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CANBERRA

Thriving Canberra 2024:

Better and Fairer Utilisation of Community Facility Zoned (CFZ) Land in Canberra

The Centre For A Better Canberra

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Contents

Executive Summary	2
What Is CFZ Land?	4
Purpose	4
Methodology	4
The Challenge	5
Demographic Change and Evolving Needs	5
Case Study: Community Land Use for Migrant Communities	7
Future Challenges	8
The Opportunity	9
The Policy Settings	12
Policy Options	15
The Future State	20
Case study methodology	20
Site: Salvation Army Braddon	22
Site: Kambah	25
Site: Ainslie	29
Recommendations and Conclusion	32
Acknowledgements	33

Better and Fairer Utilisation of Community Facility Zoned (CFZ) Land in Canberra

Executive Summary

Demand for Community Facility Zoned (CFZ) land in Canberra significantly exceeds supply. The ACT Government releases parcels of land for community use through an annual expression of interest (EOI) process – most recently six blocks of CFZ land totalling more than 2.3 hectares in August 2024.¹ At the same time underutilised CFZ sites – not uncommonly, a small building in poor repair with a modest carpark attached – are commonplace.

The lack of CFZ land has adverse community consequences. Not-for-profit (NFP) aged care providers, for example, can't compete with commercial purchasers for land, pricing out the delivery of new community facilities which would otherwise get built. The needs of emerging ethnic and cultural groups are not met. The development of indoor sporting and other community facilities is constrained, amongst other negative outcomes. At the same time there is extensive underutilisation of land that has already been allocated for the community during the course of the national capital's history.

Our city is growing rapidly, and the make-up of our community is changing. Historical patterns of community facility provision no longer reflect Canberra as it has evolved. Current policy does not address this problem. The lack of CFZ land perpetuates it.

The recent reform of the Territory Plan, and District Strategies, outline how overall growth will be managed but further opportunity exists to consider the utilisation and fair distribution of CFZ land.

Younger Canberrans are growing increasingly isolated. A housing crisis is gripping the nation, and our city is not immune. There are aged care and supported housing needs to be met. The climate emergency means that to be a resilient city we need places of shelter and security during the intensifying and increasing number of extreme weather events we face.

Amidst these challenges, there is significant and unrecognised opportunity.

Our research has uncovered widespread underutilisation of already allocated CFZ land. Through adjustments to policy settings, that land could host new and better facilities and cater to more and a broader range of users.

On a conservative estimate there is 960 hectares of underutilised CFZ land across Canberra. Increasing use up to just 50 percent of each block would unlock 480 hectares – an area the size of O'Connor – for further community purposes.

A range of options for the community to discuss and for the government to consider have been identified.

1. **Review CFZ conditions:** Review the current limitation of usage on CFZ land to ensure that while social and community uses are protected, opportunities for better utilisation of land are expanded and contemporary perceptions of a community facility are included. Consider options for alternative lease models.
2. **Review incentives:** Do the current tax settings work?
3. **Regular review of utilisation:** Conduct a whole of Territory review of CFZ land allocations and map them against known and emerging current community needs. Review underutilisation at the same time, with a view to accommodate pressing community needs.
4. **Community land trust model:** Establish an ACT Government community land trust (CLT) to preserve land for community uses and prevent commercial encroachment while providing increased flexibility for leaseholders. This could incorporate properties currently managed by ACT Property Group.
5. **Partnerships with NFPs:** Facilitate partnerships between CFZ leaseholders and not-for-profits to develop and manage community facilities. This could involve government-initiated collaborations and participation for fairer and better use of CFZ land.

1 'Releasing more land to support community diversity', ACT Government press release, 9 August 2024.

6. **Encourage multi-use development:** Promote the integration of different community uses on single CFZ sites. This could include combining childcare centres with aged care facilities, incorporating community gardens and recreational areas, supportive housing, sporting facilities and climate shelters.
7. **Create a 'trade-off' model:** Increased commercial activity could be considered in exchange for a clear whole of community benefit, as has been developed for the Clubs sector.
8. **Incorporate existing CFZ land into the existing EOI process:** Existing CFZ leaseholders with underutilised land should be identified and invited to participate in the annual land release program.
9. **CFZ Taskforce:** Enhance government oversight and involvement in the development of CFZ land to ensure equitable and efficient use through a CFZ Taskforce. Consider 'trade-offs' between ensuring financial sustainability while delivering new and expanded community facilities under legislated government oversight.
10. **Community engagement:** Increase community engagement in the planning and decision-making process regarding CFZ land use. This ensures that developments reflect the needs and desires of the local population, and are more likely to be supported by them.

A model to identify sites with the best potential for further community use was developed. (How much space is there? Are they used? Are they loved?) Localised demographic analysis on a sample of sites was undertaken to prioritise types of community facilities that meet local needs. A reimagining of what contemporary community facilities on those sites, meeting those needs, was undertaken.

These reimaginings show the upside of a positive and creative approach to the better and fairer use of already allocated CFZ land. Youth social isolation could be reduced and neighbourhood vitality increased by turning the site of a long-derelict building in Ainslie into a 'community front room'. Potential future quality of life for an ageing community in Kambah was transformed by looking at community facilities collectively rather than as individual blocks with a dementia village. A 'social mixed-use precinct' at the Salvation Army site in Braddon could provide social enterprise space in a high-rent commercial neighbourhood, add low-cost city housing and support faith group facility reinvestment by the existing owner.

These reimaginings suggest the way forward for developing some of the 960 hectares of already allocated but underutilised CFZ land, to meet pressing community needs.

We would like acknowledge that our paper discusses utilisation of land, land traditionally owned by the Ngunnawal people who did not cede their land. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging and recognise other families with connections to the land of the ACT.

What Is CFZ Land?

Community Facility Zoned (CFZ) land in Canberra exists for the benefit of the community, for uses set out in the *Territory Plan Part E - Community Facility Zones Policy* including community activity centres, community theatre, cultural facilities, educational establishments, indoor recreation facilities, outdoor education establishments, outdoor recreation facilities, places of worship, playing fields, religious and associated uses, and community uses prescribed by regulation. These include community, supportive housing and residential care.

EDUCATION	community activity centre
HEALTH	community housing
CREATION	community theatre
CULTURE	cultural facility
SPIRITUAL	early childhood education and care
SHELTER	educational establishment
SERVICE	emergency services facility
	health facility
	hospital
	indoor recreation facility
	office
	outdoor recreation facility
	parkland
	place of worship
	public agency
	religious associated use
	residential care accommodation
	retirement village
	social enterprise
	supportive housing
	veterinary clinic

Note, while CFZ land is reserved for community facility use, community facilities also exist across a range of other Territory Plan zonings.

Purpose

The project is to understand the utilisation of Community Facility Zoned land in Canberra, reimagine its use in line with current and future community needs and propose policy options enabling its better and fairer use.

Demand for CFZ land is high. CFZ use needs to adapt to serve the growing and changing needs of existing and emerging community groups, and vulnerable parts of the population. The viability of many community-focused projects relies on the availability of CFZ land. These include not-for-profit aged care, childcare, religious and culture-specific hubs, education and health care. Over time CFZ land use has decreasingly aligned with evolving community needs. A large amount is underutilised, and in some cases neglected. This represents a rich potential source of community value which this project explores as an opportunity to be pursued through the policy options proposed here.

Methodology

The Centre For A Better Canberra invited University of Canberra (UC) Architecture Lead, Dr Erin Hinton, to lead a School of Design and the Built Environment team collaborating with the Centre to quantify CFZ land utilisation – and for an agreed sample of underutilised sites, reimagine their better and fairer use. This qualitative and quantitative research incorporated data from the UC Health Research Institute, Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing, ACTmapi geospatial data catalogue and roundtable discussions with community stakeholders and ACT Government officials.

The research project draws on macro and micro assessments of community need and current amenity to understand the distribution and use of CFZ land and its relationship to the Canberra community. This city-wide and site analysis informs a proposal on how to increase utilisation of community sites for current and future communities.

The Challenge

Demographic Change and Evolving Needs

Canberra's population has grown significantly and diversified since the ACT's inception. Census data shows the population has grown from just over 300,000 people in 2001 to over 450,000 in 2021, accompanied by substantial changes in the demographics of the city.²

The proportion of people who speak a language other than English at home increased from 18 percent in 2011 to 25 percent in 2021.³ Religious affiliations have also shifted, with significant increases in the proportion of Canberrans who report either no religious affiliation, or affiliation with religions other than Christianity.⁴ With greater religious diversity comes increased demand for new places of worship that are appropriate for a greater array of religious practices.

Over the past two decades, there has been an increase in the proportion of people aged 65+ and in the proportion who require assistance with at least one of the core activities of self-care, communication and mobility.⁵ Canberra retirement communities are at 95 percent occupancy – the highest in the country.⁶ A 75 percent increase in the number of people aged 75+ in Canberra, as projected over the next two decades, will put further pressure on these facilities.⁷ Retirement communities have significant health benefits, with residents experiencing increased physical and social activity, greater happiness, reduced rates of hospitalisation and later entry into aged care compared to people the same age not living in retirement communities.⁸ Ensuring retirement community living is available to a greater number of Canberrans is essential for the city to thrive as our population ages.

Loneliness is high in Canberra, and highest among the growing population of adults under 30.⁹ Experiences of social isolation are also more common among renters, those living alone and people with disability.¹⁰ With the proportion of single-person dwellings and people with a core activity need for assistance increasing in the ACT in the past two decades, community facilities must encourage social connection, and be appealing and accessible to young people and people with disability.¹¹

There is evidence of changes in demand for housing in the ACT, with a modest increase in single dwellings and a significant increase in median weekly household rental payments between 2001 and 2021. As of February 2023, median weekly rent in the ACT has reached \$560 – the highest of any state or territory.¹² Addressing the growing demand for affordable housing is urgent.

Taken together, there is increased demand for both quantum and variety of community facilities available to Canberrans. This includes a variety of places of worship, venues for social activities and community events, facilities to accommodate larger numbers of players in a greater variety of sports, retirement villages and aged care facilities, and facilities to support disaster preparedness, prevention, response and recovery activities. Meeting this demand requires innovative use of CFZ land by a wider variety of organisations. It is vital that the policy settings governing the use of CFZ land, and the facilities built on it, can be brought to match, and then keep pace with, our growing, increasingly diverse community.

2 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021a) 'Time Series Profile: Australian Capital Territory', 2021 Census of Population and Housing, abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/8; Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) 'Time Series Profile: Australian Capital Territory', 2011 Census of Population and Housing, abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2011/8

3 ABS (2021a)

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 Harry Frost, *Current housing infrastructure won't cope with 'impending silver tsunami' of older Canberrans, advocates say*, ABC News, 6 March 2024, abc.net.au/news/2024-03-06/canberrans-elderly-face-queues-for-retirement-living-aged-care/103553554

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

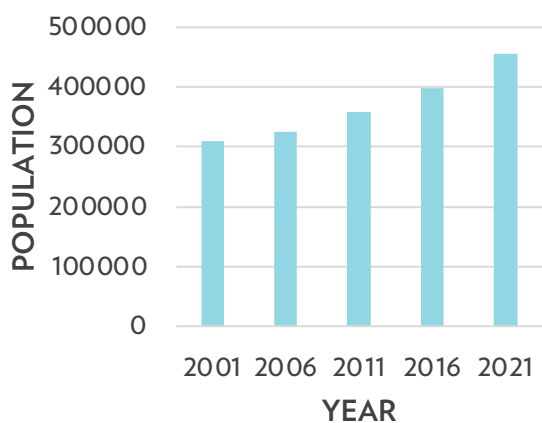
9 Charlotte Gore, *Health Research Institute survey reveals adults under 30 are the most lonely people in Canberra*, ABC News, 13 March 2024, abc.net.au/news/2024-03-13/act-health-research-institute-survey-young-canberrans-loneliness/103576716

10 *Ibid.*

11 ABS (2021a)

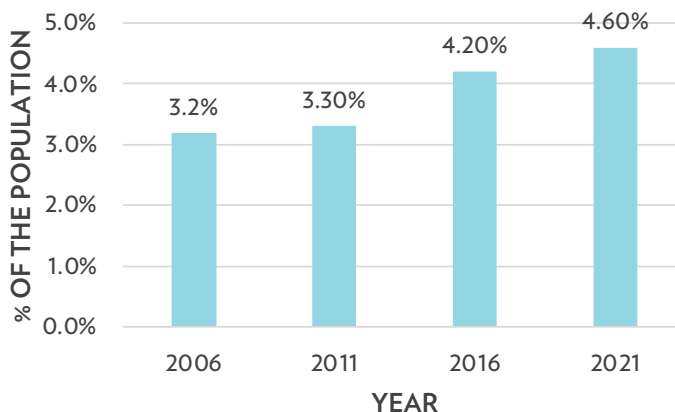
12 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023), *New insights into the rental market*, abs.gov.au/statistics/detailed-methodology-information/information-papers/new-insights-rental-market

Population of the ACT, 2001-2021



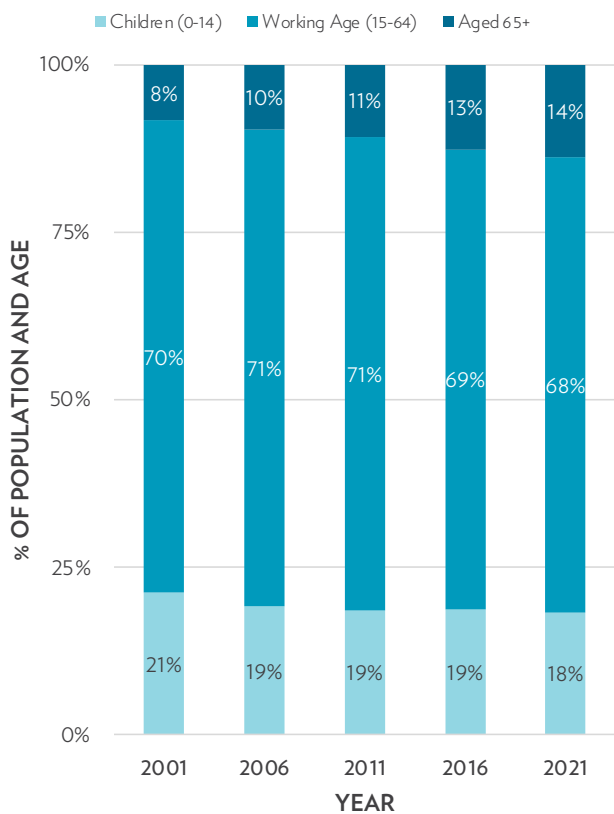
Source: ABS 2021a; ABS 2011

Proportion of the ACT population with core needs for assistance, 2006-2021



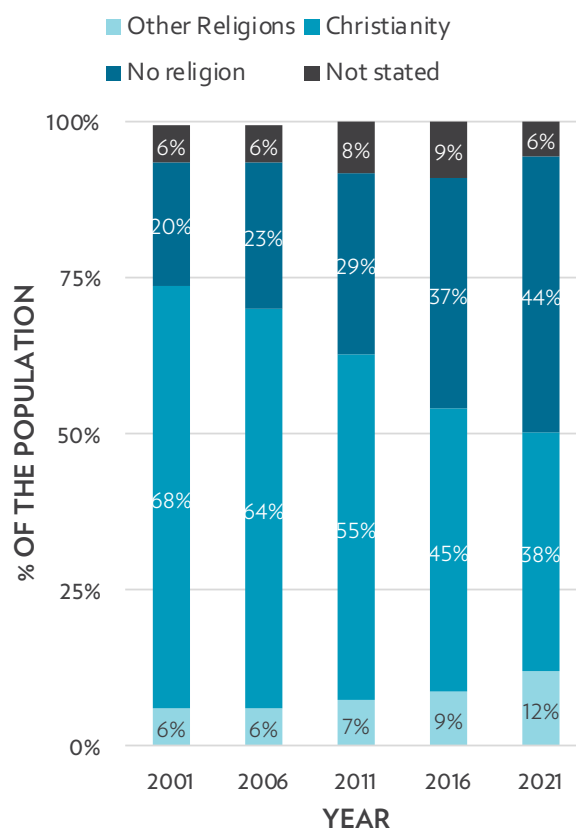
Source: ABS 2021a

Age distribution in the ACT, 2001-2021



Source: ABS 2021a; ABS 2011

Religious affiliation in the ACT, 2001-2021



Source: ABS 2021a; ABS 2011

Case Study: Community Land Use for Migrant Communities

Content provided by Pema and Leko, members of the Canberra Bhutanese community

Specific instances of individual and community trauma result from the lack of an appropriate community facility. This in turn damages the social cohesion and liveability of the city.

This case study concerns a member of the Canberra-Bhutanese community whose relative passed away in Bhutan. Friends and family in Canberra gathered at his residence for prayers for the deceased. This significant cultural practice was disturbed after the police were called when a neighbour complained that they were having a party.

Some time after the police left, a member of the community – the deceased's daughter – was left in 'inconsolable tears', not due to the ongoing grief of her father's death but from her concern for her neighbours and how their rituals had disturbed them. She had always wanted to be a good neighbour and member of the community.

Bhutanese community members argue that this grieving family would not have faced this unprecedented stress if they had a place for sacred worship without hindrance. Notable in this context is that the Bhutanese grieve and hold funeral rites for up to 49 days.

Further, the Bhutanese worship every day, and when there are particular practices to be observed relating to the teachings, blessings and rituals required following a community member's death, there is nowhere that can be used exclusively for the period required. Bhutanese Buddhist altars, shrines, artefacts, sacred relics and offerings are an important feature of their religious practice. They need to be available to adherents at all times, permanently housed and displayed.

There are around 20,000 Bhutanese people living in Australia, the largest Bhutanese community outside of Bhutan.¹³ They are embedded in the ACT community, working in the cleaning and community service industries, studying in universities and schools, and sharing and contributing to Canberra's rich culture.

For over a decade, however, the ACT Bhutanese community has struggled to find a home to practice their faith and customs. They hire community halls, churches, school gymnasiums and public parks for community events and prayers. They struggle to get the space they need due to competing bookings and uses.

Being able to worship in language, and having a place to permanently store and protect religious instruments, is integral to the community's spirituality. The rhythm of the community's daily lives revolves around the regular offering of prayers and services in a communal space, which is usually a community temple.

Because of this the community has repeatedly had to resort to converting suburban housing rentals into places of worship, leading to noise complaints and issues with parking, which in turn eventually lead them to relocate to another rental property where the cycle of having to establish the site, suffer complaints, then regroup and move on starts over again.

Without a Bhutanese Buddhist temple in Canberra, the Bhutanese community has lacked the grounded connection with the city that enables effective social inclusion.

13 Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Bhutan country brief', dfat.gov.au/geo/bhutan/bhutan-country-brief

Future Challenges

As we have established, community needs are great – for various forms of social and co-operative housing, aged care, youth spaces, climate shelter needs, focal points for community inclusion and other reasons, some yet to emerge.

There is a powerful baseline logic for better and fairer utilisation of CFZ land – to better match current rather than historic needs, and to ensure more productive uses from the now scarce resource of land. This is especially so given the low utilisation rates by many current CFZ leaseholders evident in our research, and the plentiful availability possible if a way of liberating it for further good community uses can be devised. At least maintaining, and even better, improving amenity of usage for existing CFZ leaseholders in the process is obviously key to this. Equally important is that government actively shapes the purposes and ways that greater utilisation occurs to ensure it reflects contemporary community needs rather than the world view of existing CFZ leaseholders.

The inability of NFPs to compete against commercial developers for land is the foundational reason for the creation of CFZ land in the first place. This has not changed. It's an important reason CFZ land needs to be preserved for community facility purposes by government, and not nibbled away at by commercial players who can purchase land in the marketplace.

There's an additional layer to thinking about CFZ land that's worth reflecting on. The erosion of public spaces over time, and the increase in privatised spaces organised around commercial consumption, make CFZ land especially precious.

Communities need spaces where novel responses to current and emerging needs can be tried and developed – literally providing room for collaborative, creative responses to current and future ways of living to develop. Nuclear family modes of living, for example, remain centrally important. Additional models are required though too, in our diversifying world where intersectional needs are increasingly evident and deserve to be met as well.

Climate change resilience should be considered as part of our response to more effective use of community facilities. In 2021, 70 percent of Canberrans believed they could cope easily with heatwaves. By 2023 this had fallen to 57 percent.¹⁴ Community facilities are a key source of refuge during extreme weather events. Erosion of the public realm through privatisation of CFZ land would be unwise in the face of the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Renewal of and further investment in CFZ facilities in the climate adaptation era is essential to provide for a more climate resilient community.

CFZ land is a space where, through NFPs in league with (to the extent appropriate) government, those needs can be met. Crucially, if not on CFZ land, where? If not in this way, how? Given these unmet needs, there is an obligation on government and CFZ leaseholders to draw under- and unutilised CFZ blocks into greater use, and for more diverse purposes.

14 ACT Government, 2023, 'Wellbeing data dashboard: Climate resilient environment and community', act.gov.au/wellbeing/explore-overall-wellbeing/environment-and-climate/climate-resilient-environment-and-community

The Opportunity

Land availability and allocation

Land is scarce. The ACT's development footprint is a topic of extensive debate. Canberra's urban footprint covers an area roughly a quarter of the size of Greater London with a population of 470,000 compared with close to 9 million residents. In its northwestern corner, the ACT is seeking to adjust its border with NSW to accommodate additional residents, while also seeking to accommodate 70 percent of new residents within the existing city boundaries.

While targets are set for residential infill, no explicit targets are set for renewal and increased utilisation of community facility land.

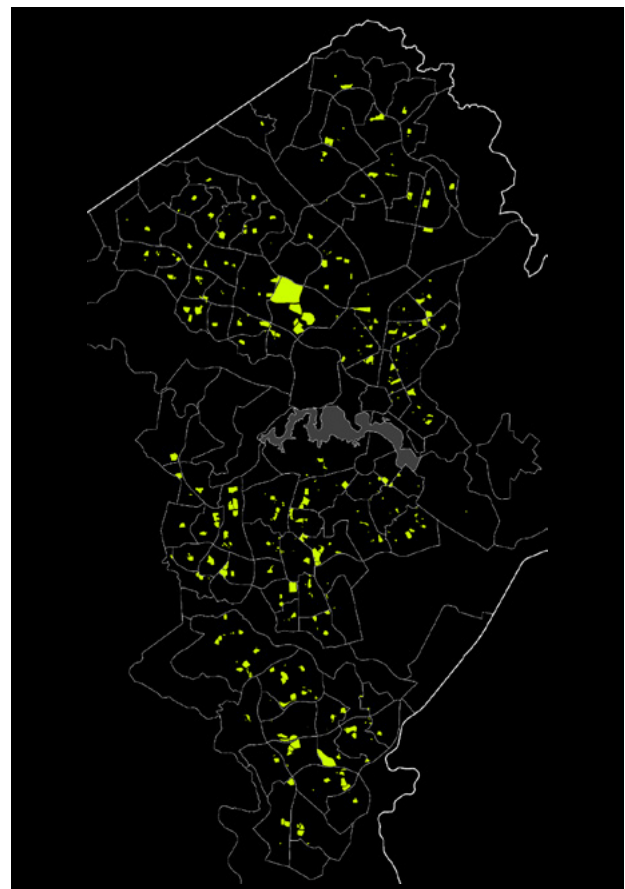
These challenges are very different to those of early Canberra.

There is a strong 'legacy' element to the distribution and control of CFZ land. The current pattern reflects needs on the basis of demographics which have changed over time. Community groups which received significant amounts of CFZ property in the past, when land was plentiful, possess a considerable resource compared to community groups which have emerged since, in an era when land is scarce and government's ability to grant land is increasingly limited. Qualitative evidence gathered by the Centre For A Better Canberra suggests this is an equity issue which merits attention and action. The not-for-profit aged care provider able to supply more aged care if not for their inability to compete with commercial entities to buy the necessary land. Recent migrant community members who lack a place to worship but see copious 'legacy' land in the hands of established churches. These are a just a few of the examples that have stimulated this project.

There is a further generalised equity dimension: that 'legacy' CFZ leaseholders have typically developed and use only a small proportion of the land conferred on them by government in the past. Some leaseholders would like to better utilise their land but face constraints. The large proportion of under- and unutilised CFZ land represents a loss of amenity to the community at large at a time when need on a number of fronts is large and growing. For reasons of both logic and equity, this unrealised community resource could and should be made available to match and meet contemporary and future community needs. The question is how.

These developments juxtapose sharply against the 'stuck' nature of existing CFZ land. The stereotypical 'legacy'

CFZ block has a small community facility on it, often with a carpark, and a large area of under- or unutilised land. The stereotypical entity with a 'legacy' CFZ block may have had previous, or even current, aspirations to further develop the under- or unutilised part of their block – but also may not. Even with such aspirations, these entities may lack the necessary suite of skills and resources to undertake further development – something unlikely to change on its own, absent of government policy changes – and likely to perpetuate sub-optimal use of the block. Where the entity does possess such skills and inclinations, it may have 'discovery' issues finding a complementary development partner. Even should there be an unexpected uptick in these issues being overcome, there is a possibility that the existing 'legacy' distribution of CFZ land skews development in unexpected ways – privileging some options and excluding others. This latter possibility underlines the desirability of government having more rather than less involvement in decisions about how existing CFZ land is further developed, to ensure community needs are comprehensively rather than narrowly considered and met.



Map of CFZ land in ACT

Identifying the scale of available land

There is an assumption in some quarters that there is not a lot of CFZ land around, and that therefore this does not merit attention. Pulling up the ACT Planning Map and highlighting CFZ land does produce an image of CFZ blocks sparsely freckling it rather than suggesting abundance.

Our research revealed a different picture:

- 1100 hectares of land within the existing footprint of Canberra is CFZ.
- Up to 195 hectares of this land are whole blocks with no built form whatsoever (though some are mid-redevelopment – for example, an aged care facility in Aranda).
- 905 hectares of this land has some sort of built form on it.
- The total building footprint across all 1100 hectares is only 12.6 percent, so there is effectively up to 960 hectares of CFZ land that could be better utilised for good community purposes.

At a development footprint of 50 percent, which is low for current required urban density, the total potential built area would be 480 hectares (approximately the size of O'Connor).

At a development footprint of 60 percent, it would total 576 hectares (approximately the size of Bruce).

At a development footprint of 70 percent, it would total 672 hectares (a little larger than Campbell).

This represents a massive potential resource to better match and meet contemporary community needs.

- A significant amount of CFZ land is underutilised, with only 12.6 percent of the total 1100 hectares being developed.
- Approximately 960 hectares of CFZ land could be better utilised for community purposes.
- The current distribution of CFZ land does not align with contemporary community needs, often reflecting historical allocations.

This project also highlights the relatively uneven use of CFZ land, as the following table of the 144 hectares of 'built form' on the 1100 hectares of CFZ land shows.

Education	84.5 Hectares	60.9 percent
Sporting	12 Hectares	8.6 percent
Health	11.9 Hectares	8.6 percent
Aged Care	8.5 Hectares	6.1 percent
Miscellaneous	8.5 Hectares	6.1 percent
Religion	8.2 Hectares	5.9 percent
Community	3.7 Hectares	2.7 percent
Youth Care	3.6 Hectares	2.5 percent
Housing	2.4 Hectares	1.7 percent
Culture	1.1 Hectares	0.8 percent

There is nothing intrinsically right or wrong about this distribution. Consideration should be given, however, to whether it matches and meets current community facility needs rather than reflecting historic ones. This would ideally be a regular matter for review in the planning system cycle rather than be left to chance.

There is significant potential to better utilise CFZ land to better meet current community needs.

- Opportunities exist to map local need relative to localised demand – at a suburb level – to support the case for local scale improved utilisation, primarily in collaboration with existing leaseholders.
- The planning system, financing, management of appropriate partnerships, market intelligence and community support are barriers (and potential opportunities) for improved use of land.
- Community facilities will be increasingly important in climate change resilience and adaptation.

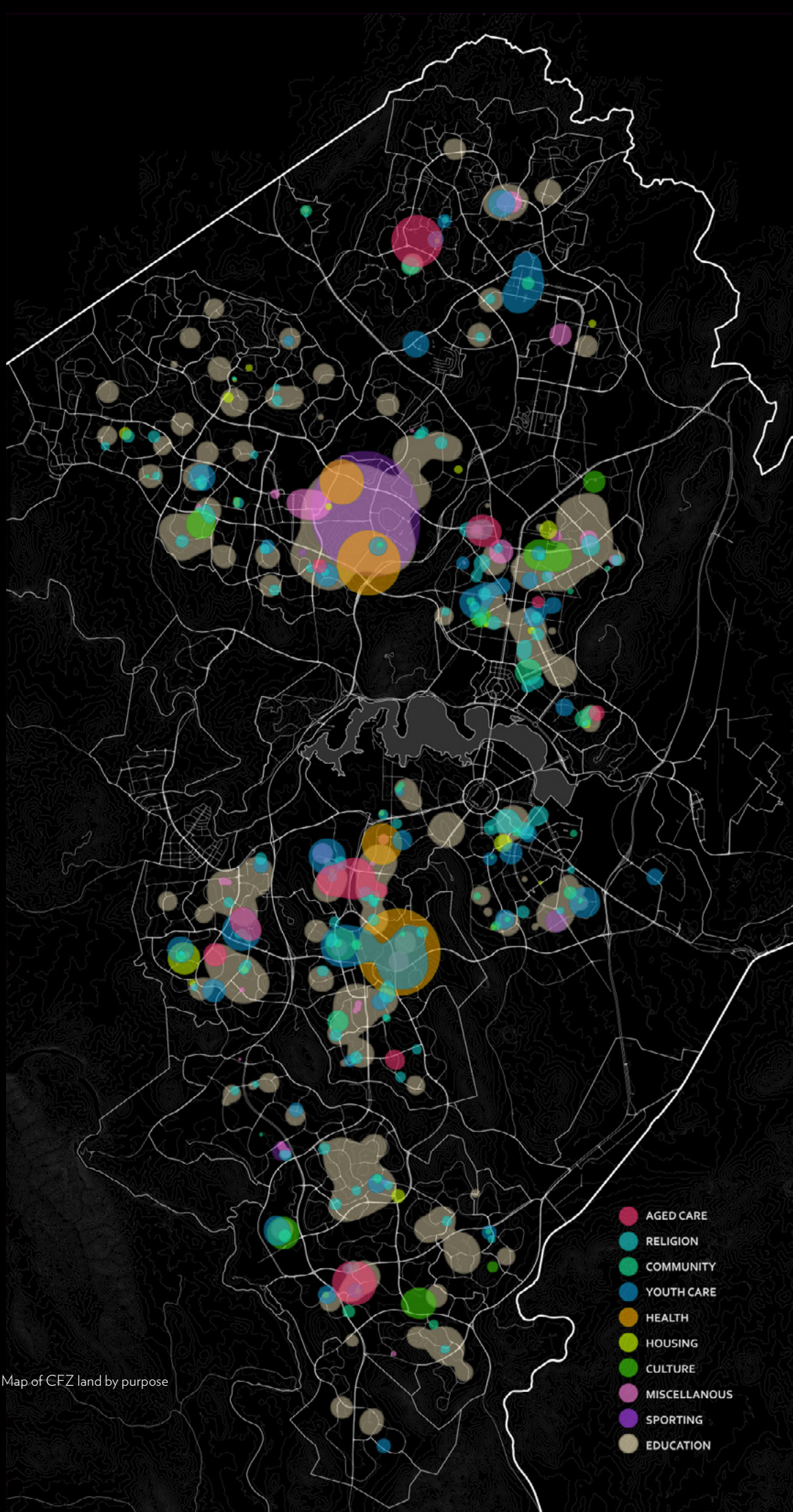


Image: Map of CFZ land by purpose

The Policy Settings

Existing policy settings allow inertia to reign in relation to more effective utilisation of CFZ land. This is evidenced in large part by the status quo: significant underutilisation despite scarcity. Discussions with key stakeholders across the sector point to a range of existing settings that either deter or fail to encourage more effective use of land.

Historic rigidity in zoning and lease conditions

CFZ title prescribes a rigid set of uses for good historical reasons: to protect community uses from commercial encroachment. The intent could be fulfilled with changes to CFZ title conditions providing greater flexibility with a view to a more wholistic consideration of options for the site.

A positive step has been the inclusion of a specific policy outcome to ‘enable the efficient use of land through facilitating the co-location and multi-use of community facilities, generally near public transport routes and convenience services appropriate to the use’ as part of the 2023 *Territory Plan* update.¹⁵

Similarly, an update to include community housing amongst the range of uses provides an opportunity for a broader mix of uses on CFZ blocks. Given the recent implementation of these changes, it remains to be seen what impact they will have.¹⁶

In addition to specific zoning limitations, the nature of the ACT leasehold system means further restrictions may apply on a case-by-case basis, sometimes as specific as prescribing times of operation of facilities within a lease.

Seeking amendments either to zoning or lease conditions can be a slow, costly and uncertain process, often requiring the engagement of planning consultants beyond the financial reach of many community organisations.

Economics

The Centre has not undertaken specific modelling in relation to the economics of redevelopment, or of the tax settings as they relate to CFZ or concessional leases. It is notable that the tax settings for CFZ land and concessional

leases are complex and as a result it is difficult to draw macro conclusions.

The *Rates Act 2004* applies commercial rates for all land that is not residential or rural, and allows exemptions for a specific range of community uses outlined in Section 8 of that act.¹⁷ These do not map directly against the community uses set out in the Community Facility Zone conditions of the Territory Plan. Other blocks are rated based on their average unimproved value (AUV) which takes into account the zoning and lease conditions.

As such it is challenging to determine if the tax structure of land provides an incentive to encourage greater utilisation. This contrasts with the relative transparency of Residential Zoning, where upzoning of residential sites where a detached freestanding dwelling in an RZ3 site would be taxed at the rate of the potential highest and best use of the block rather than its actual utilisation.

Deconcessionalising leases, or seeking to change the zoning of a block of land as per the Territory Plan to allow a broader range of uses, would however likely lead to a Lease Variation Charge (LVC). While this tax reasonably captures any windfall gain for the community’s benefit, the barrier it presents to more effective utilisation should be considered along with the range of potential benefits. However, enabling a broader range of uses within a concessional lease, that delivers a substantive benefit to the broader community, is a reasonable outcome potentially available under the revisions to the Territory Plan.

Capital availability and development viability is a major factor in considering effective use of CFZ land. Schemes like the Housing Australia Future Fund and the ACT Government’s Affordable Housing Scheme could enable redevelopment of derelict sites and the provision of both additional housing and renewed community facilities.

We note current inflation and infrastructure demand pressures in Australia. Our findings and recommendations are based on a medium-term horizon.

15 ACT Government (2023) ‘Territory Plan 2023 Part E: Zone Policies: E4 - Community Facility Zone Policy’, legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2023-540/Current

16 Community housing means the use of land for affordable residential rental which is managed by a community housing provider. *Territory Plan Part G - Dictionary*.

17 ACT Government, Rates Act 2004 s8, legislation.act.gov.au/a/2004-3

Leaseholder intent, capacity and purpose

A major challenge identified in qualitative engagement with leaseholders of CFZ land is capacity.

CFZ exists to provide land that would otherwise be inaccessible to community organisations due to their often resource poor nature. It is a logical corollary that many of these groups do not have spare capacity to consider more effective CFZ utilisation, participate in government projects, or build development acumen.

Where groups have looked at broader options for development these are often (but not exclusively) commercial ventures supporting a particular purpose limited to the cause for which that organisation was created. While we do not challenge the value of, for example, a concessional lease to a particular religious group or community organisation pursuing their legitimate purposes, the broader community should benefit from such entities sharing the value of their underutilised CFZ land.

Successful redevelopment of CFZ blocks in Canberra has occurred but often with institutions with national or international reach, financial support and/or development expertise. The development of over 55's housing behind St Christopher's Cathedral in Manuka is a recent example. The Salvation Army is another example, currently developing plans for more community facilities on its actively used site in Braddon.

Nature of existing holders

In this context, we have excluded from consideration the rezoning of community clubs, other than for the possible lessons they provide in models and regulatory flexibility to achieve better and fairer use of CFZ land.

ACT Property Group's assets, which range from freestanding detached houses in established suburbs, to decommissioned schools, community centres, derelict buildings and other government assets, were also excluded. ACT Property Group currently provides a benefit to the community of over \$18 million a year in concessional rentals.

However, the Territory does not measure the value forgone in the provision of concessional leases.¹⁸

Having also largely excluded schools and outdoor sporting facilities (including ovals) from our project, the majority of parcels of land under consideration in this research belong to smaller community organisations and churches, as well as a unique leaseholders.

Community Sentiment

While there may be broad community support for improved usage in principle – for more indoor sports and other facilities, more places of worship and more for housing – localised resistance is a factor to consider.¹⁹

Opposition to inclusion of supportive housing as part of an amendment to the Territory Plan in 2015 was significant.²⁰ More recently, moves by the YWCA to convert a small old into supportive accommodation for women in Ainslie, escaping domestic violence was subject to community resistance and legal challenge by a small group of residents, shrinking the size of, and delaying, the project by four years.²¹

Similarly, localised opposition to new places of worship for emerging and underserved communities has met some resistance. It was a 17 year journey from planning to delivery of the second mosque in Canberra. At the time it opened, the existing mosque with a capacity of 300 was serving a community of more than 10,000 Canberra Muslims.²²

The challenge for the community, and in turn the ACT Government, is to balance the increased demand for more, and more diverse, community facilities (including affordable, social and public housing) with opposition to redevelopment.

The clear articulation of community benefit through a broader understanding of whole of community need, as well as the opportunity to deliver localised benefit at a suburb level, should be a priority.

18 ACT Tax Expenditure Statement 2022–23.

19 Alistair Sisson, *The YIMBY movement is spreading around the world. What does it mean for Australia's housing crisis?*, The Conversation, 19 January 2024, theconversation.com/the-yimby-movement-is-spreading-around-the-world-what-does-it-mean-for-australias-housing-crisis-219313

20 Mark Parton, *The community facility zone swindle*, Riotact, 9 May 2017, the-riotact.com/the-community-facility-zone-swindle/202319

21 Antoinette Radford, *ACT government uses 'call-in' powers to push forward with development of social housing in affluent Canberra suburb*, ABC News, 29 June 2022, abc.net.au/news/2022-06-29/act-planning-minister-call-in-powers-ywca-ainslie-housing/101192654

22 Daniella White, *Gungahlin Mosque opens after battling years of delays*, The Canberra Times, 8 October 2017, canberratimes.com.au/story/6027403/gungahlin-mosque-opens-after-battling-years-of-delays

Allocation of new land

The ACT Government is the primary landholder in Canberra and releases land for the full spectrum of land uses forecast through the Indicative Land Release Program.

Release of new CFZ blocks has in recent years been sporadic with a range of models applied to the way land is released – primarily in the form of a direct sale application by a particular community group for a specific block. Town planning has also seen community facility uses incorporated into mixed-use development – for example in Molonglo Valley, incorporating community facilities into Commercial Zone blocks.²³ The Gungahlin Community Centre to be built by the ACT Government is to be located on a CZ1 – Commercial Core – zoned block.²⁴

The ACT Government has committed to a review of ‘whole of community’ needs²⁵ to be able to assess applications for new land released through an EOI process effectively.²⁶ Blocks are released with a limited number of specific community needs attached, given effect through the allocation process and lease conditions. This year releases included:

- Gungahlin, 4,075m² for a Community Activity Centre or Religious Associated Use
- Chisholm, 12,284m² for a Place of Worship, Community Activity Centre, Indoor Recreation Centre or Outdoor Activity Centre
- Evatt, 1,872m² for a Place of Worship or Community Activity Centre
- Kambah, 1,523m² for Community Activity Centre
- Gowrie, 1,692m² for a Place of Worship, Community Activity Centre or Residential Aged Care.

The current land release process does not incorporate consideration of existing leaseholders and their capacity to collaborate, co-invest, subdivide or otherwise share their leases. There are no incentives to participate in this process for existing leaseholders.

23 Denman Prospect, *Denman Village Community Centre and Early Learning Centre*, <https://www.denmanprospect.com.au/denman-village/denman-village-community-centre-and-early-learning-centre>; Chris Steel MLA, *Coombs Community Centre opens*, 27 May 2022, cmtedd.act.gov.au/open-government/inform/act-government-media-releases/chris-steel-mla-media-releases/2022/coombs-community-centre-opens

24 ACT Government, *Community and Recreation Facilities in Gungahlin*, yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/gungahlin-community-facilities

25 ACT Government, *Statement of Planning Priorities 2024–2025*

26 ACT Government, *For community use*, planning.act.gov.au/professionals/land-release-sales/for-community-use

Policy Options

The current ownership structure of CFZ land, the lease and planning conditions pertaining to it, broad community sentiment about land use in Canberra, and the specific interests of existing CFZ leaseholders means there is no single solution to better utilising existing CFZ land. This represents an opportunity rather than a problem at this particular moment when, after four decades of 'the neoliberal turn', behavioural economics' ascendancy has renewed interest in 'pro-social' public policy. As Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz puts it:

Embed individuals in an environment defined by ruthless competition, and they become more competitive; embed them in an environment in which cooperation and collaboration are needed and rewarded, and they become more cooperative and collaborative. Behaviour that is rewarded in one important context becomes, at least partially, ingrained, spilling over into others. It then gets reflected in organisational and institutional design and behaviour, with broader consequences.²⁷

CFZ land is a precious resource in a pervasively privatised world – potentially a kind of 'commons'. This report focuses on the practical needs of Canberrans for the better and fairer use of CFZ land. It has significance beyond this too. In the 'psychogeography of the city', as David Harvey refers to it, spaces are needed that are 'less alienated, more meaningful and playful' and 'open to becoming' – that is, spaces of social innovation.²⁸ Feminist geographer Leslie Kern refers to the 'city of possibility' and the need for openness 'to different ways of thinking about and practising our relationship to the city and all of its human and non-human inhabitants'.²⁹ In Canberra, if not on CFZ land, where?

This is more than a nice thing to have. Geographer David Harvey has written of the how the 'neoliberal ethic of intense possessive individualism' can become a socialising template for 'increasing individualistic isolation, anxiety, and neurosis', making a sense of citizenship and belonging hard to sustain. Says Harvey,

...the fissures in the system are all too evident.

We increasingly live in divided, fragmented and conflict-prone cities... of fortified fragments, of gated communities and privatised public spaces under constant surveillance.³⁰

Harvey cautions against taking too much comfort from 'boutique cultures' as a sign of urban health, invoking sociologist Sharon Zukin's warning about 'pacification by cappuccino'. The main 'commons' options of the young and poor in Canberra are the internet and the local shopping mall; if you're old and poor, it might just be the mall. Canberra, with its rich foundational endowments of land for community use in decades past, can do more with thought about how best to get better and fairer use of existing CFZ land.

It is potentially a space through which 'a new commons', as Harvey proposes, might be created in Canberra. This could require some kind of 'no disadvantage' test for existing CFZ leaseholders to encourage them to share their underutilised land with others, by agreement. Harvey notes that not all forms of the common entail open access, and that 'questions of the commons' can be 'contradictory and therefore...contested'. Yet an old church and its faith community may well be willing to give others access to the unused portion of their CFZ block, especially if its facilities were upgraded in the process.

The policy proposals contained in this report are aimed to encourage collaboration and co-operation between those who have, and those who want, CFZ land because, as Harvey argues, the 'production and enclosure of non-commodified spaces in a ruthlessly commodifying world is surely a good thing'.³¹ Collaboration and co-operation is the best first option but further means might need to be considered. As Stiglitz said,

To the extent that there is social cohesion, a requirement to act for the good of society is not coercion... We might do it on our own, but society as a whole is better off when we do it collectively so that no one can be a free rider in creating the kind of shared prosperity that is central to a good society.³²

27 Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Road to Freedom: Economics and the Good Society* (London: Allen Lane, 2024), 162.

28 David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), x-xi.

29 Leslie Kern, *Feminist City* (London: Verso, 2021), 166; *Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies* (London: Verso, 2022), 191.

30 Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 14–15.

31 Ibid., 70.

32 Stiglitz, *The Road to Freedom*, 152.

The idea of invoking the spirit of a new commons as part of future CFZ land policy could also stimulate a new dimension in Canberra's development, bringing to life a touch of sociologist Richard Sennett's observation that by living in a 'messy city, you could develop as a human being'.³³ Fifty years earlier Sennett observed,

*Where modern community life can be said to fail the young is in its inability to lead them into a social matrix where they will have to learn to deal with other people. Thus the young, whether they are radical, centrist or conservative, can pass, and have passed, into physical adulthood with fixed pictures of themselves and a deep fear of exposing those pictures to social tests. Emotionally, then, they have failed to become adults.*³⁴

How much more of a risk this is today when the internet and shopping mall constitute the remnant commons.

The idea of existing CFZ owners sharing their underutilised land with others who need but can't access it raises the question, how could they be managed? And wouldn't there be conflict? There is extensive scholarship on this, starting in the modern era with Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom's *Governing the Commons*.³⁵ Ostrom studied 'problems of collective action faced by individuals using common-pool resources'.³⁶ She found plentiful examples where communities of individuals had arrangements 'resembling neither the state nor the market' to govern collective resources with considerable success over long periods of time, rebutting 'tragedy of the commons' and 'prisoner's dilemma' objections along the way.³⁷

Ostrom cautioned that typical social science frameworks for analysing 'common-pool resource' (CPR) problems erroneously tend to support increased centralisation of political authority.

First, the individuals using CPRs are viewed as if they are capable of short-term maximisation, but not of long-term reflection about joint strategies to improve joint outcomes. Second, these individuals are viewed as if they are in a trap and cannot get out without some external authority imposing a solution. Third,

*the institutions that individuals may have established are ignored or rejected as inefficient, without examining how these institutions may help them acquire information, reduce monitoring and enforcement costs, and equitably allocate appropriation rights and provision duties. Fourth, the solutions presented for 'the' government to impose are themselves based on models of idealised markets or idealised states.*³⁸

Ostrom's findings, including about the conditions under which individuals produce their own arrangements for sharing common resources, show a top-down, 'one size fits all' approach is not the first best option. However, given the number of examples of underutilised CFZ blocks around Canberra for protracted periods of time, it is likely government will need to provide the initial spark, means of encouragement, and more.

Sennett's concept of 'seed-planning' development 'in an open way' is relevant here.³⁹ He cites the commissioning of libraries in poor districts in the Colombian city of Medellín, where government prescribed maximum costs and minimum construction standards but left it to architects and local communities to shape the project.

*The result is that very different structures are used in very different ways: some are open all hours, some shut at night; some cater for children, others for adults; some look like traditional libraries, others...nothing like.*⁴⁰

This 'seed-planning' approach, applied to transitioning underutilised CFZ blocks to multifarious community uses, could produce combinations of interests and entities well-tailored to local needs. Government oversight would be desirable as a back-up to ensure particular groups in need are not overlooked and left out.

The organic 'seed-planning' concept in urban design has echoes in contemporary infrastructure research. Instead of thinking about infrastructure in monumental terms, engineers like Deb Chachra propose thinking about infrastructure as 'ecosystems, like forests', given it can now be 'modular, networked, decentralised, responsive, and resilient'.⁴¹ Infrastructure systems shape our relationships

33 Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (London: Verso, 2021), xi; first published 1970.

34 Ibid., 137–138.

35 Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

36 Ibid., xiii.

37 Ibid., 1–5.

38 Ibid., 216.

39 Richard Sennett, *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 236; first published 2018.

40 Ibid.

41 Deb Chachra, *How Infrastructure Works: Inside the Systems That Shape Our World* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2023), 273.

today and into the future, Chachra says.

*Infrastructure is how we collectively dream about our future and then bring it into existence.*⁴²

So it is that government action to stimulate better, fairer use of underutilised CFZ land in Canberra could create, in line with Kern's approach, sites of collective 'participatory, speculative, and relational design...outside of the narrow boxes capitalist urbanism tries to force us into'.⁴³

It could embody an architecture that is 'happy by design', as Ben Channon's guide to architecture and mental wellbeing proposes.⁴⁴ It could create new spaces for community needs from the quotidian to the sublime – known, unknown, emerging – to be met in a way that transcends 'pacification by cappuccino'.⁴⁵ It could create a new kind of commons, with opportunities for sociality that aren't contingent on money. It could 'price in' non-profits for the provision of essential social needs – capable entities whose business models don't enable them to compete with commercial players for precious land.

There are a range of options to open the way, each with their own benefits and challenges. We recommend detailed further work, including community consultation, be considered for each proposal in this non-exhaustive list. We have grouped these recommendations under the three categories of:

1. Reviews and information
2. Economic models and alternative structures
3. Practical implementation.

Reviews and information

Review CFZ conditions

Current CFZ titles and regulation should be reviewed to ensure that social and community uses are protected while opportunities for better utilisation of land are not discouraged.

Contemporary perceptions of what constitutes community facilities should be incorporated, and alternative lease models considered, including a community land trust model tailored to ACT priorities.

Ways of including a 'commons' element to CFZ land use should be considered to expand non-commercial spaces of sociality for the Canberra community.

Review incentives

Current tax settings should be reviewed to identify barriers to better utilisation and ways of mitigating them.

Ways of incentivising existing CFZ leaseholders to engage with other entities for better utilisation of their land should be considered.

The option of allowing a percentage of CFZ land to be commercialised to create cash flows to maintain and sustain community facilities over time, approved as part of overall community purpose redevelopment plan, should be evaluated.

Seed funding for community organisation skill-building to engage with potential CFZ partners should be considered, and beyond that, seed-funding for community organisation collective management skill-building for CFZ sites that become multiuse.

Regular review of utilisation

A whole of Territory review of CFZ land allocations should be conducted, mapped against currently known and emerging community needs, with underutilisation of CFZ land quantified as part of that process. Powers under the Planning Act 2023 enabling government to require leaseholders to commission an audit of each lessee's land

42 *Ibid.*

43 2022, 191.

44 Ben Channon, *Happy By Design: A Guide to Architecture and Mental Wellbeing* (London: RIBA Publishing, 2023).

45 Sharon Zukin, *The Culture of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) cited in Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 14.

use could be drawn on in this process.

A commitment to repeat that review on a regular, perhaps five-yearly, cycle should be made.

A speculative ‘futures’ gap analysis should be incorporated into the regular review process to bring possible ‘just off the radar’ needs into view.

Economic models and alternative structures

Community land trust

Government may want to consider pivoting CFZ titles into something more like the community land trust (CLT) model being experimented with overseas – so far usually to preserve low-cost housing in the face of gentrification pressures, though that isn’t the only way of deploying the concept.

Blanket conversion of CFZ titles into CLT titles could, for example, have the following features.

- Guaranteed protection of existing community land against alienation for commercial purposes.
- Government co-ownership of the lease in league with the community entity which previously had CFZ title.
- Government welcoming, and where appropriate initiating, NFP partnerships for better and fairer use of CFZ land without harm to, and with collateral benefits for, the community entity which previously had the CFZ title (for example, through upgraded or new facilities as part of a redevelopment).

This would lead to the large, significantly underutilised amount of CFZ land in Canberra being brought back under government’s wing, without harm to – and with potential gains for – existing CFZ leaseholders. It would provide greater scope for positive government action than relying on single CFZ property-by-property proposals to emerge – something which, conspicuously though with honourable exceptions, rarely happens today.

Practical implementation

Partnerships with NFPs

Partnerships between CFZ leaseholders, not-for-profits and other community groups to develop and manage community facilities that meet local needs need to be facilitated.

It could involve government-initiated collaborations for fairer and better use of underutilised CFZ land, and models for initiating this should be developed. This may range from facilitating match-making opportunities bringing existing CFZ leaseholders with underutilised land together with NFPs in need of land, to government being an active partner in community facility development on that land.

Encourage multi-use development

The integration of different community uses on single CFZ sites should be promoted to get more community value from underutilised CFZ land.

This could include combining childcare centres with aged care facilities, incorporating community gardens and youth recreational areas, supportive housing, sporting facilities, climate shelters and venues supporting non-commercial sociality.

Multiuse development plans should draw on regular ACT Government CFZ land utilisation reviews, and be further informed by local community input, and be alive to changing patterns of need.

Create a ‘trade-off’ model

A ‘trade-off’ model could be considered where increased commercial activity has a clear whole of community benefit, as has been developed for the Clubs sector.

Financial sustainability should be built into plans for multiuse CFZ site redevelopment. New, expanded and diverse community facilities could be delivered under legislated government oversight, with cash flows ensuring ongoing maintenance of, and investment in, the site.

Incorporate existing CFZ land into the existing EOI process

Existing CFZ leaseholders with underutilised land should be identified and invited to participate in the annual land release program, with a view to exploring collective development opportunities for their sites.⁴⁶

CFZ Taskforce

A CFZ Taskforce could be formed to enhance government oversight and involvement in the development of underutilised CFZ land for better and fairer community use.

This could potentially be funded by the increase in the lease variation charge (LVC) and/or rates revenue generated by broader and more effective use of CFZ land.

Community engagement

Community awareness of the untapped potential of existing CFZ land needs to be increased, and the opportunity for benefits from improved community facilities through new and different ways of thinking about each site needs to be demonstrated.

Community engagement in the planning and decision-making process regarding CFZ land use should be facilitated and encouraged to ensure developments reflect the needs and desires of local citizens.

Implementation and utilisation of the methodology developed by UC in this report could be used to engage local community members in reimagining the possibilities of underutilised CFZ sites. Positive engagement and input by local citizens could help reduce opposition to increased land use in their community, especially when they have helped shape the community facility development choices concerned.

⁴⁶ planning.act.gov.au/professionals/land-release-sales/for-community-use

The Future State

Having established the challenge and the opportunity, and envisioned a range of policy settings that might better enable fairer and more efficient use of community facility land, what is the ideal end state?

We looked across the broad range of Canberra's existing CFZ blocks, longlisted a series of sites that had small footprints (lots of spare land), limited utilisation (from the derelict to the sites used only a few hours a week) and that had the best potential for renewal (needed a little love).

We then narrowed this down to three sites for detailed analysis, matching macro territory trends with localised need, to provide concept designs for reimagined community spaces.

Using these case studies, we developed proposals for effective use of the sites and provide examples of what alternative thinking for community facilities could be. For example, what is a community facility that addresses the social isolation of younger Canberrans, provides a space in which to comfortably pass through extreme weather events and which is adaptable to changing community needs?

At the Salvation Army site in Braddon we explore an inner city precinct. We find opportunity to renew and enhance the broader community served by the Salvation Army, from better facilities to support core social services, new social enterprise space not otherwise provided by commercial rentals, and supportive and affordable housing to ensure opportunity for people not to be priced out of their community, as well as providing housing for those who need it most.

In Kambah we take a broader view. We look at the changing needs of Australia's largest suburb and the projections of what will happen in that community over time. We overlay a series of separate but closely located blocks of CFZ land into connected spaces for a dementia village and associated facilities.

In Ainslie we propose a new model of community facility – the community front room. Ainslie's unique makeup sees a large percentage of Canberrans most at risk of social isolation. We propose a space where young share-house dwellers and ageing residents alike could come together in an exciting mixed-use facility, welcoming all.

These examples are intended to provoke discussion of a possible future state for underutilised CFZ land in our community. They aim to spark conversation on better community facilities that can meet the needs of local communities while contributing to the Territory's larger ambitions.

Case study methodology

Three processes for site analysis were done for each of the sites. The analysis is aimed to provide a clear picture of the:

- Function of the site
- Value of the site in the suburb
- Demographics of the suburb
- Evaluation of the city-wide dynamics of community facilities.

Each case study considers the following data:

Site Profile. This includes information about the location, size, use, ownership, plot utilisation and heritage status.

Qualitative Site Mapping. UC's School of Design and the Built Environment engaged with UC's Health Research Institute to begin to explore, at the suburb level, the extent to which existing community facilities match current needs at more local levels. The team developed a sketch framework for evaluating this based on the following dimensions.

- Utilisation – temporal study of use of space; patterns of use; rules of engagement with space (for example, exclusive or outreach).
- Effective footprint – cultural impact spatially; contribution to suburb identity; relationship to local demographics.
- 'Loved' – place is maintained and cultivated; place is attractive to non-traditional users; place has adapted and morphed with community.

Demographic Analysis of Suburbs. Population and demographic data from the most recent ABS Census of Population and Housing (2021) is examined at the Statistical Area 2 (SA2) level, including:

- Age Distribution
- Sex
- Education
- Income
- Employment by age
- Mode of transport to work
- Household Composition
- Place of Birth (top 5)
- Religion (top 5)
- Language spoken at home (top 6)
- Dwelling Type
- Crime Type and occurrence



Image: Proposal for Braddon

Site: Salvation Army Braddon

STREET ADDRESS	2 Fawkner St, 1 Elder Street BRADDON
BLOCK AND SECTION	Section 24 Block 11
BLOCK AREA	4427m ²
BUILDING AREA	1193.7m ²
PLOT RATIO	27 percent
BUILDING DESCRIPTION	Inter-War Gothic style – typical of ecclesiastical buildings pre-WWII. 1 of 2 remaining in Canberra. Listed on ACT Heritage Register (R3). [*] Additional service buildings have been added to site.
BUILDING OWNERSHIP	The Salvation Army Australia, 1929
UTILISATION	Outreach recovery church functions: 10am–2pm weekdays – Community days 4pm–dinner Sunday – recovery church
ACT HERITAGE REGISTER	R3* Salvation Army Hall
LAND USE/ DEVELOPMENT TYPE	Community Activity Centre Community Housing Outdoor Recreation Facility Parkland

^{*} R3 = REMOVED FROM THE PROVISIONAL REGISTER BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS TRIBUNAL

CURRENT



PROPOSED



Utilisation – The site has outreach time every day for a few hours. The office is occupied during work hours.

Footprint – The site has a broad impact on the CBD of Canberra, supporting the homeless.

‘Loved’ – The main hall was built almost 100 years ago and has social heritage significance.

Braddon has a young population, with a median age of 30.⁴⁷ The number of people aged 0–14 years is projected to increase.⁴⁸ A large majority of dwellings are flats or apartments (81 percent) and single households (44 percent) and couples (30 percent) are the most common household compositions, ahead of group houses (15 percent) and families (11 percent).⁴⁹ Educational attainment and income are both high, and a relatively low proportion of people drive to work – 22.2 percent of people walk to work, compared 4.0 percent in the Territory overall. Braddon is more culturally diverse than the ACT as a whole, with a high proportion of people (31 percent) speaking a language other than English at home, Mandarin being the most common at 8.1 percent. Social fragmentation is also higher than the Territory average.⁵⁰

KEY FINDINGS:

Braddon has:

- A high percentage of single person household composition (low percentage families), almost exclusively housed in flat/apartment dwellings.
- A young population - median age between 20–39 years (with very little outside of this range).
- A high percentage of tertiary qualifications.
- A high percentage of full-time employment.
- Comparatively high income (this is commensurate with the type/quality of the current suburban facilities).
- High social fragmentation (Index of Social Fragmentation).⁵¹

THE PROPOSAL:

SUBURBAN INCLUSION:

Community Co-Housing, Outreach and Social Enterprise

The development of community co-housing and associated social outreach and enterprise facilities, including:

- **Shared living facilities:** community living room, kitchen, dining, laundry and spare bedrooms.
- **Community outreach facilities:** public/private rooms for service delivery, library, music room, co-working spaces, play area, workshop, gym and inside/outside rooms.
- **Social Enterprise:** café, kitchen + pantry, room hire and boutique retail.

47 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021b) 'Braddon', 2021 Census All persons QuickStats, abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/801051051

48 Data provided by UC Health Research Institute.

49 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021b) 'Braddon', 2021 Census All persons QuickStats, abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/801051051

50 Nasser Bagheri, Philip J. Batterham, Luis Salvador-Carulla, Yingxi Chen, Andrew Page, Alison L. Callear & Peter Congdon (2019), 'Development of the Australian neighborhood social fragmentation index and its association with spatial variation in depression across communities', *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 54 (1189–1198), doi:10.1007/s00127-019-01712-y; Secil Yanik (2024), Interactive map of dementia care in Australian Capital Territory, public.tableau.com/app/profile/secil.yanik/viz/DementiaAtlasACTbyUC/DementiaServices

51 *Ibid.*

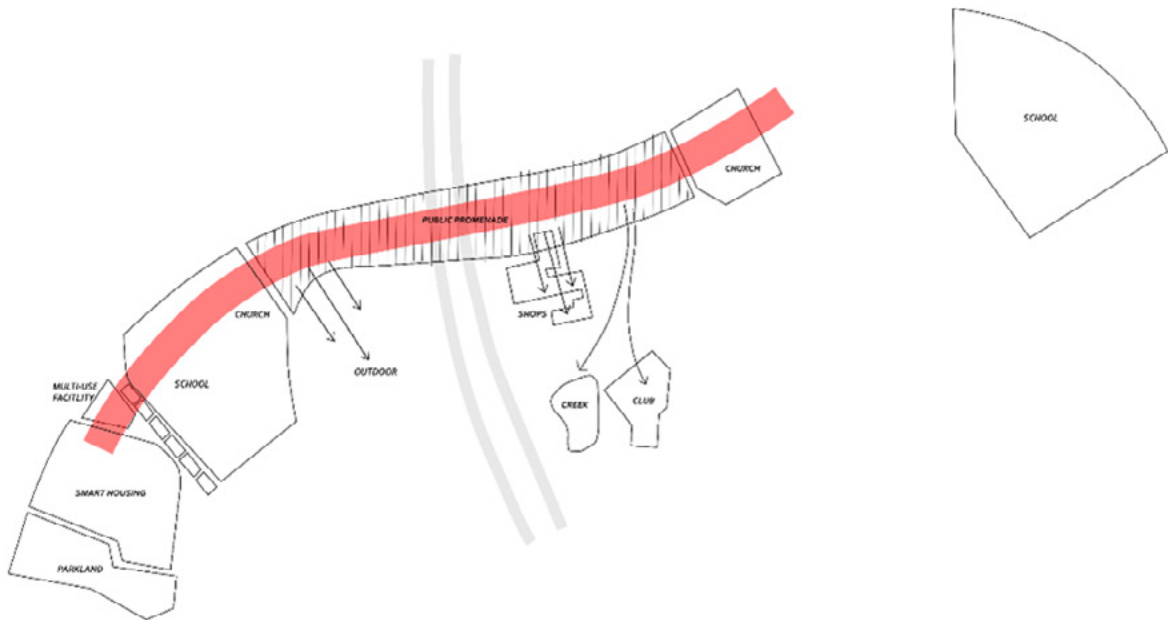


Image: Proposal for Kambah

Site: Kambah

This case study examines a series of adjacent sites in Kambah. It proposes linking a cluster of CFZ sites into a series of connected spaces. For the purpose of analysis, two sites are examined in detail.

STREET ADDRESS	Cnr Kett Street, KAMBAH
BLOCK AND SECTION	Section 360 Block 2
BLOCK AREA	5827m ²
BUILDING AREA	393.94m ²
PLOT RATIO	6.8 percent
BUILDING DESCRIPTION	Arawang Anglican Church Brick and glass block windows
BUILDING OWNERSHIP	Anglican Church Property Trust Built 1988
UTILISATION	Open every day 9am–5pm except for FRIDAY and SATURDAY On Sundays 9:30am Family service with kids and youth program.

Site: Playgroup

STREET ADDRESS	7 Reynell Pl, KAMBAH
BLOCK AND SECTION	Section 115 Block 2
BLOCK AREA	5469m ²
BUILDING AREA	163m ²
PLOT RATIO	2.9 percent
BUILDING DESCRIPTION	Early Intervention Playgroups 0–5 Old timber cottage construction with minor renovations
BUILDING OWNERSHIP	ACT Playgroups Association 1986 Day-to-day management and booking of this facility for casual and regular events is coordinated by community organisations.
UTILISATION	This Cottage provides a space for parents or carers and their children to run playgroup sessions

Utilisation – Playgroup is open during work hours for customers. The church has outreach services on weekends.

Footprint – Arawang Church services the Christian community in the area. Playgroup is small and utilised by local families.

‘Loved’ – The church is maintained and used but does not add significantly to suburb identity.

Kambah has an older population (median age of 41) and a high percentage of families (73.8 percent) compared to single (or lone) person households (23.7 percent) or group households (2.5 percent).⁵² Most people live in separate houses (84.6 percent) rather than townhouses or apartments and get to work by car, either as a driver or passenger (71.0 percent).⁵³ A relatively high proportion of people are Catholic (23.0 percent) or Anglican (9.6 percent).⁵⁴ Income is comparatively high.

KEY FINDINGS:

Kambah has:

- High car use as mode of transport.
- An older population, median age 41, with a high percentage of families.
- A high percentage of school aged, primary and secondary, children.
- A comparatively average high income (this is commensurate with the type/quality of the current suburban facilities).

THE PROPOSAL:

DEMENTIA VILLIAGE:

To establish, for people living with dementia needing residential care, home-like clustered care homes in a village setting connected with the surrounding community and where intergenerational connections are fostered.

- **Shared living facilities:** community living room, kitchen, dining, laundry and spare bedrooms.
- **Community outreach facilities:** public/private rooms for service delivery, library, music room, co-working spaces, play area, workshop, gym and inside/outside rooms.
- **Social Enterprise:** café, kitchen + pantry, room hire and boutique retail.

⁵² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021c) ‘Kambah’, 2021 Census All persons QuickStats, abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/801071082

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

CURRENT



PROPOSED

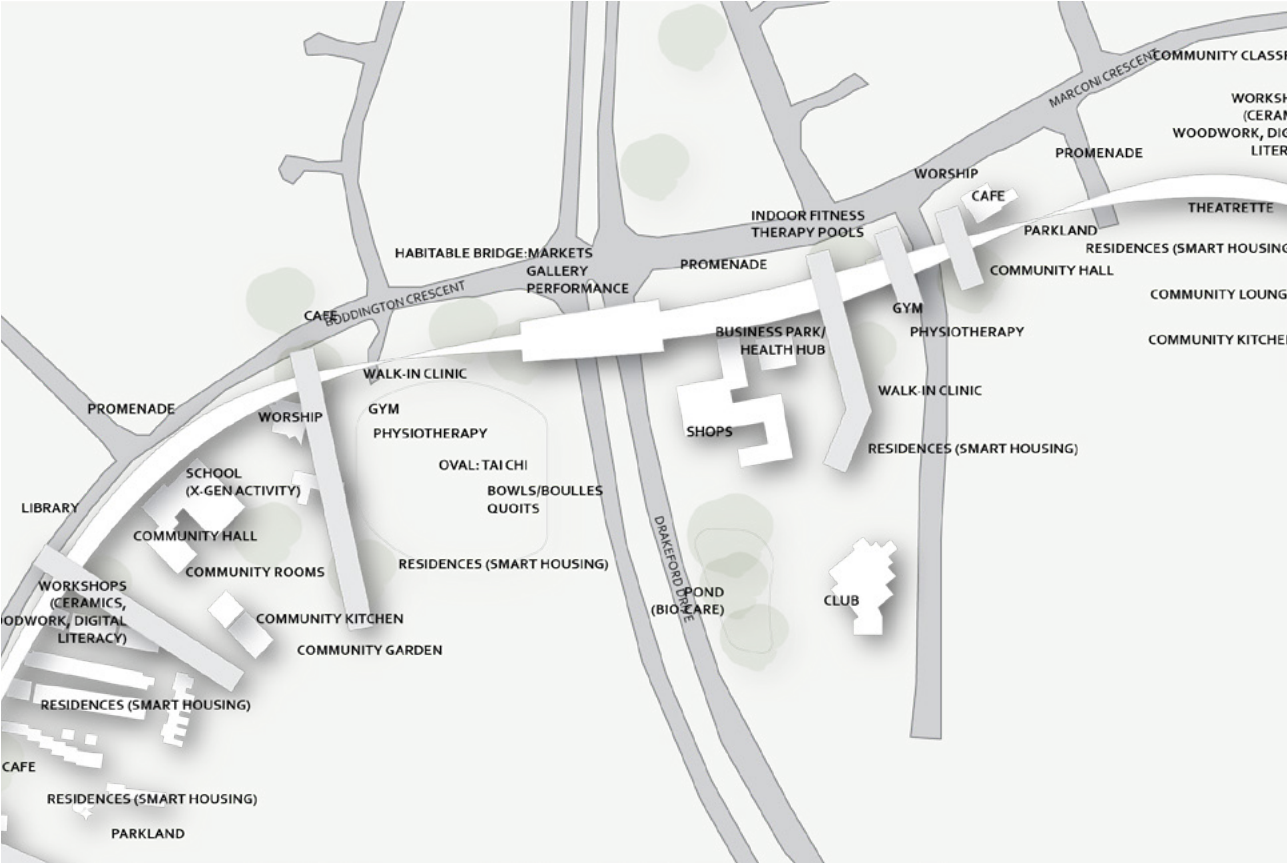




Image: Proposal for Ainslie

Site: Ainslie

STREET ADDRESS	91a Wakefield Gardens AINSLIE
BLOCK AND SECTION	Section 27 Block 10
BLOCK AREA	1181m ²
BUILDING AREA	264.5m ²
PLOT RATIO	22.4 percent
BUILDING DESCRIPTION	Residential construction
BUILDING OWNERSHIP	Previous site of Winnunga Nimmityjah – Aboriginal Health and Community Services.
UTILISATION	Nil – no current use
ACT HERITAGE REGISTER	20046. Wakefield Gardens Housing Precinct
	Objective 4.3 – Community Buildings
	To ensure community facilities are consistent with the streetscape character of the precinct.
	Mandatory Requirements
	4.3a Alterations and additions to community buildings [...] shall be sympathetic to the streetscape character of the precinct and the form and scale of the existing buildings.
	4.3b Alterations and additions to the commercial buildings [...] shall be sympathetic with the streetscape character of the precinct. Requirements subject to the discretion of the Authority.
	4.3c The landscape setting of the community buildings, including spatial relationships between the built form and the landscape, and formal patterns of hard landscaping that contribute to the streetscape and landscape character of the precinct should be conserved.
LAND USE/ DEVELOPMENT TYPE	Community Activity Centre Indoor Recreation Facility Outdoor Recreation Facility

Utilisation – The site has no use.

Footprint – The site is not in use and has no cultural impact or footprint.

‘Loved’ – The site is falling into disrepair, detracting from the suburb.

Ainslie has an older/ageing population that is diverse in income and cultural background.⁵⁵ It has a median age of 42 (7 years higher than the Territory median) and a higher proportion of people aged 65+ years compared to the Territory as a whole.⁵⁶ A relatively high proportion of people work from home, though more than a third (34.3 percent) of people are not in the labour force – higher than the Territory-wide rate of 26.2 percent.⁵⁷ Residents are highly educated. Predominantly separate dwelling housing typology with a high likelihood that the suburb will gentrify in the future with more diversity of housing typology being added.

There is a high opportunity for improvement on this site as it is currently not being utilised, is aging to the point of disrepair and is situated on a site with high potential with an active community.

KEY FINDINGS:

Ainslie has:

- An ageing population;
- An increasingly diverse population in terms of income/employment, ethnicity and family composition.
- A high percentage of detached houses;
- A high percentage of share accommodation.

THE PROPOSAL:

‘COMMUNITY FRONT ROOM’ - VERTICAL COMMUNITY CENTRE

A 24-hour facility demonstrating diverse uses that relate to the evolving community and augment the adjacent suburban shops. Possible functions/activities to include:

- **Indoor:** community ‘living rooms’, community kitchens, night-hub (library, theatre, bar, games inc. e-gaming), maker spaces and innovations labs, community ‘tool’ library and community co-working spaces.
- **Outdoor:** fitness station (multi-generational classes), urban agri-garden (produce), site for mobile services (learning, healthcare) and play space (accessible).

55 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021d) ‘Ainslie’, 2021 Census All persons QuickStats, abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/801051050

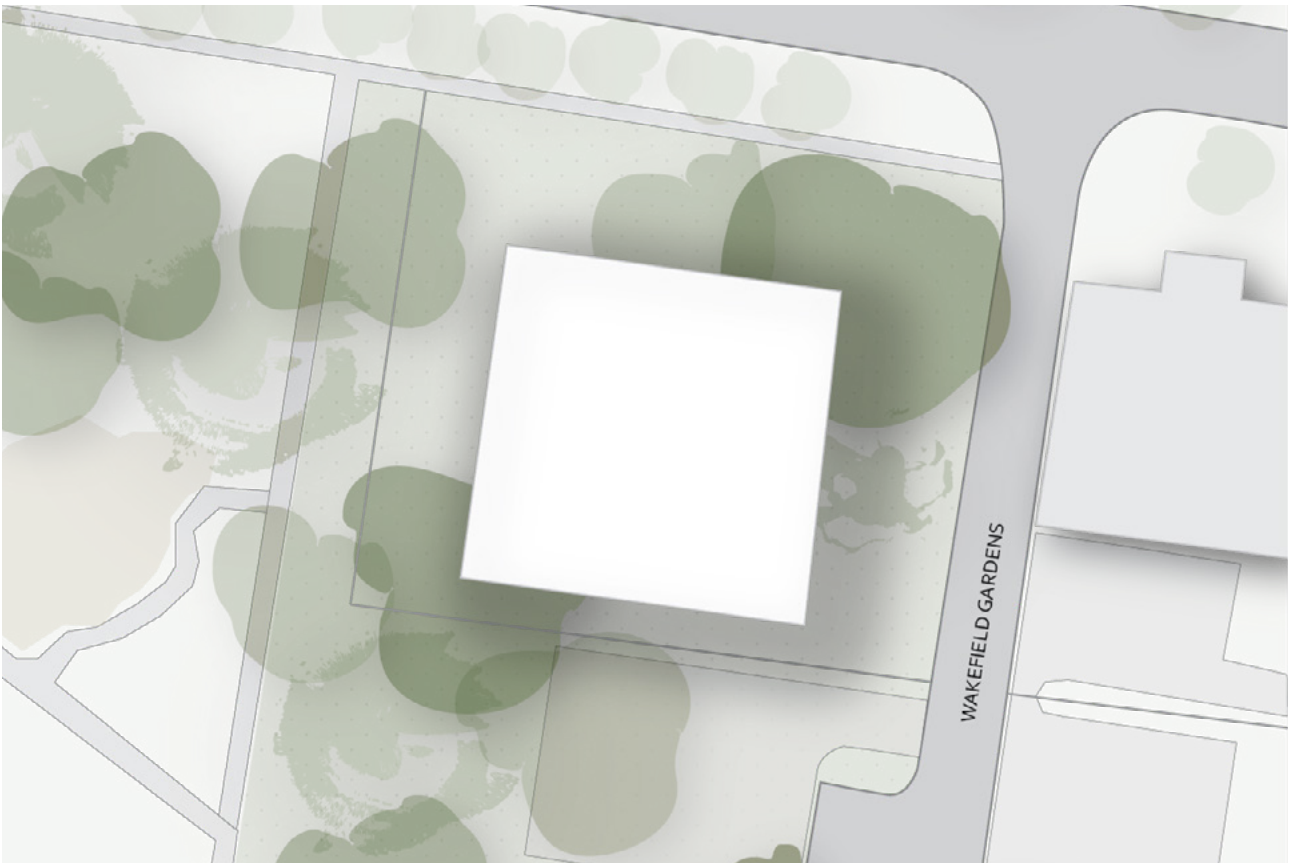
56 *Ibid.*

57 *Ibid.*

CURRENT



PROPOSED



Recommendations and Conclusion

1. **Review CFZ conditions:** Review the current limitation of usage on CFZ land to ensure that while social and community uses are protected, opportunities for better utilisation of land are expanded and contemporary perceptions of a community facility are included. Consider options for alternative lease models.
2. **Review incentives:** Do the current tax settings work?
3. **Regular review of utilisation:** Conduct a whole of Territory review of CFZ land allocations and map them against known and emerging current community needs. Review underutilisation at the same time, with a view to accommodating pressing community needs.
4. **Community land trust model:** Establish an ACT Government community land trust (CLT) to preserve land for community uses and prevent commercial encroachment while providing increased flexibility for leaseholders. This could incorporate properties currently managed by ACT Property Group.
5. **Partnerships with NFPs:** Facilitate partnerships between CFZ leaseholders and not-for-profits to develop and manage community facilities. This could involve government-initiated collaborations and participation for fairer and better use of CFZ land.
6. **Encourage multi-use development:** Promote the integration of different community uses on single CFZ sites. This could include combining childcare centres with aged care facilities, incorporating community gardens and recreational areas, supportive housing, sporting facilities and climate shelters.
7. **Create a 'trade-off' model:** Increased commercial activity could be considered in exchange for a clear whole of community benefit, as has been developed for the Clubs sector.
8. **Incorporate existing CFZ land into the existing EOI process:** Existing CFZ leaseholders with underutilised land should be identified and invited to participate in the annual land release program.
9. **CFZ Taskforce:** Enhance government oversight and involvement in the development of CFZ land to ensure equitable and efficient use through a CFZ Taskforce. Consider 'trade-offs' between ensuring financial sustainability while delivering new and expanded community facilities under legislated government oversight.
10. **Community engagement:** Increase community engagement in the planning and decision-making process regarding CFZ land use to ensure that developments reflect the needs and desires of the local population, and are more likely to be supported by them.

Conclusion

Better and fairer use of CFZ land in Canberra is crucial to addressing contemporary community needs. By implementing regular reviews, increasing government involvement, and fostering partnerships, the ACT Government can ensure that CFZ land is used effectively and equitably, yielding much more community value for residents. These measures would enhance the availability and quality of community facilities, contributing to a thriving, inclusive, sustainable Canberra.

In addition the specific policy recommendation proposed here, we recommend that the ACT Government undertake more detailed work to better understand opportunities for better utilisation of CFZ land.

More detailed mapping and site by site analysis as well as consultation and engagement with existing leaseholders is required.

A model to identify sites best suited for renewal, and a suburban level analysis tool to best match whole of city need with localised demand, would assist in making the best use of scarce land.

Our city has changed, and continues to change. Our needs and expectations must reflect both the city we have and the city we want.

We encourage the community to engage with the findings and recommendations of this report, and for government to act on better and fairer use of Community Facility Zoned land.

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