bedroom apartment. The relevant (conservative) calculations of estimated persons per apartment based on planning regulations follow:

One-bedroom: 20 apartments = 20 persons [1 car space x 20 = 20 residents]

Two bedroom: 40 apartments = 60 persons [1.5 car spaces x 40 = 60 residents]

Total: 80 residents if a site the size of '44 Curtin Place' site was built upon.

This means the estimated number of cars added for a five residential level development on a block this size also would be 80 (20 + 60).

One could argue planners erred in requiring fewer car spaces than likely to be required in Canberra (hence more people would live in such a structure); one could argue planners erred in requiring a greater number of car spaces than likely to be required in Canberra (hence fewer people would live in such a structure). The point is that given the time/data available the assumptions used about persons per car space are not unreasonable.

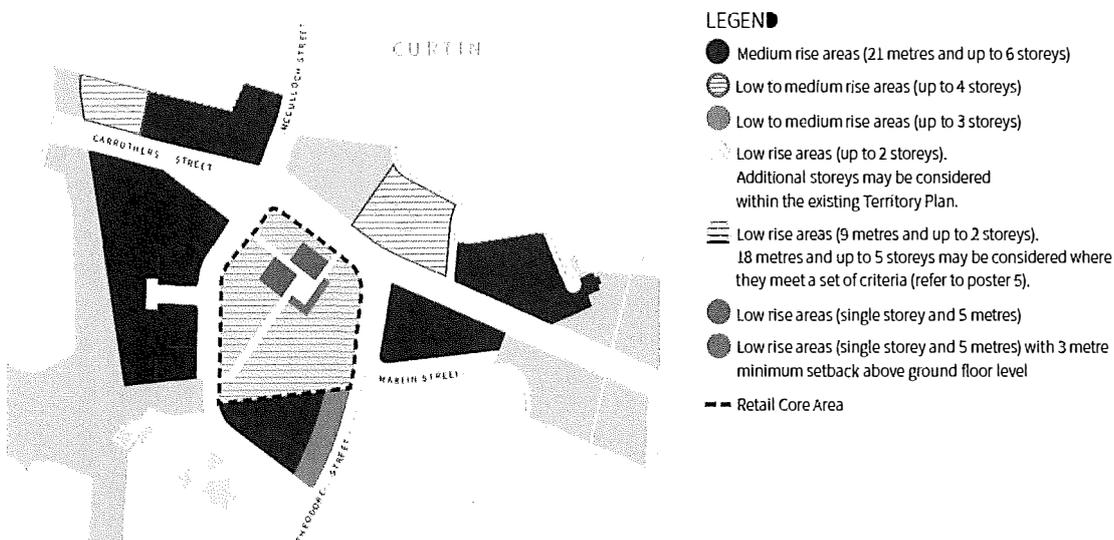
Using ACTmapi the size of the '44 Curtin Place' site is about 1,280 m² [/10000 (or x 0.0001)] = 0.128 of a hectare.⁶

If the area of '44 Curtin Place' was built as originally proposed to the full allowed (1:1 100% plot ratio) capacity of the site - one retail ground level and five residential levels - the estimated residential density of this one site would then be $80/0.128 = 625$ persons per hectare (62.5 persons per stereotypical Australian quarter acre block).

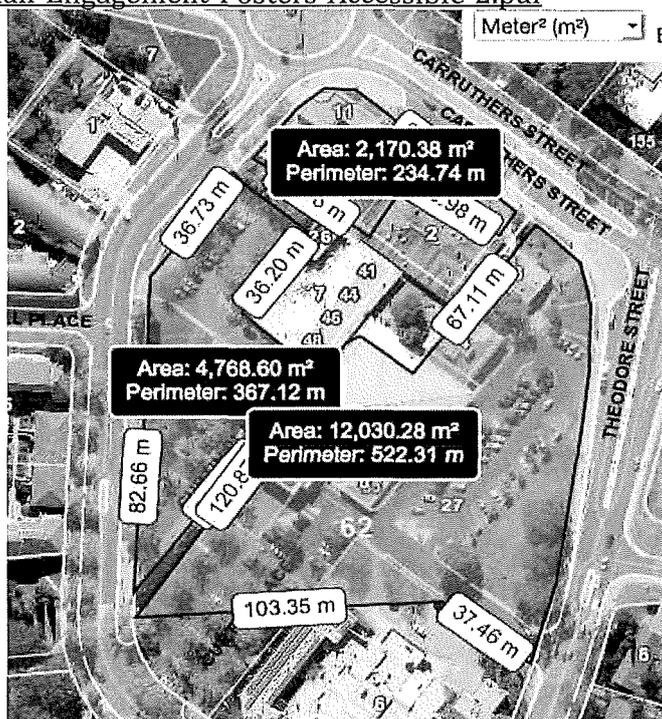
[... And an estimated number of additional cars, 80. We assume most added cars would be catered for by on-site (i.e., underground) parking, so an important issue is the amount of traffic added to the core of this Group Centre and the number of cars added to adjacent arterial roads (Cotter, Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen, Melrose Drive, leaving it to traffic engineers to estimate multiplier effects for congestion on other roads across the Canberra network.]

The revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) suggests the Core (CZ1) area be zoned for mixed use to be built up to five levels (18 metres) as shown in the Figure below (p. 4).

PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHTS



Source: <https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/application/files/2515/2348/5781/Curtin-Masterplan-Engagement-Posters-Accessible-2.pdf>



Source: ACTmapi at <http://app.actmapi.act.gov.au/actmapi/index.html?viewer=bwi>

Relating previous diagram to the area(s) calculated (above) [from ACTmapi ('line polygon' area tool)] we get a quantitative measure of the areas earmarked in the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) for development up to 5 'storeys' and 18 metres.

These areas total roughly 18,969 m², or 1.90 hectares (=18,969 x 0.0001).

The allowable height for the CZ1 area as shown above [revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018), p. 4] is stated as "[b]uildings may be considered above two storeys and to a maximum of 18 metres (up to 5 storeys) ... " (p. 5) followed by criteria such as "local character" and "visual impact". The later criteria are subjective so it could argued these are largely irrelevant. That is, once a single development/redevelopment at the maximum height has been approved the character of the Curtin Group Centre core (or any other Centre) has been lost and the criteria 'local character' and 'visual impact' become meaningless, these become the (unspecified) "proposed character" of a locality.⁷

Although the revised *Draft Master Plan* states a requirement for one ground level of retail, not having before us an actual 'Rule' it is not clear if this will be enacted or enforced. Hence, two ends of the 'residential density' spectrum are relevant:

1. All new developments/redevelopments have a retail ground floor level and four residential levels above (lower end);
2. All new developments/redevelopments have five residential levels (higher end).

If only four residential levels were built this would mean estimated persons per apartment based on planning regulations as follows:

One-bedroom: 16 apartments = 16 persons [16 car spaces x 1 = 16 residents]

Two bedroom: 32 apartments = 48 persons [1.5 car spaces x 32 = 48 residents]

Total: 64 residents if a site the size of '44 Curtin Place' site was built upon to four residential levels.

This means the estimated number of additional cars for a four residential level development on a block this size would be 64 (16 + 48) for reasons given above.

Estimates	Lower End	Upper End
Residential levels:	Four	Five
Persons per 0.128 ha:	64	80
Density/Hectare	500	625
Density per Quarter Acre Block:	50.0 persons	62.5 persons
Est. Total persons living in CZ1 area	950	1,190
Added cars per 0.128 ha	64	80
Added Cars/Hectare	500	625
Total Cars Added	950	1,190

The reason the potential number of persons added and the number of cars added are identical for both the 'lower' and 'upper' estimates is that we are using the ACT current 'requirement' of one car space for each one bedroom apartment and 1.5 car spaces for each two bedroom apartment for both the number of people and the number of cars likely to be added to a new residential building in which each level is configured as the (mirrored) ('44 Curtin Place') level shown above. In other words, these estimates are based on what the ACT Government believes an accurate apartment/car ratio for Canberra. Time/data limitations do not permit going beyond these estimates.

What makes this more problematical is the *Group Centres Development Code*, ACTPLA, NI2008-27 (2012) specified that the ground floor in a mixed-use high rise development,

i.e., one with upper level residences, indicated that in a CZ1 (Centre core) zone residential use was not permitted on the ground level (as a mandatory requirement, R2, p 16). But, who can predict if a mandatory Rule will be changed in the future? Nevertheless, here we make the conservative assumption of no more than four residential levels (i.e., we use the 'lower end' estimate above).

If the Curtin Group Centre revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) were to be approved, based on these assumptions, the maximum residential density and population possible within the CZ1 core area of the Curtin Group Centre [*excluding* the present '44 Curtin Place' site and *excluding* the Statesman Hotel site (as the area of allowed development remains to be specified for these), both of which if approved would add even more persons to this small area], using the four level residential 64 persons per 0.128 ha ratio (above), we get a potential for 950 residents living in the core of the small Curtin Group Centre, together with at least 950 residents' cars, in the area bounded by Carruthers, Stangways, and Theodore. [That is, $(64/0.128) \times 1.9 = 950$ (to which proposed '44 Curtin Place' and Statesman Hotel redevelopments should be added as both are part of the Curtin Group Centre core).]

This could mean potentially 950 (or more) new residents (and cars) for whom the local supermarket would be too small ... meaning longer trip distances, greater congestion on arterial roads as at least 950 cars seeking to shop elsewhere, leading to more stress, more aggressive driving, more horn blowing, more road rage, more traffic accidents, more liquid fuel use, more greenhouse gas emissions, and so on. On top of this, there would remain a postage stamp sized courtyard in which – should anyone wish to spend time there – people could look up and likely see more buildings than sky.⁸

On a positive note, as these proposed upper level apartments would get more sunlight than the community courtyard, new residents could save energy by hanging their clothes out to dry on balconies overlooking the courtyard.

Moreover, leaving new residents' guests and visitors aside, if development/redevelopment proceeds as indicated in the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) figure shown above, it is not clear where parking would be provided for other residents of Curtin, those who live outside the Curtin Group Centre core zone area, or if they too would find it easier to drive farther to use other centres.

One could counter-argue firstly, that these estimates are too high. Possibly, but there are no guarantees these levels would not be reached, within the core area of a small Centre. Secondly, one could argue new development would happen over time, not all at once, which would be likely. But, as noted, once even one of these higher density mixed use residential developments (or redevelopments) goes up, the character of a Centre has changed irreversibly and virtually anything can follow.

We come then to 'planning' as approvals building by building, rather than to a *Master Plan* suitable for a 21st century capital of Australia, back to approvals based on subjective criteria - in the closest Group Centre to the Parliament, to the Prime Minister's Lodge, to the Governor General's Residence (and residence of the current Head of State when visiting Canberra), to the diplomatic areas nearby - resulting in a Group Centre more suitable for a regional town in the Third World than for the national capital of Australia.⁹

On a positive note, it is probably reasonable to say no brothels would be allowed in this area.¹⁰

Finally, it is useful to compare what is proposed for the Curtin Group Centre with other Group Centres in Canberra, using the Centres aforementioned 2012 document entitled: *Group Centres Development Code, ACTPLA, NI2008-27 Effective 13 April 2012*.¹¹

Current residential buildings (May 2018) and potential Densities
of additional residents and additional cars
in other Canberra Group Centres.

In looking at the Table on the next page one has to keep in mind that we are not dealing with predictions carved in stone, so to speak. Some areas may have Precinct and other codes that limit development; others may not.

Nonetheless, it is useful to keep in mind that - after considerable research, community and leaseholder input - the original Curtin Group Centre *Draft Master Plan* (November 2015) recommended maximum building heights of two storeys for the Core (CZ1) area of the Curtin Group Centre [except for the area of '44 Curtin Place' not adjacent to the community courtyard which was proposed to be four storeys and also six storeys for the adjacent Hotel leasehold (within the Carruthers, Strangways, Theodore core Centre area though zoned CZ2)]. This was followed by a proposal for a 12 story building on the Hotel site and a DA [201630437] for six level building on the '44 Curtin Place' site. Parenthetically, for the latter the six proposed levels measured (605.130m - 581.000m =) 24.1 m high (rear elevation). At the traditional three metres per storey conception many have in mind, this equates to eight storeys. The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate [EPSDD] notices (for those who could find them) stated the '44 Curtin Place' proposal was for a five-storey building in large print (with five storeys and a ground retail level appearing in smaller print).

The point is that the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018), proposing building heights of up to 18 m for much of the core area of this Group Centre is closer to the desires of the commercial leaseholders than to the original professional planner and community consensus of a maximum of two storeys for the buildings surrounding the central core so as to maintain the 'urban village' character of this Centre for the next 50 years or more in the 21st century.



Source: Curtin Group Centre *Draft Master Plan* (Nov 2015), p. 62.

This figure above - from the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015) - is included so readers can reach their own conclusions by comparing it to the relevant figure above from the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018).

The Table that follows - showing estimated possible residential densities within core areas of all 17 listed Group Centres (as of 2012) - may appear a pessimistic. In light of experience with Draft Master Plans, however, it can be argued these are not unrealistic with 'assurances' Group Centre development will be "... sympathetic to the character, or [unspecified] proposed character, of the locality." [Emphasis added.]

Indeed, the fact that the only Group Centre within Canberra at present (2012 list) with a residential building within its (CZ1) Centre core is the historic Manuka Centre, and another may be under construction in the equally historic Kingston Group Centre, does not encourage optimism either for other Centres or for Canberra's future as the world class national capital to which its founders aspired, ... of which all Australians could be proud.

Residents and Cars added to (2012 list) Group Centre Core (CZ1) following Curtin Precedent

Group Centre	Current			Projected (Based on Curtin Precedent)		
	Core (CZ1) Area (M2)	Core (CZ1) Area (Ha)	Residential Buildings Core (CZ1) Zone	Residential Density (/Ha) (based on Curtin 'Low')	Residents Added (Curtin floor plan)	Cars Added (ACT - car spaces per bedroom rule)
Calwell	26,440	2.64	0	500	1,322	1,322
Charnwood	26,460	2.65	0	500	1,323	1,323
Chisholm	26,425	2.64	0	500	1,321	1,321
Condor	41,570	4.16	0	500	2,079	2,079
Curtin	22,710	2.27	0	500	1,136	1,136
Dickson	45,585	4.56	0	500	2,279	2,279
Erindale	32,720	3.27	0	500	1,636	1,636
Hawker	21,565	2.16	0	500	1,078	1,078
Jamison	38,840	3.88	0	500	1,942	1,942
Kaleen	34,535	3.45	0	500	1,727	1,727
Kambah	23,180	2.32	0	500	1,159	1,159
Kingston	39,265	3.93	0	500	1,963	1,963
Kippax	51,860	5.19	0	500	2,593	2,593
Manuka	11,715	1.17	1	500	586	586
Mawson	26,440	2.64	0	500	1,322	1,322
Wanniassa	20,435	2.04	0	500	1,022	1,022
Weston	39,115	3.91	0	500	1,956	1,956
TOTALS:	528,860	52.89	1	-	26,443	26,443
Averages:	31,109	3.11	-	500	1,555	1,555
Ranges:	20,435-51,860	1.17-4.56	0-1	-	586-2,593	586-2,593

This Table (above) takes the Group Centres listed in the *Group Centres Development Code, ACTPLA, NI2008-27* (2012) document and calculates - if the Curtin revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) becomes the precedent for future Group Centre developments and redevelopments - residential densities, the numbers of added residents and added cars. The calculations used the previously proposed floor plans for redevelopment of '44 Curtin Place' [DA 201630437] as an example in which a development team aimed to maximise returns to investment, as is a commercial leaseholder's legitimate right, subject to planning and other regulations.¹² The relevant assumptions regarding the Curtin floor plan model were explained above.

Several points stand out:

1. Manuka. As far as could be ascertained at present there is only a single Group Centre in Canberra with a residential development within its core (CZ1) zone, Manuka.¹³ It is not clear why the area in which the residential building is located was zoned CZ1 (as it contains a petrol station). The relevant residential building (of some kind) faces Captain Cook Crescent and hence - visually - is not likely to

be seen as part of this historic Centre core area. At present, it is not known – at least to me - if a ‘proposed character’ criterion for the Manuka shops now would include mixed use residences within, and towering above, the ground level retail, cafes, eating establishments, and so on, in this historic Centre.

Although a nearby residents – of Forrest, Red Hill, or Griffith – may believe it would be difficult - politically - to alter the present character of the Manuka Group Centre, to the extent other Centres are rendered unattractive the number of ‘non-residents’ driving over to the Manuka Centre to enjoy its current ambiance is likely to continue increasing, making it even more difficult for residents of this catchment area to use ‘their’ Group Centre.¹⁴

2. Kingston. This Group Centre is another historic Canberra Centre, and there is a new development in its CZ1 zone that may be mixed use, high-rise residential. However, this is located on the other side of Eyre Street, more or less south of the main core area, so many would consider this outside the core Centre area (though this depends on the completed building height and its resulting visual impact).

Hence, so far, to date, amongst the 17 Group Centres for which data and plans are available in the 2012 Group Centres document, *none* have residential accommodation within areas most would consider the *core* of these Centres.

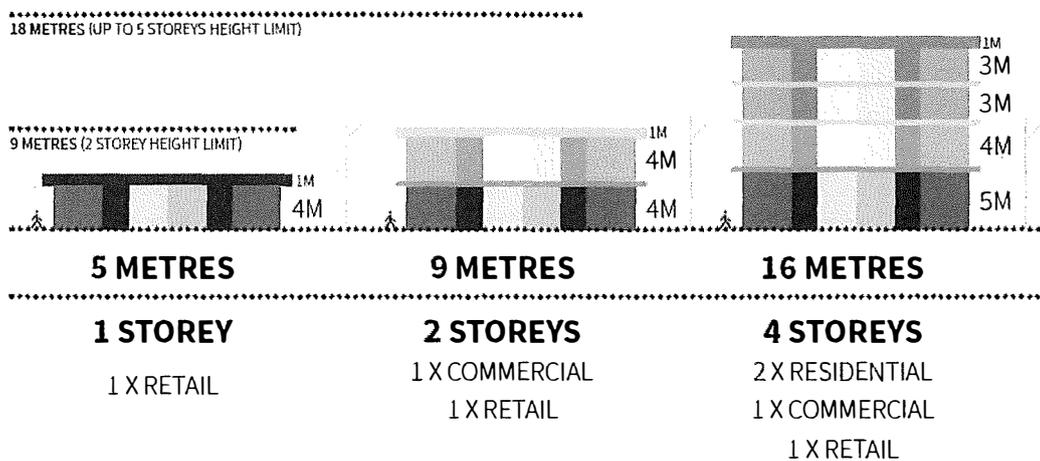
3. Dickson. The Dickson Group Centre is problematical ... deserving comment. Leaving aside current controversies (‘Woolies’/Library car park development proposal and the ‘Tradies’ car park issue) if one tries to look at this Group Centre – as best one can – from a purely planning perspective, the Centre seems large enough and the locations of both the (small) ‘Woolies’ Car Park and the Tradies car park such that some medium level residential development on these sites would seem possible without significant adverse effects. That is, Dickson is one of the larger Group Centres in Canberra, particularly if one takes into account the food establishments area nearby (though outside the Centre core). *But* – an important ‘*but*’ – the problem is that there are no easily accessible Group Centres close to the many new multi-storey residential developments all along Northborne Avenue. It should be reasonably clear that new residents along this strip will not take light rail for grocery shopping, as this likely would involve a great deal of walking with heavy/bulky shopping bags or two-wheel ‘granny carts’. As these new residents would be unlikely to drive into Civic due to increasing traffic congestion, their closest grocery shopping most likely would involve a drive to the Dickson Group Centre. *But*, if the current (small) Woolies and Tradies car parks are used for mixed use residential development, where will all the new residents from along Northbourne Avenue park? Unless one or both of the two mentioned car parks are set aside for parking structures, new Northbourne residents are likely to drive farther afield – adding to traffic congestion, liquid fuels consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and so on - possibly even driving out to Majura Park more often ... in other words to Centres where parking is freely available (and free) and much shopping can be done in one location. Hence, if parking structures cannot be built on the Woolies and/or Tradies car park, any mixed use/residential redevelopment in the Dickson Group Centre could occur on top of the ground floor retail now in place, thus creating another future Group Centre that would be dark and cavernous for much of the cold part of the year (e.g., mid-May to mid-August at minimum).

4. Hawker. This Group Centre is another of interest. Some years back a new

development was proposed for this Centre and stimulated much community opposition. The plan was put on hold (just as the proposed Curtin redevelopment was put on hold). If the revised Curtin Group Centre *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is approved and implemented, it is hard to see how Hawker residents could stop the development opposed a few years ago on the basis of altering the village character of their Centre.

5. Mawson. This Group Centre is of particular interest. That is, Mawson has a *Final Master Plan*, one ostensibly allowing up to two storeys within the core area. Here two questions arise: Firstly, what is meant by 'two storeys' and secondly, will more than two storeys be allowed? ... After all, once the community courtyards have been planned into darkness, little is to be lost by adding one or two additional stories (other than more cars, more traffic congestion, more crime, more small business bankruptcies, and so on).

EXAMPLES OF THE POSSIBLE MIX OF USES AND HEIGHTS IN THE RETAIL CORE AREA



Source: : Curtin revised *Draft Master Plan* 2018, p. 4.

The answer to the first question is suggested by an illustration in the revised Curtin *Draft Master Plan* (above)(p. 4). That is, 'two storeys' can be considered up to nine metres, equivalent to three traditional storeys of 3 metres each.

As to the second question, the *Group Centres Development Code*, ACTPLA, NI2008-27 (2012) is suggestive:

The Codes are used by the Authority to assess development applications. The Codes therefore also provide guidance to intending applicants in designing their developments and preparing their development applications.

Each Code's controls are expressed as either **rules**, which are generally quantitative, or as qualitative **criteria**.

- Proposals in the **code track** must comply with all rules relevant to the development.
- Proposals in the **merit track** and **impact track** have the option to comply with the rules or criteria, unless the rule is mandatory. Where it is proposed to meet the criteria, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate, by supporting plans and written documentation, that the proposed development satisfies the criteria and therefore the intent of the element.
- Proposals in the **impact track** also have the option to justify any non-compliance with the rules and the criteria, unless the rule is mandatory. Where it is proposed to not meet the rules and the criteria, the onus is on the applicant to justify the non-compliance by demonstrating that the proposed development is consistent with the relevant principles of the Statement of Strategic Directions. Supporting plans and written documentation, providing consideration of the relevant Intents of the Code and the Zone objectives, are to accompany the development application.

Source: *Group Centres Development Code*, ACTPLA, NI2008-27 (2012), p. 1. [Emphasis in original.]

This is followed by another statement relating to building heights in core (CZ1) areas of Group Centres:

Element 2: Building and Site Controls

Intent:

- a) To encourage a built form and scale of development that reflects the role of group centres as the main commercial focus for surrounding suburbs
- b) To ensure that buildings are compatible with the built form, siting and scale of development in adjacent areas or the desired future character of the area established within the Plan.
- c) To promote an attractive pedestrian environment

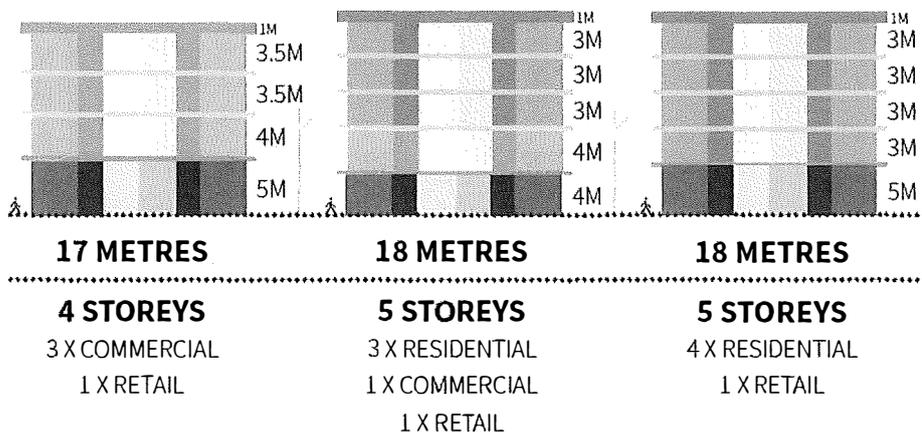
Rules	Criteria
2.1 Height – General	
R5 Maximum building heights are 2 storeys.	C5 Building heights comply with all of the following: a) are compatible with existing, or future desired character of, adjacent development b) are appropriate to the scale and function of the use c) minimise detrimental impacts, including overshadowing and excessive scale.

Source: *Group Centres Development Code*, ACTPLA, NI2008-27 (2012), p. 17.

What this means is that a development team can choose to make a case on the basis of the Criteria rather than the Rule.

This raises the question of whether any Group Centre in Canberra is safe from high-rise mixed-use development involving additional residences and additional cars within its core area. ... The extent to which the ACT Government can use subjective Criteria to approve a development application, whatever the adverse consequences might be for the current character of a Group Centre, for the extra traffic added to adjacent arterial roads, for the increased congestion resulting from multiplier effects on roads across the Canberra network, and so on.

In the case of the Mawson Group Centre this means any of the following examples of higher rise mixed use, residential redevelopments might be approved despite the Mawson Final Master Plan indicating two storeys in the core of this Centre.

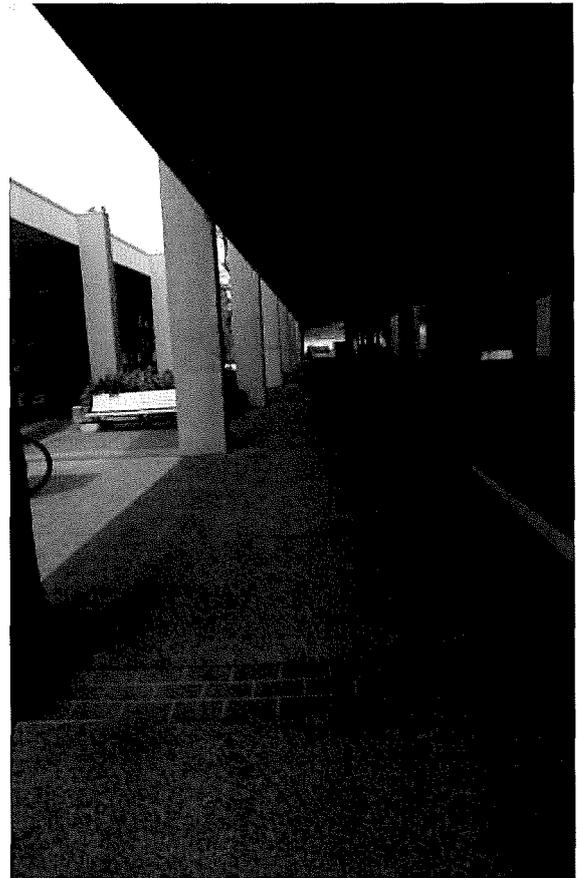


Source: Curtin revised *Draft Master Plan* 2018, p. 4.

One factor that makes the Mawson Group Centre a useful case to consider is the narrow spaces between existing buildings. Hence, in the winter months there are few sunny courtyard areas even at present.¹⁵

One ACT Government public servant – when a concern was expressed at a public meeting about the potential for high-rise buildings within a Centre’s core area to remove all semblance of human scale - responded that awnings would prevent people from viewing the high buildings above a community courtyard.

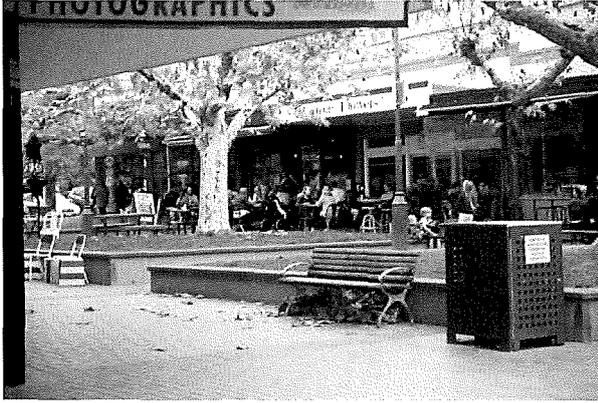
Mawson is an excellent example of how awnings work to prevent potential users of community space from perceiving the scale of surrounding buildings ...



Source: Author 3 June 2018 [No alterations to photos other than resizing to fit.]

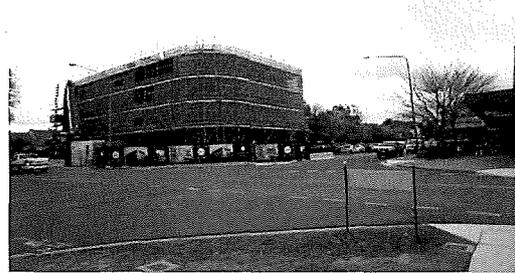
Of course, there is the apparently ‘minor’ issue that such awnings block out sunlight for much of the day during the long, cold winter months.¹⁶

Here it is useful to compare Manuka on the same day, with photos taken 30 minutes later. Note how more open space on the one hand attracts customers to eating establishments but on the other hand how awnings would not block out the oppressive visual impact of any redevelopment to higher levels



Source: Author 3 June 2018 [No alterations to photos other than resizing to fit.]

In this context Kingston likewise is of interest, for two reasons.

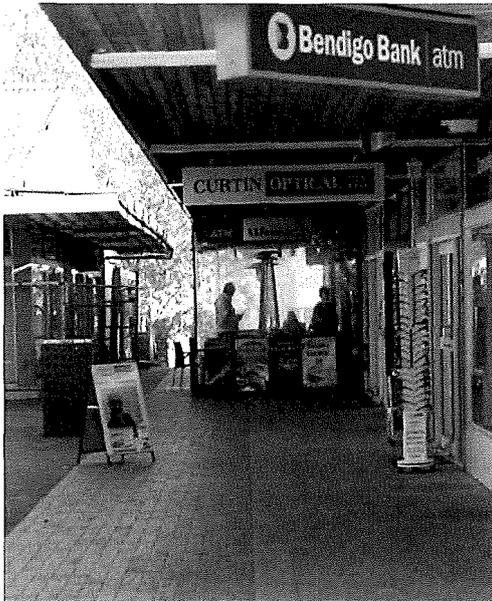


Source: Author 3 June 2018 [No alterations to photos other than resizing to fit.]

The photo on the left above illustrates how even on a relatively cold winter day, an abundance of natural light can bring people into a Group Centre.¹⁷ Here too awnings would not prevent this open community space from being overwhelmed, dominated by mixed-use residential developments towering over this community space. The photo on the right, depicting construction adjacent to the core of the Kingston Group Centre underscores an important point: the issue is not increased densification but where densification is appropriate. The default assumption should be that - in Australia's national capital - residential development does not belong within the core of a Group Centre.

5. Curtin. If the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) for the Curtin Group Centre is approved, this will be the first (of the 17) Group Centre to have mixed use, multi-level residences within what is reasonably considered the core area of a Centre. This could add 1,000 or more residents within this Centre, plus an equal number of cars (likely to flood adjacent arterial roads).

Returning to the issue of awnings to protect potential users of a 'modern' Curtin Group Centre from being overwhelmed by massive structures dominating this small Group Centre, an example of what a main entry/exit passageway Curtin shops looks like at present is useful:



Source: Photo on left by Author, mid-May 2018 [Cropped to give same view as photo on right and resized to fit (no other alterations)]. The photo on right is from original Curtin Group Centre *Draft Master Plan* (2015) (p. 34) (resized to fit, no other alterations).

If one could zoom into the photo on the left, one would see that even in mid-May the food establishment finds it necessary to have two outdoor heaters to attract customers. The photo on the right shows what a dark and narrow passageway into the Community courtyard this main entry/exit can become.

The revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) makes no attempt to remedy this. This narrow, cold, dark passageway would remain unaltered in terms of winter season shadowing (possibly even adding more shadowing).

Importantly, if the Curtin revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is approved without meaningful change, if development/redevelopment proceeds with commercial leaseholders exercising their legitimate right to try to maximise their returns to investment with mixed-use high-rise residential developments within the Curtin Centre core, if the ACT Government agrees to these development/redevelopment proposals, then this will set a precedent likely to have adverse impacts on all – or virtually all – other Group Centres in Canberra.

... as Curtin goes so goes Canberra.

Equally important, what many do not seem to appreciate in their haste for a quick short-term solution is that if the revised Curtin *Draft Master Plan* (2018) is implemented without meaningful change it will lead to a redeveloped Centre that will repel rather than attract customers and tenants, to the long-term detriment of shopkeepers and other small businesses ... as well as to the image of Australia as projected in a Centre that is the local Group Centre for many diplomats and diplomatic staff members from our major allies and trading partners.

... as Canberra goes so goes Australia.

Many 'ifs' to be sure, but experience in Canberra over past decades likely would find many voters with opinions that each 'if' above should be replaced with a 'when'.¹⁸

6. Charnwood. Some might argue this Group Centre should be heritage listed. It is a lovely Centre and a prime example of the transition from the walking cities of

the medieval period to the car dominated cities of the 20th Century. That is, in medieval cities and their modern descendants in many European countries (e.g., Cambridge), central courtyards were places where people could congregate, socialise, interact, enjoy periodical market days, and so on. In Charnwood, in contrast, planned during the peak of the 'Age of Oil', the central courtyard is reserved for – you guessed it – car parking.

One does not have to be a cynic to wonder if the Curtin Group Centre, similarly, will merit heritage status sooner rather than later, as the first of Canberra's Group Centres in which its central courtyard is planned for the 'enjoyment' of those who live within the core area, to the exclusion of others who live in Curtin and its wider catchment area.

All of this said, I have very great sympathy for Canberra planners.¹⁹ These planners and lower-level ACT Government public servants appear to be under great pressure to get the Curtin revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018) approved, and to do so by the end of the year, whatever the costs, whatever the consequences. Hence, there is the question of why there is need for any 'planning' in Canberra when – it would appear (at least to me) – planning principals that make other national capitals great appear to be ignored.

Bottom line: In my view, the document entitled *Group Centres Development Code*, ACTPLA, NI2008-27 (Effective 13 April 2012) permits development or redevelopment within Group Centres that is not appropriate for any national capital aspiring to world class status. It should be rewritten so as to fully take into account the characteristics of each Group Centre. Following on, any commercial leaseholder who has invested significant funds anticipating approval of plans on the basis of this document should be entitled to reasonable ex-gratia compensation for work to date.²⁰ This would not be easy, for a variety of reasons, but the stakes are very high. ... Some financial pain now, or 50 years or more of national embarrassment for Australia? Moreover, the longer change is delayed, the higher the costs will be, ... of one kind or another.

In sum, this is Australia's nation capital, this is our national capital. The area at issue at the moment is the area most visible to the diplomats and diplomatic staff members who spend time in Canberra, who form their views of Australia ... views they take with them when they return home. These views can have serious adverse effects on our national interests. The nation deserves better.

5 June 2018

cc. [Various ... time limitations do not permit listing.]

Endnotes

¹ When once asked by a somewhat concerned Ph.D. student at a world famous university if I was offended that she was not calling me 'Dr' or 'Professor', I replied that I was very offended when someone did not call me by my preferred title: Al or Alden. Yet, one person involved in all of this, for whom I have the greatest respect, told me I should include this information. Since then, I have done so at the same time as retaining a deep-seated belief that arguments should be considered on their merits (or otherwise).

² Residential density is challenging to measure. Although popular uses of the term vary, we can begin by differentiating between 'crowding' as the number of

persons per household or dwelling unit and residential density. For example, if we were measuring crowding, one household with 20 people could indicate a high level of crowding. However, if this household were the only household in an area of one square kilometer one would say residential density in the area was very low. As for measures of residential density, the question becomes: What surface areas are included, what areas (if any) are excluded? For example do we exclude waterways, roads, parks, ... ? Measuring residential density, actual or potential, in Canberra Group Centres on the one hand is made easier as there are no waterways within these. On the other hand, complexity is added by roads, parks, children's play areas and so on. Roads (etc.) can be 'de-gazetted' as has happened before in Canberra. Hence, if the ACT Government has included a road (street, place, park, etc.) within a designated CZ1 zone, at the same time as it has excluded other roads (etc.), it is reasonable to assume the areas designated CZ1 of Group Centre cores are open to future 'de-gazetting' and development. Thus, the total area of each CZ1 zone considered here has been assumed to have potential for redevelopment, or new development, in calculating potential residential densities ... and added numbers of cars.

³ If one were doing a manuscript of this nature for a professional journal one would have more time as well as the benefit of the comments of peer reviewers/referees prior to publication. This is not the case here.

⁴ It is useful here to keep in mind the Canberra urban hierarchy, from top down: Civic (the CBD), the Town Centres (such as Belconnen, Woden), the Group Centres (such as Curtin and the others listed), and local shops. If each level works at its best it serves to reduce overall trip distances, transport costs for families, traffic congestion, petrol/diesel use, greenhouse gas emissions, and so on.

⁵ , "Authorised by the ACT Parliamentary Counsel also available at www.legislation.act.gov". [The link below is more direct.]

See: <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-27/copy/84849/pdf/2008-27.pdf>

⁶ I am informed the 'publically available' lease for '44 Curtin Place' is not available ... to persons who might wish to submit a Representation about the revised *Draft Master Plan* (2018). Hence, ACTmapi has been used to measure the approximate area of this site. Another piece indicates this area at 1,200 m² (compared to 1,280 m² used here), which if correct means the residential density measures calculated here for the Curtin Group Centre, and other Canberra Group Centres, would be lower and the actual estimated possible density/numbers figures here higher. This is not a problem as the aim here is conservative estimates, as accurate as possible in light of time and data limitations.

See: <https://www.allhomes.com.au/news/community-concerns-for-sixstorey-curtin-shops-redevelopment-20170110-gtowu0/> [for the 1,200 m² figure.]

⁷ See: the *Group Centres Development Code* NI2008-27 (Effective 13 April 2012), p. 1. [URL above]

⁸ It used to be said that in Canberra there was no horn blowing. The explanation given was that if one blew one's horn, however irritated one might be, one might be blowing a horn at one's boss or boss' wife. Canberra has certainly 'modernised' over recent decades: Now one sees driving that competes with the

worst of what one observes in car dominated cities such as Houston Texas, where in driver may cut across a number of lanes on a multi-lane expressway so as not to miss an exit. As well, in a few years, after a spell driving in Canberra, most will find driving in Naples Italy a 'piece of cake'.

⁹ Of course, over the longer term we may be headed towards Third World status, following the historic Argentina model.

¹⁰ Although a cynic might say that in Canberra anything is possible.

¹¹ See: <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-27/copy/84849/pdf/2008-27.pdf>

¹² See: <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2008-27/copy/84849/pdf/2008-27.pdf>

¹³ Using the list of 17 Group Centres noted above.

¹⁴ To believe historic Manuka is 'safe' from unsuitable redevelopment would mean one would have to ignore past efforts to preserve the historic Capital Theatre as a heritage building ... unsuccessful efforts.

¹⁵ On a positive note, if redevelopment allows higher buildings within the Mawson Group Centre core this may provide an attractive feature ... to spelunkers, who can come from far and wide to test their equipment without having to venture into underground caverns to do so.

¹⁶ As for summer – heat, UV radiation , etc. – think modern laminated UV protective glass, umbrellas, shade 'sails', and so on. Barriers that close to prevent cold winter winds, open to allow cool summer breezes. This should be Modern Planning 101.

¹⁷ Another photo shows a family group with children at play in the green area to the left of the frame in the photo on the left, but this has not been included.

¹⁸ On a positive note, approval and implementation of the *revised Draft Master Plan* for Curtin could well be an international first for the ACT Government: the introduction of a new theory of planning ... the *solar eclipse theory of urban planning*, which strives to block as much sunlight as possible from community spaces during the cold, dark winter months.

¹⁹ And, indeed, for private architects and other professionals who have studied fantastic buildings and world-class urban planning but who have to pay their mortgages and feed their families.

²⁰ Reasonable, in my view, does not include a leaseholder who has proposed something clearly unlikely to be approved, such as a 100 storey tower more suited to Manhattan, the London CBD, or Dubai, than to a Group Centre. For example, 'reasonable' might include pro-rated costs of going above what the original *Draft Master Plan* (2015) indicated as two storeys relative to what 'Criteria' might have allowed. ... Reasonable but not ex-gratia payment on the basis of an ambit development application over the top, so to speak.