



Submission

**Draft Waterloo South People and Place Plan
Feedback**

June 2024

Prepared by Counterpoint Community Services Inc. with input from local Waterloo residents,
community groups and partner organisations

About Counterpoint Community Services INC

Since 1977, Counterpoint Community Services Inc. has been a beacon of support in Waterloo. We focus on empowering social housing tenants and diverse communities within Waterloo, Alexandria, Redfern, and other public housing estates as we lead the charge in grassroots initiatives and services.

Under the leadership of the Executive Officer, we spearhead the Redfern and Waterloo Groundswell Collation and actively engage with local NGOs to support residents through the redevelopment process.

Our dedicated community development team, funded by the City of Sydney and Homes NSW, works tirelessly to assist tenants and community groups. Our team has contact with thousands of individuals each year, and we receive funding support from DCJ, the City of Sydney, SLHD, Dept of Education, and Homes NSW.

Despite our close ties with funders and local authorities, we maintain political neutrality and strive to serve all residents equitably.

Executive Summary

As a trusted partner of Homes NSW, Counterpoint Community Services is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the People and Place plan for Waterloo South. Our mission is to advocate for residents' needs impartially while ensuring diverse perspectives are heard. Many of the actions within the current draft plan are supported, but they could be enhanced and added to address concerns.

Drawing on our extensive experience and consultations with residents and key partners like Waterloo NAB Redevelopment group, REDWatch and Groundswell, we offer a perspective that we hope reflects the voices of the local community. We stand ready to discuss our feedback and recommendations further to assist in shaping a more robust plan for Waterloo South.

Counterpoint views on what makes a good people and place plan

We appreciate that there are many ways to develop and articulate a plan. Our understanding of a people and place plan is that it should put local people in control in determining and articulating what should be kept, what needs to go, what needs to change, and what needs to happen to achieve it and communicate the reasons and evidence underpinning it.

A good plan will articulate how a neighbourhood will look and feel and how it will benefit its residents. It would clearly state what services and facilitates will be needed, how they will be designed and operated, and what steps will be taken to ensure better outcomes for all living in the area.

Local Place Plan should put our communities and their current support providers in the best position to achieve the goals they have determined for their neighbourhoods. Whilst many people have engaged much over many years before this draft plan, it appears some of those historic conversations have not been captured correctly, interpreted well or, in some parts, ignored.

Design of current plan

We argue that current plan pillars could be changed to priority areas of action with an articulated vision and underpinning reasons, which would help understand the selected actions and measure future success like that often found in program logic or RBA frameworks.

We also argue that if we try to align with international place standards, the actions may be grouped to cover the following example-focused action themes:

Governance, Resources, Human Services, Space, Connection, Design

We also believe it was premature to assign leads before achieving buy-in and ownership from stakeholders, and it made assumptions of other government departments and service provider roles without formal discussions or resources being committed to.

More explicit definitions should be articulated to minimise any misinterpretations of the current content. For example, current participation and service mechanisms must change in different scenarios to respond to different tenure types, such as public housing versus CHP tenants.

The delivery and operational breakdown and concept did not work well with any stakeholder we engaged, and it should be reviewed. Clear, tighter timelines should be identified where possible.

General Overview of Concerns We Heard

we support many aspects of the plan, but crucial details and contexts are missing.

The vision for Waterloo South is not articulated, making it hard to assess actions fully without clear alignment.

Community Trust issues and equity concerns remain unaddressed despite being raised in all workshops, and many also felt there was a lack of clarity on commitment aspirations and some actions are merely recycled policy statements.

The plan fails to express underlying values and principles and leaves many questions about the action's integration with the remainder of the Waterloo estate and the broader human service system.

Unsurprisingly, resource allocation for implementation and sustainability remains absent, which is crucial for any plan.

Tenants have expressed feeling sidelined in the current plan and that it fails to prioritise their and future tenants' needs, nor does it address how it will protect or retain what they currently value about their community. Mistakes made within the gentrification of Redfern St. are highlighted as an ongoing example of changing character marked with significant displacement and growing inequality.

Some have interpreted it as more like a checklist than a detailed plan with a collaborative effort with residents.

Some stakeholders view the plan as a project outline rather than a holistic community-driven approach. They believe it overlooks systemic challenges, complexities, and design considerations necessary for successful placemaking.

Many we spoke to expressed concern that the proposal, in its effort to be succinct, lacked sufficient details to assess what is being proposed fully, and many resident participants commented on their lack of trust that it would be delivered. Some tenants expressed that it's many words that say very little.

The plan also lacked reference to the recently developed local Waterloo compact, a significant document outlining how this community wants to be governed and work with the department and other stakeholders.

While the plan acknowledged the current human service plan, there was no clear articulation of any future integration or how this may be achieved.

Tenants also expressed frustration that the plan didn't appear to put them at the heart and centre of the plan, with them only being mentioned as a lead in one of all the actions, highlighting the fundamental problem with the approaches to engagement to date.

The plan's styling also made it difficult to distinguish between a place action and a human service action, and, in our view, it failed to capture some relevant actions or recommendations from previous engagement reports and technical studies.

Stakeholders believed it is more of a project plan for the Waterloo South renewal from a Home's NSW and narrow project lens rather than an authentic people and place plan with the ownership of the whole community and those who support them.

The current plan reads more as doing for tenants rather than with them.

While we appreciate that it is intended to be high-level, given the historical in-depth consultations, the plan disapprovingly shies away from many of the complexities and shades of grey debated at length or, in some cases, placed in the too-hard basket and proactively avoided over the last decade.

Whilst the physical aspect of Waterloo South's design and built environment aspect of place-making may be captured elsewhere, it was noted that it has been inadequately captured within this plan, particularly when it comes to communal areas, accessibility, facilities and role in addressing commonplace concerns EG: Noise complaints, connection points, safe spaces, etc.

Below are comments we captured when speaking to residents and stakeholders about the current draft actions against the pillars.

1. Working together

Keep:

- Meaningful engagement of stakeholders and community members
- Clear community governance arrangements.
- Reporting back to the community on progress.

Change:

- Provide more clarity on accountability and decision-making processes.
- Ensure that actions are not too high-level and vague but provide specific details on implementation.

Add:

- Develop mechanisms for ongoing community involvement in decision-making and governance beyond mere consultation.
- Ongoing Place governance was established to support and integrate activities across tenures and all community stakeholders.
- Ensure local service providers' values and roles are retained and built upon, and work to ensure they are adequately resourced for any additional work related to the renewal.
- Ensure Active, Meaningful, and respectful local involvement by recognising the cultural and historical importance and drawing on local knowledge.
- Ensure reference to commitments of the already agreed local Waterloo compact by Homes NSW and the expectation that all governance stakeholders will make the same commitment.
- Ensure linkages and integration to the current Waterloo Human service plan
- Expand on 2.2 to ensure adequate and diverse communication streams throughout the renewal.
- Developing clear escalation strategies should be part of any governance arrangement to mitigate and resolve anticipated or emerging challenges.
- Resourcing the documentation of successes and challenges throughout the project's lifetime to inform future planning.
- Ensure all new stakeholders and staff undertake training and local induction programs.
- Address the complexity issue around the integration of strata, tenant patriation and business across local governance.
- Address the issues of integrating the selected consortium and contractors into current community mechanisms.
- Address protection and retention of current respected service providers
- Ensure regular review mechanisms of all plans

2. Working with social housing residents

Keep:

- Dedicated relocation support for tenants.
- The right of return for existing tenants.
- Allocation of social and affordable housing.

Change:

- Clarify the process for social housing allocation and ensure transparency.
- Address concerns about retaining local character and mitigating the potential loss of affordability amenities.

Add:

- Guarantee legal protections such as leases for current tenants.
- Ensure that existing trusted NGO providers are involved in delivering redevelopment initiatives.
- Provide free and reliable transportation to aged and disabled residents during redevelopment so they can stay connected, participate in events in Waterloo, and address any other access barriers.
- Develop a Local Housing Allocation Strategy to ensure resident needs are matched to housing provision throughout the project, including maintenance of social networks, appropriate locations for older people, and proximity to services and supports.
- Create programs, classes, Activities, or centrally located places during and after redevelopment. Preserve existing social network by providing space and get-together events for the residents during the redevelopment process.
- Planning to address the parking issues.
- Create and resource an independent newsletter that is written by and for residents.
- Enhance accessibility by ensuring service provision is not limited to office hours.
- Committee to Resourcing Placemaking strategies and independent community development staff and initiatives (events, activities and programs) emphasise a strengths-based approach that fosters integration and connection among all residents.
- Proactively manage and mitigate construction impacts.
- Support current and future Tenants and community members to be engaged in designing community spaces, facilities and all aspects of the DA stages.
- Build upon and develop new peer support projects and initiatives
- Develop community brand strategy for Waterloo, working with current and future residents
- Develop strategies to tackle social isolation
- Enable peer support models, including those from residents who have undergone similar redevelopment experiences or are being transferred to CHP, etc.
- Consider how their experiences are documented for future lessons/ planning.
- Consider actions as relates to Children and family support and protection

3. Working with the Aboriginal community

Keep:

- Engagement with diverse Aboriginal voices.
- Collaboration with the local First Nations community.
- Allocation of social and affordable housing for First Nations tenants.

Change:

- Deepen the Aboriginal strategies to address complex challenges faced by the community.
- Ensure meaningful involvement of First Nations peoples in decision-making processes.

Add:

- Support sustaining tenancies and ensuring involvement in community decision-making in a format that is relevant and suitable for them.
- Ensure Aboriginal people manage any Aboriginal cultural space.
- Ensure the design of diverse and appropriate safe spaces, such as yarning circles.
- Ensure celebration and documentation of their more recent history
- Develop greater opportunities for collaborations between Aboriginal control organisations and non-ACLO's
- Develop and resource Aboriginal lead community events
- Resources independent Aboriginal support as required
- It's noted that non-aboriginal controlled organisations that service significant parts of the Aboriginal community were not consulted on this plan aspect.
- Consider how actions within this plan can align and contribute to the national closing-the-gap strategies.
- Ensure cultural awareness and education are provided to all new stakeholders in the Waterloo community, including the consortium, contractors, departmental staff, and new residents.
- Resource the leadership development of the local Aboriginal community

4. Supporting health and wellbeing

Keep:

- Delivery of a community hub with active and passive spaces.
- Accessible housing designs.
- Ongoing programs for community health and wellbeing.

Change:

- Include more focus on the wellbeing side of health actions.
- Address concerns about support during the rehousing and construction phases for those indirectly impacted in the broader estate.

Add:

- Incorporate disability considerations more explicitly into the plan.
- Develop strategies for ensuring accessible or affordable services for all residents.
- Strategies to provide wrap-around onsite and health services for people with complex needs.
- Please provide details on how it will be maintained and funded.
- Consider addressing repeated and strongly supported tabled concerns about the planned location of the community hub and ensure the existing provider Counterpoint is at the centre of the design and implementation.
- Support and respond to the community-driven health impact assessment
- Continue to enhance the current peer support project and other health resilience and capacity-building projects
- Consult and Develop strategies for those requiring enhanced Harm reduction supports
- Repair and maintain current outdoor spaces and other gathering spaces, including those near the development site
- Ensure a rolling community development program and wrap-around support during relocations and redevelopment.
- Establish a 24-hour support line for tenants impacted by the renewal who can raise questions, concerns, or complaints or seek additional support.
- Ensure Social and affordable housing has been maintained to a high standard from day one and remains tenure blind.
- Deliver improved and affordable services that support the community's everyday needs, such as health and wellbeing, grocery and retail options.
- Ensure actions that support health and wellbeing at every stage of life.
- Support the community-led health impact study and commit to responding to their recommendations.
- Develop action around recognised pillars of wellbeing, including prevention, protection, education, enhancement, crisis readiness, recovery and resilience.

5. Accessing quality education, learning, and jobs

Keep:

- Skills and training programs for tenants and residents.
- Local employment opportunities.
- Affordable spaces for community use and local businesses.

Change:

- Ensure that the plan addresses the potential pricing out of the area and the lack of affordable services.
- Develop strategies for integrating different socioeconomic groups within the community.

Add:

- Develop and resource a collaborative Local Adult Learning, Training and Employment Strategy.
- Provide capacity building for residents to participate in the next planning consultation stage.
- Consider including aspirational changes such as funding structures for local NGOs.
- Provide guarantees and commitments regarding the implementation and outcomes of education and employment initiatives.
- Define local (Suburb or Km Radius), not as greater Sydney, and prioritise residents and locals living in Waterloo and existing providers to run small shops and businesses to maintain connections and bonding.
- Develop a local digital access and support strategy.
- Support the development of social enterprises.
- Support the development of new and innovative funding models for local services.
- Resource and enhance the current coordination of local family and children education services.

6. Feeling safe and welcome

Keep:

- Community engagement through art and naming.
- Inclusive design features.
- Maximising accessibility to homes and services.

Change:

- Address concerns about safety during construction phases.
- Develop strategies for preserving local affordability and preventing gentrification.

Add:

- Develop a complaints mechanism for addressing safety concerns during construction.
- Provide more information on how design impacts health and wellbeing.
- Preserve community Mosaics, Sundial, and memorials
- Planning for affordable shops and restaurants owned and operated by local community members or tenants.
- Create a Children's Park, Exercise space for residents, and playing space for youths, such as a basketball court or skate park.
- Strategies to maintain connections between older residents during redevelopment who want to strengthen connections and be involved in the activities in Waterloo.
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- Strategies to mitigate gentrification impact that makes current locals feel displaced
- youth events like basketball competitions and other activities.
- Active and lively neighbourhood but not overcrowded.
- Ensure accessibility to homes, services, and space for all individuals.
- Develop wet spaces for safe outdoor consumption of alcohol.
- Consider integrated and responsive estate security while balancing enforcement, prevention, and harm reduction.
- Ensure actions align with the crime prevention technical study and feedback from the previous community submission from the planning approval process.

7. Being green and clean

Keep:

- Providing parks and green spaces.
- Retaining existing trees.
- Designing homes to mitigate sound pollution, energy and water efficiency.

Change:

- Address concerns about overlooked issues such as wayfinding.
- Ensure effective management and oversight of cleaning and maintenance.

Add:

- Incorporate strategies for waste management and recycling systems that consider diverse community needs.
- Provide more detailed information on how sustainable practices will be implemented and monitored.
- Refelcte on itnerntinal best practice.
- 7.2 Add resourcing the management of communal gardens to create high-quality open space.
- Resource and enhance current environmental community projects such as recycling workshops, cycle recycling, etc.

Thank you for considering the above points

For further info, kindly contact:

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Disclaimer: Any views or statements within this submission are not necessarily those of Counterpoint unless otherwise explicitly stated. Every effort has been made to ensure that information is accurate and reflective of those we have consulted. We take no responsibility for errors and omissions and recommend that all feedback contained within be tested directly with Residents, stakeholders and other evidence-based sources. Any appearance or mention of any person or organisation in this submission is not to be taken as any indication of the social, political, official or any other assumed status of such person or organisation.