

DETERMINING PRIORITIES FOR URBAN/COMMUNITY RENEWAL

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November 1999

Summary

This paper outlines a methodology developed by a South Australian government cross-portfolio working party during 1998, to identify principles and preconditions for urban regeneration, and a methodology for prioritising areas for regeneration. A number of examples of implementation which pre-date this methodology are then provided, with some reflections on our learning.

THE THEORY

Background

Over the last decade the South Australian experience in urban regeneration (the term preferred to renewal), has been mostly focused on projects initiated by the South Australian Housing Trust (the public housing body of 60 years). While Rosewood at Elizabeth North was set in the detailed framework of Better Cities research and funding, most of those projects have been primarily driven by asset management needs. The larger examples are Mitchell Park, Hillcrest and Regent Gardens, Lincoln Gardens (Port Lincoln). These have featured complementary working relationships with respective local governments, and in some cases private sector investment and project management.

The current Housing Trust projects, such as Salisbury North and The Parks, are considerably larger, longer term in scale, and more complex in terms of the project and partnership arrangements. They have much more community and stakeholder involvement and greater focus on co-ordination of current and future services and resources.

Whole of Government Framework

Meanwhile since 1998 there has been extensive development in South Australia of a whole of government framework to regeneration, particularly area-based regeneration. Three high level working groups worked for some six months in cross-portfolio forums to develop State government approaches to area regeneration, land supply and policy and financial levels.

Their reports were received very positively in late 1998/99 by the State's Senior Management Council of the 10 Departmental CEOs. They in turn formed a sub-group to oversee the State's urban regeneration agenda. This sub-group is constituted by the CEOs of Planning, Transport and the Arts (DTUPA), Human coincides with their release of the Green Paper on urban regeneration, A Better Place to Live: Revitalising Urban Adelaide, in April this year.

I would like to focus here on the outcomes of the Area Regeneration Work Group, led by Human Services and CEO Christine Charles, to explain how South Australia has developed a framework from a whole of government's perspective for determining priorities for regeneration.

This Work Group of six government agencies met over six months as a round table for sharing information and plans. The concept was that regeneration is underpinned by the optimum and efficient use of infrastructure, and improved coordination of, and access to, services.

State Government is seen to have a critical role in facilitating, coordinating and delivering regeneration initiatives, because it has a number of levers at its disposal which can be used to stimulate regeneration, namely:

- government land and assets (including public housing stock and vacant and surplus government sites)
- capital investment (including transport and remediation of brownfield sites)
- service provision (e.g. education, health and cultural initiatives)
- other policy and financial levers (e.g. planning policy, industry relocation assistance, subsidies).

Principles Underlying Area Regeneration

In this context, from a State Government perspective, the principles which should underlie any approach to area regeneration include:

- a clear and agreed vision about regeneration outcomes, which encompasses economic, social and environmental objectives
- dynamic and flexible approaches to regeneration which respond to the diversity of local/regional circumstances and the opportunities and strengths inherent in specific areas
- coordinated and complementary initiatives undertaken by State Government agencies within an overarching and agreed framework

- effective engagement of, and partnerships with, different spheres of government, the private and non-government sectors in order to maximise and integrate planning and resources inputs
- active community involvement in defining the needs and aspirations as an essential component of planning
- a thorough analysis of regeneration proposals, including consideration of options and a clear assessment of economic, social and environmental costs and benefits described in both qualitative and quantitative terms
- rigorous monitoring and evaluation of regeneration initiatives and outcomes.

Prioritising Areas to Be Regenerated

In determining priorities for areas to be regenerated, this State Government Work Group has proposed applying the following criteria:

- common interest by State Government agencies and willingness
 - to participate
 - to commit resources
- capacity to use State Government assets/investments/levers as a catalyst
- community and stakeholder support
- willingness to invest/participate, by local government, private and non-government sectors.

The following chart summarises how this approach has been applied to a range of potential areas, by analysing relative interest of the six key government agencies, needs (grouped as social, economic and environmental), and opportunities.

POTENTIAL FOR AREA REGENERATION

AREA (of common interest)	AGENCY PRIORITY	NEEDS	OPPORTUNITIES
The Parks	Planning – high Education – medium Industry and Trade – high Human Services (including housing - high) Transport - Medium Land Management Corporation – low	<p>Social</p> <p>Socio-economic disadvantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health status & health service • utilisation • education levels • income • car ownership • family structures • ratios of youth and overseas born <p>Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment levels • effect of restructuring <p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contamination • density and condition of public housing <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • population forecasts 	<p>Levels of Council interest</p> <p>Potential economic development strategies</p> <p>Education/housing/transport upgrades planned or committed</p> <p>Relative links between services</p> <p>Private sector interest</p> <p>How well serviced by public transport</p>

This kind of analysis is readily assisted by overlaying maps of agency data and priority, such as the Socio-Economic Health Atlas, distribution of public housing assets, industrial databases, unimproved land values, surplus government land, public open space, major projects and plans for transport road improvements. (While catchment areas for schools were not readily available for this exercise, they were seen to be of strategic significance. Increasingly, education and police are seen to be the agencies that must be involved to a greater degree.)

While the resultant map of potential regeneration areas in the Adelaide metropolitan area shows considerable compatibility with concentrations of public housing, there are other potential area of regeneration related much more to development of transport and industry. This in turn has lead to a general understanding that, as well as different approaches to different areas, there may be different “lead agencies” in different areas.

(I offer a cautionary note in passing about our experience of close analysis of data on areas of socio-economic disadvantage for example. In particular, we found that the distribution of suburbs with a broad postcode area can mask areas of concentrated disadvantage.)

MAP GOES IN HERE.

The formal structure for progressing the recommendations of the three government workgroups, including that of the Area Regeneration Group, is currently being finalised, and will take into account responses from a myriad of stakeholders to the recent consultation on DTUPA's Green Paper. The work will be overseen by the CEOs of Planning, Human Services and Education referred to earlier.

Perspective of DHS

From the perspective of the Department of Human Services, DHS, (health, housing and community services), the key driver for regeneration projects is concentration of disadvantage. Thus DHS has developed the following draft definition of area regeneration. (The term "area" is preferred to "urban", in order to be inclusive of country area.)

"Area regeneration is a collaborative process to enhance and sustain quality of life in areas of relative disadvantage, through working with the community to develop its resources, services and networks."

Consistent with the philosophy of DHS, the process of determining priorities for regeneration must be related to the willingness of that community to participate and work towards enhancing the sustainability of its resources. The evaluation frameworks currently being developed in DHS are certainly underpinned by improved quality of life as a key outcome.

DHS recognises the need to ensure that communities being considered for regeneration, have the capacity to participate. In a number of projects resources have been successfully invested in capacity building of communities in the form of partnering workshops, and neighbourhood development works supporting community reference groups. To this end SA Shelter has also been funded to research and develop a training response for communities where appropriate.

THE PRACTICE

Experience in Implementation

In discussing how the framework outlined above works in practice, I need to make clear that these four current regeneration examples pre-date the methodology I have outlined, although they are generally consistent with it. While in three out of these four examples, the Housing Trust remains the lead agency, the hope is that the community health arm of DHS may take the lead role in developing the latest project under consideration.

The four examples of South Australian regeneration projects I will touch on are at Salisbury North, The Parks, Playford and Kilburn/Blair Athol. The first two have been in the pipeline for some five to seven years.

Salisbury North Project

The Salisbury North Project is focused around the major government assets there of 1400 public houses nearing the end of their economic life.

(Interestingly, there are many hectares of vacant government land nearby owned by the Defence Science Technology Organisation (DSTO). While it was hoped that this would provide scope for a proportion of new dispersed public housing to complement the Salisbury North Project, it now appears that this land will be used for industry.)

The Salisbury North regeneration is a good example of top down and bottom up best practice in a number of areas. There is a ten-year project agreement between the South Australian Housing Trust and City of Salisbury Council, which has a long established record as a provider of community services, and commitment to community and economic development. The agreement specifies a process of overall evaluation and a review of each stage against project objectives. (In addition, a project auditor has recently been brought in to monitor the project structure in particular.)

The asset plans over a number of stages are well complemented by a ten-year Community Development Strategy. This commits some \$800,000 to strategies around youth employment, community safety and information and traffic management, all of which have been developed as a result of comprehensive studies about the needs and aspirations of the Salisbury North Community.

Intensive effort was invested in community needs and consultations over 18 months prior to the signing of the project agreement. An interim community reference group was fostered by a dedicated Neighbourhood Development Officer, jointly funded by the Council and the Trust.

The membership of the Community Reference Group was revised through a process of registrations of interest, once the project was formalised. Members, who included residents, and representatives from service clubs, local schools and the Aboriginal community, were given training in ways of operating and relating to the project structure, and opportunities to reframe the project objectives in their own terms and talk about indicators of achievement. Joint workshops were facilitated between the Community Reference Group and the Project Steering Committee, to develop a Partnering Agreement.

The purpose of this Partnership Agreement is to ensure that the needs of the key stakeholders are understood and good working relationships and strong communication links are established and maintained. These are identified as key factors in the project's success, and its ability to sustain a strong community. The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of respective parties, communication principles and mechanisms for dispute

resolution. It also builds in reviews of the Partnering Agreement at each stage of the project.

(On reflection, an additional session could have been undertaken with the Project Steering Committee to ensure a thorough understanding of the potential and the parameters of the Community Reference Group.)

The Steering Committee of the Salisbury North project reflects a sense of partnership as it consists of:

- Council (2)
- South Australian Housing Trust (2)
- Community Reference Group (1)
- Department of Human Services (1)

Key workers also attend these meetings, along with a second member of the Community Reference Group as a training opportunity.

Two other features of the project are noteworthy in terms of fostering and sustaining participation by service providers, across both government and non-government sectors. Firstly, the Department of Human Services has commissioned a project officer to work alongside the project for 12 months to align the planning of the numerous human service providers in the area, with a particular focus on special needs groups. Potential exists here to refocus government and non-government funding, with a number of pilots underway in this and other northern suburbs around the needs of families in crisis and children at risk for instance and pre-apprenticeships in house construction and renovation.

Secondly, there is the development of a Community Connections Group. This focuses on the strategies in the 10-year Community Development Strategy and has specific roles in:

- supporting the range of community workers (all employed in different arrangements and structures)
- reinforcing the community development dimension in a Steering Committee that could be prone to a focus on physical infrastructure and marketing, and
- ensuring that community development strategies put in place are able to be resourced and sustained over the medium to longer term.

It is acknowledged that considerable effort needs to be invested in skills development and mentoring community workers in these projects. This is particularly important with workers who may be working on short to medium term aspects of the project, and when strategies and activities are constantly evolving.

Playford Project

The regeneration of the Playford area is particularly challenging. This community is an amalgamation of former rival Elizabeth and Munno Para Councils, very much on the fringes of growth (and has been for 15 years or so). Their tradition of providing community services is not strongly developed and the Council has a large debt portfolio. The most unstable and disadvantaged area of this community feels it “has been studied to death” in numerous potential projects in the past to no avail. Given its fringe location, concentrations of disadvantage and pockets of negative media image, the potential for private sector investment is minimal.

State Government has the levers of regeneration here in terms of extensive public housing, numerous schools with decreasing populations, and planning issues around defining the limits of urban growth.

The approach to facilitating regeneration is a formal top down structure called the Playford Partnership. This is a five-year written commitment to focus resources and planning to address disadvantage here, in the Peachey Belt (Smithfield Plains and Davoren Park) in the first instance, by the following agencies:

- City of Playford
- Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE)
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Anglicare (non-government service provider)
- Commonwealth Family and Community Services

In addition, State Planning, and Commonwealth Health and Aged Care, are observers at the table.

While interest from this range of parties appears strong, discussions about commitment of resources are still in preliminary stages. Recognition of resources in kind and varying levels of financial contributions, will need to be worked through.

A particular feature of the Playford model, in recognition of the need to engage and sustain senior levels of commitment from local Members of Parliament and across sectors, is that a high profile independent chair has recently been appointed to assist with the steering and lobbying of the Playford Partnership.

The critical success factors here are seen to be pitching the project at a very strategic level, while being seen to deliver some concrete community development projects in the short term.

There has been some early learning around this. In anticipation of government agencies coming together with regeneration in mind, after almost a year of talks, a community development worker was employed for six months initially in early 1999. The intent was to develop activities in one local

area (Swallowcliffe Village) to complement the opportunity provided by the upgrading of a school and surrounding public housing.

While these activities were very successful in generating neighbourhood and local business response, a certain lack of faith resulted when the formal Partnership took much longer than expected to eventuate. That is, there was a mis-timing of commitments by government and other agencies at a strategic level and the community respectively. The community worker's energies were focused as a result on products, at the expense of process and the evolution of links to sustain regeneration in the longer term.

The Parks Project

There is some similar learning about the timing of decision making in the Parks project.

The Parks project again around public housing assets that are nearing the end of their economic life. The location is an inner/middle ring suburb seven kilometres west of the City of Adelaide.

The sheer size of this project (2500 houses), and the complex commercial nature of its structure as a joint venture between the Housing Trust and Urban Pacific, necessitated detailed Treasury analysis of the financial cost benefits and then Cabinet approval. Major long-term commitments from City of Port Adelaide/Enfield around physical infrastructure in particular, are the subject of other detailed project documentation. The Parks project was not formalised until late 1998.

As a result, the project has to overcome the fact that the Education Department chose to close the major high school in the community prior to the project being announced, and the community child care facility adjacent to this closed soon after in response to Commonwealth funding policy changes.

There is an identified need to foster public transport within the area. While the suburbs being regenerated are well served by major public transport routes on its boundaries, services within these suburbs are minimal, and this impacts on customers attempting to access human service agencies.

The project structure includes a Government Commitment Deed. This concept is proposed as a way to harness the commitment of key government departments to ensure that the right synergies are there to sustain the project in the longer term.

Community support for the project meanwhile is mixed. It has been significantly affected by two factors. The first was a top down announcement back in 1994 that the area would be developed because it was a "ghetto".

The second relates to stretched timeframes. The community's willingness to be involved was demonstrated initially: for example, by the close involvement of locals in the Trust's Relocation Policy (December 1997) which detailed the

rights and responsibilities of tenants and the Trust. Unfortunately, the lead time of some four years (and four Ministers) between the project being announced and then formally agreed to, as a result of the complexity of arrangements and negotiations referred to above, served to some degree to undermine the community's confidence in the project.

There is however a well organised and active Community Reference Group in the Parks project, in whom considerable time and energy is being invested by the project partners, with some acknowledgement that the loss of faith in the early stages needs to be offset.

Kilburn/Blair Athol

This suburb adjacent to the north side of Adelaide's city parklands, is identified as one of the areas prioritised for potential regeneration by the Department of Human Services in particular. A Departmental Taskforce is currently developing a comprehensive community development consultation framework to help decide an appropriate model for regeneration in this area. While there are significant ageing public housing assets here (1450 houses), there are also a good number of schools, providers of human services and some strong non-government agencies providing neighbourhood centre services.

There is interest in having Community Health as the lead agency here, based on their skills and experience in community development. One of the particular challenges is to find ways to harness scattered community development workers attached individually to a variety of agencies in the area. Housing Trust's plans for asset upgrading and dispersal will be dovetailed into the proposed consultation.

A further challenge in this area may be the engagement of the local council, City of Port Adelaide/Enfield. They are already heavily committed to the Parks Project and have been a player in smaller projects like Hillcrest and Regent Gardens. For them the issue may be how far they can stretch themselves as partners across a range of regeneration projects.

Conclusion

In determining priorities for urban/community renewal (or "area regeneration" as a preferred term) the South Australian government sees itself as having a critical role in facilitating, co-ordinating and delivering initiatives because of the levers at its disposal (assets, investment, service provision, policy).

The criteria proposed re areas to be regenerated are:

- common interest by State Government agencies and willingness
 - to participate
 - to commit resources

- capacity to use State Government assets/investments/levers as a catalyst
- community and stakeholder support
- willingness to invest/participate, by local government, private and non-government sectors.

In implementing regeneration initiatives, our experience points to the importance of:

- a clear and agreed vision of outcomes worked through with all parties
- co-ordinated government planning
- medium to long term commitment of resources, including community capacity building to participate
- good levels of community involvement early on, in defining the project, but a caution that lead times that are too lengthy can be counter-productive
- good structures to support and connect various community development workers dispersed across an area, to ensure sustainability of outcomes.