Draft Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework
Submission by the Curtin Residents Association

The Curtin Residents Association (CRA) is a community organisation that serves the Curtin community by supporting projects and providing community-based advocacy. The CRA is supported by Curtin residents and is affiliated with the Woden Valley Community Council.

This submission is based on discussions over many years with residents of Curtin and also two 'pop-up' stalls at the Curtin shops to discuss the Draft Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework.

contact:
PO Box 261, Curtin 2605
info@curtinresidents.asn.au

CONTENTS

Key points

1. Infrastructure delivery must be based on a holistic plan for population growth
2. Social infrastructure
3. Coordination of development and upgrades to public spaces and all forms of infrastructure
4. Intersection at Cotter Road and Yarra Glen Drive: the Mint Interchange
5. Making the transport corridor multimodal: the need for rapid car and bus transit will continue
6. Adapting to, and mitigating the impacts of, climate change
7. Yarralumla Creek and surrounding open space
8. Heritage: Curtin Radburn Precinct
9. Curtin: Community Needs Assessment
10. Curtin urban village
11. North Curtin Residential Area
12. North Woden

KEY POINTS

These are the key actions the Curtin community needs.

1. Commit to timely infrastructure delivery based on a holistic plan for population growth.

The Framework does not yet provide a coherent picture of how additional and improved infrastructure relates to projected population growth.

2. Commit now to build the full Mint Interchange — not yet another feasibility study.

The need is demonstrable and growth already under way along Cotter Road and in the Molonglo Valley makes it urgent.

3. Require a community-endorsed master plan before any redevelopment of the Curtin Group Centre for an urban village

This would build upon 2018 Curtin Group Centre Master Plan which was received positively by the community.

4. Make a binding commitment to climate adaptation, with a mandatory flood-resilience standard for at-risk sites such as North Woden.

In order to maintain the well-being and health of Canberrans, aspirational language on urban heat and flood risk must become enforceable design standards not a discretionary "consideration."

5. Fund an upgrade to the whole Yarralumla Creek corridor upgrade to a fixed flood and canopy standard.

Relying on individual developers to fund "relevant portions" risks a piecemeal result for what is essential public flood and green infrastructure.

1. Infrastructure delivery must be based on a holistic plan for population growth

The Draft Framework is a start to providing a more joined-up view of the location and forms of residential development, the transport connections, the infrastructure for social community facilities, and the environment, particularly along Yarralumla Creek. However, it does not yet provide a coherent picture of how additional and improved infrastructure relates to projected population growth.

A key question for this strategic Framework is the projected distribution of population growth: how much population goes where? This is essential for:

- building social infrastructure and community facilities;
- upgrading electricity, water and sewerage infrastructure;
- re-designing the whole transport network; and,
- identifying what kind of green space and environment is preserved and where additional urban green space is needed for the health and well-being of the increased population.

This requires a holistic plan for population growth that includes timely access to social infrastructure and ensuring that upgrades to public spaces and all forms of infrastructure occur in tandem with new development is critical.

- Needs assessment must be based on population increases enabled by this planning and design framework.
- **Planning for all forms of infrastructure must be done before densification occurs** and implementation may need to occur before densification, increases in easily accessed urban green space, for example.

2. Social infrastructure

> "Encompasses all the facilities, services and networks that help families, groups and communities meet their social, health, education, cultural and community needs." (p.73)

Considering the need for social infrastructure as part of planning for urban densification is very welcome. It will be critical for successful densification.

Assessment of the need for social infrastructure must be based on population increases enabled by this planning and design framework. Planning for infrastructure must be done before densification occurs and implementation may need to occur before densification, identifying areas to be reserved for increases in easily accessed urban green space, for example.

Existing social infrastructure was built for the existing population. It will not be able to cope with significant increases in demand from population increase occurring with densification: the population of Curtin, for example, is likely to double to over 11,000 people with half of the increase occurring as a result of development in the North Curtin Residential Area.

New social infrastructure will be needed in the relatively short term. For example, population growth already being built or planned along Cotter Road - the Yarralumla Brickworks development, the North Curtin Residential Area, LDK Amberfield and in Weston Creek north of Cotter Road - will add ca. 2,760 dwellings and ca. 7,000 people, which is

equivalent to 2 new suburbs (Deakin and Yarralumla both have 3,120 people according to the 2021 census).

Recreational facilities, urban green space and places for people to gather and socialise are essential components of social, health and community needs and should be mentioned explicitly in the definition.

Social infrastructure is primarily a government responsibility and the community has high expectations for delivery by the ACT Government.

3. Coordination of development and upgrades to public spaces and all forms of infrastructure

"A renewal authority, multi-agency program or similar governance coordination model will be established to lead and coordinate renewal projects along the corridor, ensuring that upgrades to public spaces and infrastructure occur in tandem with new development." (p.18)

This commitment to co-ordinated delivery is welcome. Effective implementation of this commitment will be critical for successful densification.

Upgrading all aspects of infrastructure must be included in this commitment:

- physical, including public transport;
- social; and,
- living (urban open green space, both public and private, and particularly parks and tree canopy cover)

A commitment to implement measures to adapt to, and mitigate the impacts of, climate change with the aim of maintaining the well-being and health of Canberrans must be added to the statement about co-ordinated delivery.

The North Curtin Residential Area, which will house 2,500 to 3,000 people, will be the first densification project in the Southern Gateway Corridor. It will be the first test of this commitment to co-ordinated delivery, so the whole Canberra community will be taking an interest in what happens. The Curtin community expects this Area to be an exemplar for co-ordinated delivery.

4. Intersection at Cotter Road and Yarra Glen Drive: the Mint Interchange

The proposal in the Draft Framework for a longer-term investigation of the potential for a new intersection at Cotter Road and Yarra Glen Drive ('Mint Interchange') that only connects into west Deakin **is totally inadequate given the existing level of traffic congestion and 'rat running'**. This congestion and 'rat running' will increase significantly with densification and the increase in population in Molonglo.

A firm commitment is needed now to a new intersection at Cotter Road and Yarra Glen Drive that enables traffic to:

- turn right from Cotter Road on to Yarra Glen Drive south towards Woden;
- turn left from Yarra Glen Drive on to Cotter Road; and
- more easily access to the West Deakin commercial area from Cotter Road

A full 'Mint Interchange' with all these functions is essential for the large number of residents of Gungahlin, Belconnen, Molonglo and Weston Creek travelling to and from the Woden Town Centre, Canberra Hospital and the West Deakin commercial area. This new intersection has been called the 'Mint Interchange' for many years.

The Mint Interchange is a critical issue for the Curtin community because the existing, inadequate intersection results in traffic congestion and 'rat running' through Curtin. This is bad now and will increase with densification and growth of the suburbs in North Curtin and the Molonglo Valley. (There's also 'rat running' through Yarralumla and Deakin.)

Population growth already being built or planned along Cotter Road - the Yarralumla Brickworks development, the North Curtin Residential Area, LDK Amberfield and in Weston Creek north of Cotter Road - will add ca. 2,760 dwellings (ca. 7,000 people) which makes the construction of an effective Mint Interchange all the more urgent.

This is a problem to be solved now.

5. Making the transport corridor multimodal: the need for rapid car and bus transit will continue

Making the transport corridor multimodal is a worthy goal; however, the high value of Adelaide Avenue and Yarra Glen Drive as a rapid transit route for cars and buses must be recognised, and that the need for rapid car and bus transit will continue. Grade separation must be retained.

The high value of Adelaide Avenue and Yarra Glen Drive as a rapid transit route applies to local residents and communities as well as residents of the southern part of Woden Valley and northern Tuggeranong. Attention must be paid to the carrying capacity of these roads and their current value not lightly cast away.

The goal of reducing through-traffic by "encouraging use of orbital links, such as Tuggeranong Parkway" is worthwhile to alleviate the expected increase in demand on Adelaide Avenue and Yarra Glen Drive generated by the plan set out in this Framework to double the population of the Woden Valley. It will however, require re-designing and upgrading existing road networks.

It's also essential to note that private and public transport are not always subsitutes for one another.

6. Adapting to, and mitigating the impacts of, climate change

Adapting to, and mitigating the impacts of, climate change is essential. Unless this is done well the impact on the well-being and health of Canberrans will be very high and there will be very large increases in the cost of providing health care in Canberra[1].

The statement on page 34 "Consideration for heat mitigation, flood risk and biodiversity within the corridor will be essential." is completely inadequate. **The Framework must include a commitment to implement measures to adapt to, and mitigate the impacts of, climate change with the aim of maintaining the well-being and health of Canberrans.** This commitment should be added to the statement about "Co-ordinated delivery" on page 18.

Providing adequate urban green space will be a critical component of adapting to, and mitigating the impacts of, climate change. This is very likely to require increases in urban green space that's easily accessed from additional development associated with densification. These increases must be identified now as they will be very hard to find once the areas are built out.

7. Yarralumla Creek and surrounding open space

Comments in the Draft Framework

There is an opportunity to enhance significant parts of Yarralumla Creek and surrounding open space to improve its environmental function, recreational value and connection to nearby neighbourhoods. This Framework supports opportunities to further investigate options to:

- *restore parts of Yarralumla Creek, considering improved design quality, amenity, function and safety*
- *improve active travel paths/boardwalks and landscaping along the creek edges*
- *plant more trees and create shaded walking and cycling paths*
- *design with Country principles, in partnership with Traditional Custodians*
- *relandscape existing blue-green corridors with native species*
- *integrate the blue-green grid into new development, with the potential for the future developer to fund upgrades to relevant portions of the creek*
- *soften sections of the creek channel edges to capture and treat stormwater.*

Any changes to the current design of Yarralumla Creek as an engineered concrete channel must address community safety and stormwater function as a primary concern

The Yarralumla Creek corridor runs through the entire length of the Woden Valley. The corridor is critical urban green space. It's importance for community health and well-being and mitigating the impact of urban heat will increase significantly with densification and climate change.

A commitment to enhance Yarralumla Creek and surrounding open space to improve its environmental function, recreational value and connection to nearby neighbourhoods is welcome because of the importance of the whole corridor to surrounding communities.

[1] See, for example, Williams et al, Urban green space provision: the case for policy-based solutions to support human health, *Medical Journal of Australia*, 222(3), 110 - 113 (2025) doi: 10.5694/mja2.52569, and Liu et. al., Heat exposure and cardiovascular health outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis, *Lancet Planet Health* vol.6, e484–95 (2022)

In fulfilling this commitment, it is essential to:

- Develop a holistic plan for the full Yarralumla Creek corridor that integrates environmental and recreational values with flood mitigation.
- Improve the recreational experience along the full length of the corridor.
- Ensure a tree canopy cover of least 50% within this corridor.
- Mitigate the risk of flooding, preferably using nature-based solution. The risk of flooding will increase dramatically with climate change. The corridor must be made resilient for 0.1% AEP (1 in 1,000 year) floods.

Upgrading the corridor is a Government responsibility. Expecting "the future developer to fund upgrades to relevant portions of the creek" is not realistic and risks an unaccountable, piecemeal approach when a responsible holistic whole of corridor approach is necessary.

8. Heritage: Curtin Radburn Precinct

The Radburn Precinct is valued highly by the Curtin community. Consequently, we welcome the principle to "Realise the corridor's heritage vision." and the commitment to "protect the heritage values of the Curtin Radburn Precinct" (p. 34).

9. Curtin: Community Needs Assessment

Additional community and recreational facilities MUST be provided throughout the Southern Gateway Corridor, in and around local centres, group centres and as an integral part of the planned urban villages: **it is not sufficient to provide them only in the Woden Town Centre**.

There will be a very large increase in the population of Curtin; it's likely to more than double to over 11,000 people over the planning period.

- The North Curtin Residential Area alone will increase Curtin's population by 50%.

Social infrastructure considerations: (*italicised text* from p. 11)

Maintaining school and childcare provision for school-aged residents.

- This is essential and, with a doubling of the population, will require significant expansion of existing and/or new facilities.

Opportunities to prioritise health services to support an ageing population, and community hubs and family recreation opportunities.

- With a doubling of the population more must be done than provide "opportunities". Additional community hubs - one is needed in the North Curtin Residential Area, for example - and family recreational facilities are essential.
- The basketball / netball court at Holy Trinity Primary School is one of the most heavily used family recreational facilities in Curtin. The community is lucky that it is not fenced-off like pubic school facilities and so able to be extensively used by the community outside school hours Additional such facilities that are suitable for older children and teen-agers are needed.

Curtin needs, in addition to those listed on p. 11 of the report which have been addressed above:

A community hall: local church halls are the only ones now available and they are so heavily booked that it can be difficult to obtain a booking for community events. A community hall could be built as part of the Curtin urban village.

Upgrades along the Yarralumla Creek corridor

- This is critical urban green space. It's importance for community health and well-being will increase with densification. It's role in mitigating the impact of urban heat will increase significantly with climate change. Consequently, it is essential to:
  - Improve the recreational, pedestrian and cyclist experience.
  - Ensure a tree canopy cover of least 50%

Upgrade the "Holman Street" oval, including adding recreational facilities. In its current state it is a real lost opportunity to provide green space recreational facilities to the booming population of the nearby Woden Town Centre as well as to residents of South Curtin.

Upgrade the North - South and East - West paths through Curtin to improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience and commuter carrying capacity without endangering pedestrians and recreational uses.

10. Curtin urban village

The initiatives proposed "to support the transformation of the Curtin local centre into a vibrant urban village" are:

- Encourage mid-rise, human-scale development
- Redevelop existing surface car parks
- Improve streetscapes
- Improve pedestrian and cyclist experience

This is not sufficient: providing additional social infrastructure, community and recreational facilities for a significant increase in the number of people must be an integral part of the development of the Curtin urban village.

Consequently, **a master plan is an essential first step** for any redevelopment of the Curtin Group Centre as an urban village. This must be developed in collaboration with community groups through a similar process to the one used to produce the Curtin Group Centre Master Plan of 2018.

Examining each of the proposed initiatives in more detail:

> *Redevelop existing surface car parks into mixed-use buildings with basement parking whilst maintaining the existing village identity and character of the centre.*
>
> - *heights would be 6 to 7 storeys in the area close to the shops*

Maintaining sunlight in the Square (central courtyard) throughout the day and throughout the year is essential to maintain the existing identity and character of the Centre. This requires limits to building heights to the East, North and West of the central courtyard. This was

recognised in the Curtin Group Centre Master Plan and incorporated into the Curtin precinct map and code (Variation to the Territory Plan No 363, 2021)

Parking is already a major issue: additional parking spaces are desirable now, with the existing population in the area. Maintaining access to adequate parking, during any construction and in the longer term, is essential for continuity in patronage of the shops and services and so for business continuity.

The Curtin Group Centre is an urban heat island. Ther are many mature trees in the existing surface car parks that would be removed during redevelopment. The plan for the Group Centre must include the objective of mitigating the heat island effect, including through a tree canopy cover of at least 30% within the area bounded by Carruthers, Theodore and Strangways Streets.

Additional social infrastructure and community facilities must be included in any redevelopment of existing surface car parks into mixed-use buildings – not just residential accommodation and commercial retail.

> ***Improve the streetscape*** *along Carruthers Street and Theodore Street, with new landscaping and active travel paths to enhance the walking experience between the proposed light rail stop and the centre.*

The streetscape along Strangways and Martin Streets must also be improved. This was part of the Curtin Group Centre Master Plan.

- Martin Street will be a major active travel between the proposed light rail stop and the urban village.

Improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience *along the Yarralumla Creek blue-green corridor.*

Yes AND the Yarralumla Creek corridor is critical urban green space. It's importance for community health and well-being and mitigating the impact of urban heat will increase significantly with densification and climate change. Consequently, it is essential to:

- Increase the number and quality of the recreational facilities along the Yarralumla Creek corridor.
- Ensure a tree canopy cover of least 50% along this corridor.
- Mitigate the risk of flooding, preferably using nature-based solution. The corridor must be made resilient for 0.1% AEP (1 in 1,000 year) floods.

There is significant community interest – and concern - in the recent reduction in trees along Yarralumla Creek. While there may have been reasons for the tree removal (proximity to wastewater infrastructure, age of the trees), the repeated raising of concerns with the CRA indicates there is strong community attachment to the tree-lined creek and need for its maintenance and improvement.

Potential mid-rise housing (5 or 6 storey?) on Theodore St to Dawson St and along Strangways St.

Mid-rise housing on Theodore St would share back boundaries with lower rise housing on Parker St. Greater separation between mid-rise housing on Theodore St and existing homes on Parker St is desirable for privacy and solar access. This could be by setting zoning changes at the street, rather than the fence line

11. North Curtin Residential Area

According to the Draft Framework

> *High-rise housing* [i.e. 8 or more stories] *will be limited to Woden town centre. Higher-density development is also suitable for the north Curtin residential area, where there is strong access to transport, services, community facilities, and amenities.*

The North Curtin Residential Area will be effectively a new suburb, housing 2,500 to 3,000 people in an isolated location without effective access to transport, services, community facilities, and amenities unless you are prepared to drive a car to just about everything.

No social infrastructure or community facilities are currently planned. The response to questions from the community about this during public consultation in May 2026 was that development would "create opportunities" that would be "left to the market." **This is totally inadequate**. Social infrastructure will almost never outbid residential accommodation for space and without clear zoning parameters, the risk is that the North Curtin Residential Area becomes a dormitory suburb.

The commitment to co-ordinated delivery to ensure that "upgrades to public spaces and infrastructure occur in tandem with new development." (p. 18) is welcome; however, it **must include the North Curtin Residential Area.**

The North Curtin Residential Area will be the first densification project in the Southern Gateway Corridor. It will be the first test of this commitment to co-ordinated delivery and the Curtin community expects this Area to be an exemplar for co-ordinated delivery.

12. North Woden

The North Woden investigation area includes the south-east edge of Curtin up to Holman Street. Development in this area will affect the down-stream part of Yarralumla Creek which runs through Curtin.

North Woden 26 January, 1971

This area, which is at the intersection of Long Gully and Yarralumla Creeks, is flood-prone - see the picture of the area in January 1971.

Climate change will increase the intensity of heavy rain and flooding events. **Consequently, any development in this area must be resilient for <u>at least</u> 0.1% AEP** (that is, 1 in one thousand year rain / flood events).

There must also be modelling, again **for <u>at least</u> 0.1% AEP**, of the down-stream impact of any development in the North Woden investigation area.

We need to avoid the loss of life that happened in 1971, and ensure infrastructure survives better than the paths, bridges and storm water infrastructure that was washed away in the relatively modest rain event in February this year.