

DOWNER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

A statement for the future character and development of Downer

Version 1.2 | February 2020

What this document is...

This statement by the Downer Community Association (DCA) articulates to the community, the ACT Government and to potential developers, what the Downer community expects in relation to the ongoing development and sustainability of this suburb.

This document draws on feedback received by Downer residents to the DCA from a community workshop held in April 2019 and a survey from May - June 2019. It represents the **majority** of views of more than 200 respondents arising from those consultation activities. This document should be read in conjunction with the DCA 'report back' presentation to the community (reproduced at [Attachment 1](#)).

This document is the outcome of the 'Downer by Design' process – a positive statement of what the community wants for its future, not simply what it doesn't want.

This document will evolve over time, as the views of the community evolve over time. It is noted that much of the feedback reviewed during this exercise reiterates as well as builds on the values and vision for Downer as set down by the community for the 'Downer Neighbourhood Plan – A Sustainable Future for Downer' (2004).

What this document is **not**...

This document is not a definitive statement of every view held by every resident of Downer.

What else?

The DCA will refer to this statement when:

- engaging with ACT Government on any matter directly or indirectly affecting Downer;
 - engaging with developers and/or a development application directly or indirectly affecting Downer;
 - it develops its submission to ACT planning authorities on a proposed Downer 'Precinct Code';
 - deciding how and when to support matters raised with it by the community.
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How can you contribute?

If you have special skills of the urban planning and development kind, media and communication, survey design and statistical analysis, or even simply a high degree of enthusiasm and a willingness to be involved and to make a contribution, then please contact the DCA at downerassociation@gmail.com

Comments or feedback on this document most welcome to the email address above.

Community and connectivity are important to Downer residents

Downer prides itself as a family friendly suburb, welcoming to all

Overwhelmingly, Downer sees itself as a family friendly suburb, welcoming to a diverse cohort of society, offering a safe, cohesive, supporting and friendly environment for all.

The DCA will support and advocate for initiatives that support:

- Ageing in place
- Affordable and social housing
- Suburban ambience
- Families
- Accessibility
- Mitigate climate change impacts on residents

Downer will support initiatives that increase connectivity, vibrancy and social interaction

Downer residents have a strong desire to have increased connectivity to others in the suburb and to re-enliven a dynamic village vibe

The DCA will support and advocate for initiatives that:

- Will re-enliven and contribute to Downer's vibrancy and vitality at the Downer shops
- Promote a diverse age-cohort and mix of people
- Support community interaction
- Support and enhance a 'community hub' at the Downer shops
- Enhance social places and socialisation opportunities
- More dog friendly areas

Downer embraces the peace, quiet and livability of its existing suburban feel

Downer residents primarily saw themselves for families, offering a welcome, peaceful oasis near the city, an inner suburban sanctum from the busy-ness of the city.

The DCA will support and advocate for planning and initiatives that maintain its:

- Character and soul
- Suburban ambience
- Community feel
- Livability

Downer will not support things that...

- May make Downer a dormitory suburb
- Re-creates or takes it down the path of a modern Braddon
- Makes Downer feel 'crowded', over-busy or too inner city
- Doesn't adequately recognise existing residents

Downer is a leafy, garden suburb – green space is important to us.

Downer will support initiatives that maintain and increase the utility of green and open space

Overwhelmingly, Downer residents said that they value the green space that Downer has, and they don't want to lose any more of it; moreover, they would like to increase the utility of the green space they have.

The DCA will support and advocate:

- Increased utility of the existing green space, for example, designated 'fitness' spaces (having outdoor gym equipment), enhanced play areas for kids, designated water play spaces.
- Initiatives that facilitate a greater sharing of green space, for example, seating and tables where older residents can come together with young families.
- Preserving the existing green corridors
- Increasing the tree canopy and enhancing shaded pathways to address climate change impacts

Downer expects its leafy, green canopy to be maintained and prioritized, and improved

Downer residents value the leafy, green character that took over 50 years to create – they don't want to see it lost or destroyed.

The DCA will support and advocate:

- Preserving its arboreal history
- Maintaining and improving the health of existing tree canopy
- Increased planting with native trees of existing green spaces
- Creating additional tree canopies and green spaces

Downer has pride in its character as a garden suburb

Downer residents embrace, unapologetically and with pride, its character as a 'garden suburb'. Maintaining that essential character is **very** important to Downer residents.

The DCA will support and advocate:

- Maintaining its streetscapes and street amenity rules
- Ensuring that streetscapes are not 'crowded out' by building heights and narrow setbacks
- Further developing and improving Downer's garden suburb status and appearance

Downer will not support things that...

- Threaten to reduce green space
- Place the existing tree canopy at risk

Downer residents support thoughtful, modest density increases

Downer residents support modest density increases, in the form of two to three-storey terrace-style townhouses, apartments and dual occupancy/dual title developments

Downer residents are very clear in their expectations of sustainability and the degree of increased density wanted for the suburb.

The DCA will support and advocate for buildings not more than two to three storeys in height:

- Town houses, dual occupancy/dual title and granny flats
- Low density apartments (maximum of 12)
- Initiatives that support ageing in place and affordable housing

Downer expects the architecture to be aspirational and tasteful, with quality built residential homes and apartments, and carefully planned transitions

Downer residents expect development applicants to showcase interesting, thoughtful and tasteful architecture. Setbacks should be suitable to preserve the streetscape. There should be enough space between buildings to avoid creating a 'wall' effect and overshadowing. Further, developments should be sympathetic to the existing streetscape, facilitating transition in building type and transitions in the character of the streetscape over time.

The DCA will support and advocate:

- Good design, sustainably inspired and architecturally interesting
- Development sympathetic to the existing street scape, accommodated gradually – for example, no three storey developments unless more than 50 per cent of the street already comprises two storey dwellings, with retention of considerable permeable areas and tree plantings.

Solar access, privacy and public amenity should be prioritised

Solar access and privacy considerations should be prioritized for existing residents in any development application. Further, Downer residents expect that any development to benefit the entire Downer community, prioritizing public access, ease of access and movement, and safe and well-maintained thoroughfares.

The DCA will support and advocate for initiatives that:

- Avoid overshadowing, prioritises existing residents' privacy amenity and solar access
- Ensure that streetscapes are not 'crowded out' by building heights, narrow setbacks and parked cars
- Ensure public access to and through any green community space created within a development
- Improving usability of green, treed public spaces

Downer will not support ...

- Uninspired 'box' design or developments reminiscent of Flemington Road in Gungahlin
- High rise, high density (above four storey) or over-crowding, without adequate setbacks or that which is too 'bunched' together, or which creates 'wind tunnels'
- Inadequate provision of parking in new developments

Significant investment in Downer's physical and social infrastructure

Downer will support initiatives that model integrated living infrastructure

Overwhelmingly, Downer residents indicated that investment in Downer's infrastructure was urgently required as a means by which to improve amenity, accommodate increased density and facilitate better access to the light rail.

The DCA will support and advocate:

- The installation of wide footpaths on least one side of every Downer street
- Widening, flattening and improvement of existing footpaths
- Enhanced street lighting, especially in relation to footpaths
- Creation of dedicated bike paths, facilitating access to and through the suburb to Dickson
- Dedicated spaces to lock up bikes securely near light rail

Downer expects that infrastructure that supports and facilitates increased connectivity and community engagement in the suburb

Downer residents highly rate the Downer shops and the central community precinct, and seek to build upon the momentum of a 'village vibe' the reinvigorated Downer shops has created.

The DCA will support and advocate for initiatives that:

- Contribute to the rejuvenation of the Downer Community Centre and its utilisation
- Encouraging more businesses and services to the Downer shops
- Improve public spaces, including playgrounds, fitness equipment, facilities for socialisation
- Encourage different sections of the Downer community to use public spaces to socialise and come together
- Maintain and improve the utility of the Downer pre-school
- Attract and support other activities and healthier lifestyles for Downer residents

Downer will not support initiatives that...

- Increased vehicular traffic flow into and through the suburb
- Increase on-street parking
- Fail to adequately recognize or accommodate the narrow width (7 metre) of some Downer Streets
- Impede the take up of more 'active travel' by Downer residents of **all** ages

Engaging with the ACT Government

Notwithstanding the *2018 ACT Planning Strategy* and *2018 City and Gateway Urban Design Framework*, many Downer residents remain concerned that there is a lack of holistic, integrated planning and investment is being undertaken by ACT Government in the inner north precinct. For example, many residents cannot envisage, with the changing demographics in the suburb, how the ACT will accommodate increased primary school enrolments.

The DCA will support and continue to advocate:

- The ACT Government to undertake a comprehensive physical and social infrastructure review, and needs assessment, for Downer and surrounding suburbs; additionally, **explain and consult** with the community on what it means in a practical sense
- Continue to work with the Northside Community Council on matters of shared interest
- Development of a Precinct Code specific to Downer, reflective of the views expressed in this statement