

Customer Service
Land, Planning and Building Services Shopfront
GPO Box 158
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Mr Ponton

Woden Valley Community Council (WVCC) Submission - ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Territory Plan and Woden District Strategy. Our comments are in the context of the ACT's governance arrangements, land use planning and development controls. This WVCC has held many events over the years and this submission communicates the views, expectations, and concerns of many community members.

The WVCC supports development and urban infill, however we want it to be done well with a focus on people and the bush capital. Town planning is holistic and balances competing priorities for land, it includes consideration of homes, jobs, public (green) spaces, community facilities and public transport to connect us to our social and commercial hubs.

The message is that the:

- Woden District Strategy does not balance competing priorities for land use with uncertainty around public spaces in the core of Woden and a lack of community facilities.
- The development controls in the Territory Plan through the Woden District Policy and the zone codes do not provide enough certainty to the community about good outcomes as developers will push the limits of the guidance.

Governance

Given the ACT Government's unicameral system of government, its small Assembly, and the lack of local government, too much power resides in the hands of too few. There are not enough opportunities for independent advice and review of land use planning and development controls, and appeal to ACAT is still not permitted in various areas, including the Town Centres.

The primary documents setting out the outcomes should be disallowable instruments under the Planning Bill 2022 and considered by the Legislative Assembly, including:

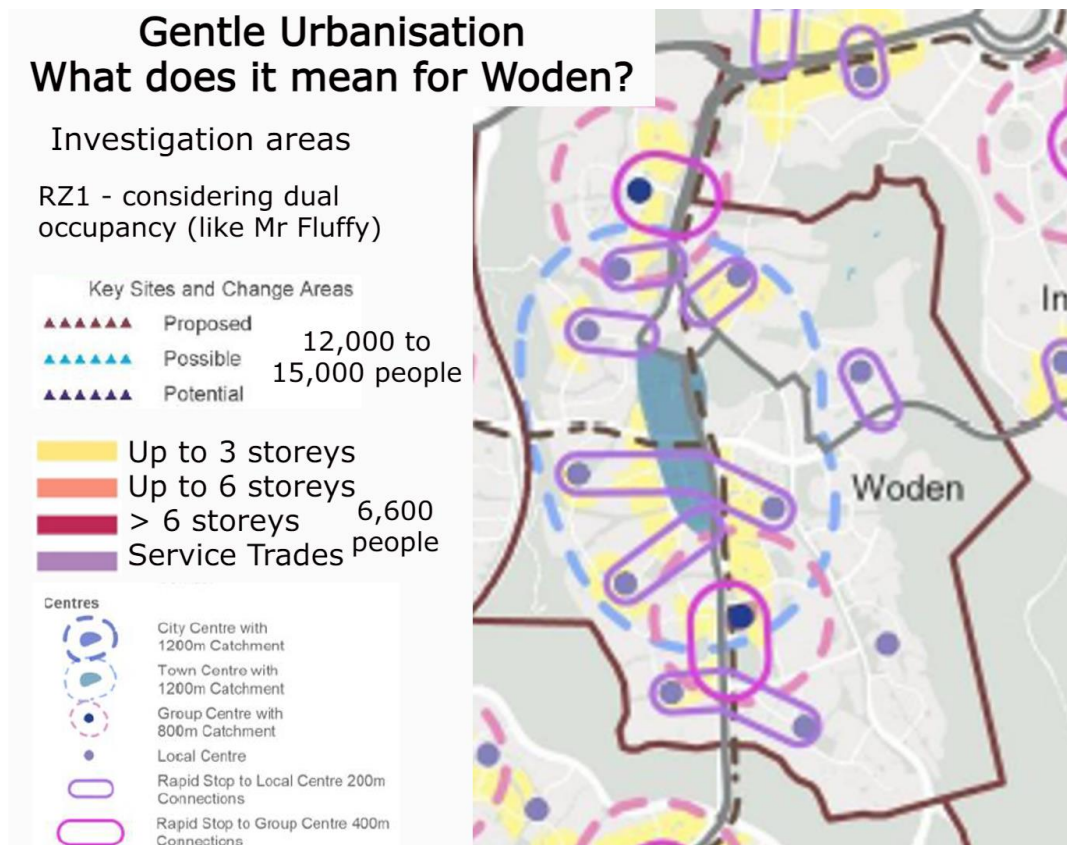
- **Planning Strategy** - desired future planning outcomes for the Territory (NI s36(4)).
- **District strategies**— desired future planning outcomes for Districts (NI s38(4))
- **The Territory Plan**—desired planning outcomes, land use zones and development assessment provisions (NI s45(2))
- **Territory Priority Project** — a development proposal declared to be a territory priority project under section 215 (notifiable instrument s213(a))
- **Offsets policy** – how environmental compensation may be made to offset the impact of development that has a significant adverse environmental impact on protected matters; (notifiable instrument s227(2))

The planning system is opaque and lacks transparency leaving the community with very little opportunity to influence the vision and the outcomes for the ACT and their districts.

- comprehensive discussions with representatives of the community are required to determine the desired objectives and outcomes and consider the variety of options to realise them
- independent advice is required to provide a different perspective to the options to develop the city in an equitable manner
- checks and balances need to be included, for example changing the above documents to disallowable instruments to allow the Legislative Assembly the opportunity to debate planning policy and bring motions to amend outcomes
- accountability for implementation for the agreed land use outcomes needs to be transparent. To date each block in the Woden town Centre has been developed in isolation and governance around collaboration and cohesive planning to deliver great outcomes is absent.
- access to appeal to ACAT on matters of law, development controls need to be in the law.

Woden District Strategy - Land Use Planning – Densification outcomes in the suburbs

Most of Woden is included in the Future Investigation Areas which will be analysed for development opportunities that will require zoning changes. See **Attachment A** for high levels of densification.



While this reform does not change the current zoning maps, the outcomes of the investigations will require zoning changes to implement the government’s desired densification outcomes. This will take tremendous effort from communities across Canberra to make representations to protect areas of value to them.

The Woden Flood Memorial acknowledges the loss of 7 young lives in 1971 and is of special importance to the community. It is a place that we can come to remember this tragic event and should be protected within its peaceful environment.

It should be protected within its peaceful green environment and should not be moved for high density housing.

The Yarralumla Creek should be naturalised and to create a green wildlife corridor to encourage biodiversity. Woden does not have a lake or water feature and the creek is important to slow water and bring cooling to this central corridor in the valley.



Community Facilities

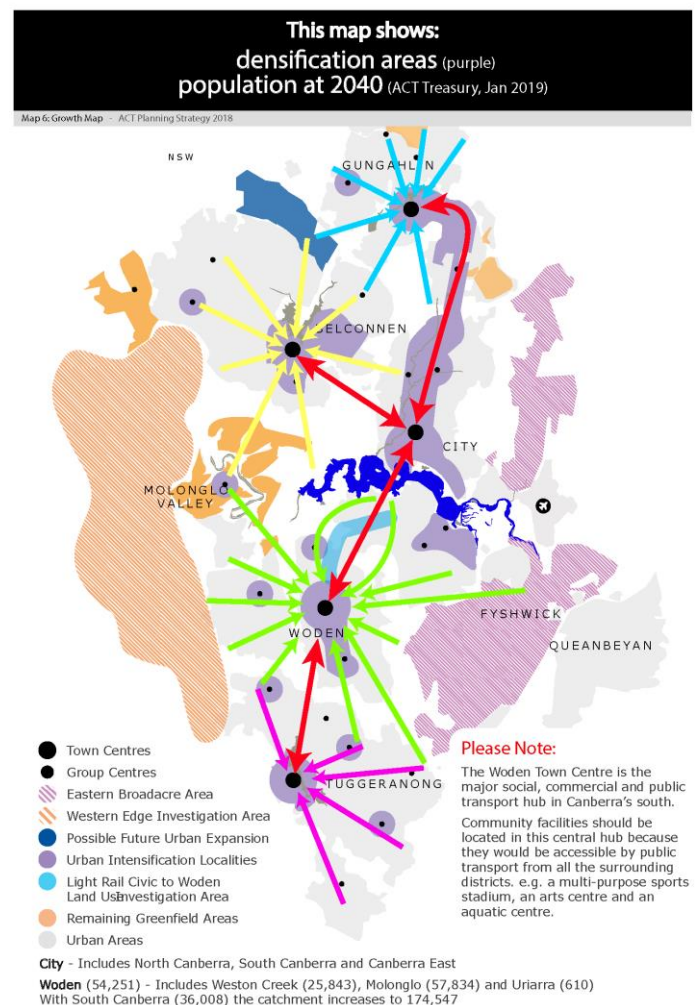
Participation in culture and recreation is good for our physical and mental health. To encourage participation facilities need to be located where they are convenient to access, on public transport corridors.

To gain the additional benefits of agglomeration and support for small business in commercial hubs, community facilities need to be located in the town centres where the buses from across the region converge.

While the Woden District Strategy mentions community facilities 43 times, sites for a multi-purpose arts centre, an indoor sports stadium, and an aquatic centre have not been included in the planning.

There is a major inequality in the location of social infrastructure in Canberra. Activity encourages more activity and without these facilities, the south is at a major disadvantage in trying to bring activity to our centres.

To reduce car use we need to be able to live work and play in our local districts.



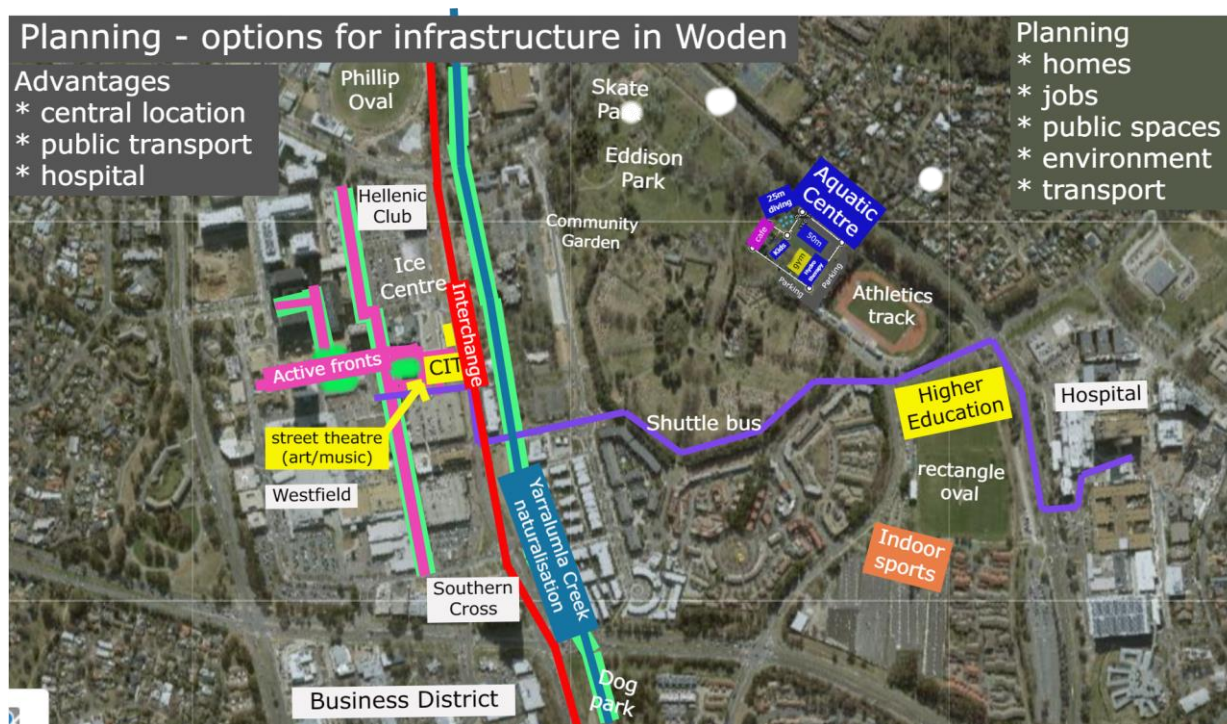
Pool

There is a huge demand for a centrally located aquatic centre. The loss of the pool and ice rink from Woden is a major blow to the social development of the Town Centre.

The proposal to include a 25m pool in a Geocon tower is second rate and will not meet the demand of all the sporting groups, squad training, lap swimmers, water aerobics, water polo, scuba diving, swimming lessons ...

An aquatic centre north of the athletic track could include a hydrotherapy pool that is near the hospital, a 25m outdoor pool and café opening up onto to Eddison Park to activate the park.

It is concerning that Minister Berry said there were no suitable sites in Woden for the new ice centre, at the same time as large government owned carparks are being sold.



Ideas for the Woden District Strategy - connect the town centre to the hospital, include an arts facility in the CIT, indoor sports stadium and aquatic centre.

Woden District Policy and Zone Policies - Development Controls

While the draft Residential Zones Policy provides some controls for site coverage, housing density, secondary residences, co-housing, number of storeys and heights, statutory controls for the following have been removed from the territory plan to guidance material:

- Consideration of area character (not just extract as much value from the block as possible)
- Height of ground floor – can it be above the fence line?
- Overlooking and privacy
- Permeable area and tree canopy

Government certifiers are required to enforce the law and access to ACAT needs to be supported with legislation for decisions to be made.

Sentences like 'development should be of a scale and nature that responds to the zone hierarchy' are too uncertain and must be changed to 'must' The word 'unless' is used 7 times in the Woden District Policy which provides opportunity for developers to not meet the development control.

Current legislation requires developments to be built within the character of the area. The Territory Plan has rules for permeable areas, tree canopy and privacy.

If current laws cannot be enforced at the DA assessment stage or by the certifier, how will the proposed outcomes based guidance stop bad outcomes?

A review of Mr Fluffy blocks should be undertaken to learn which types of developments had the best outcomes and how development controls could contribute to these outcomes.



Out of character with the area



large footprint



Overlooking invading privacy

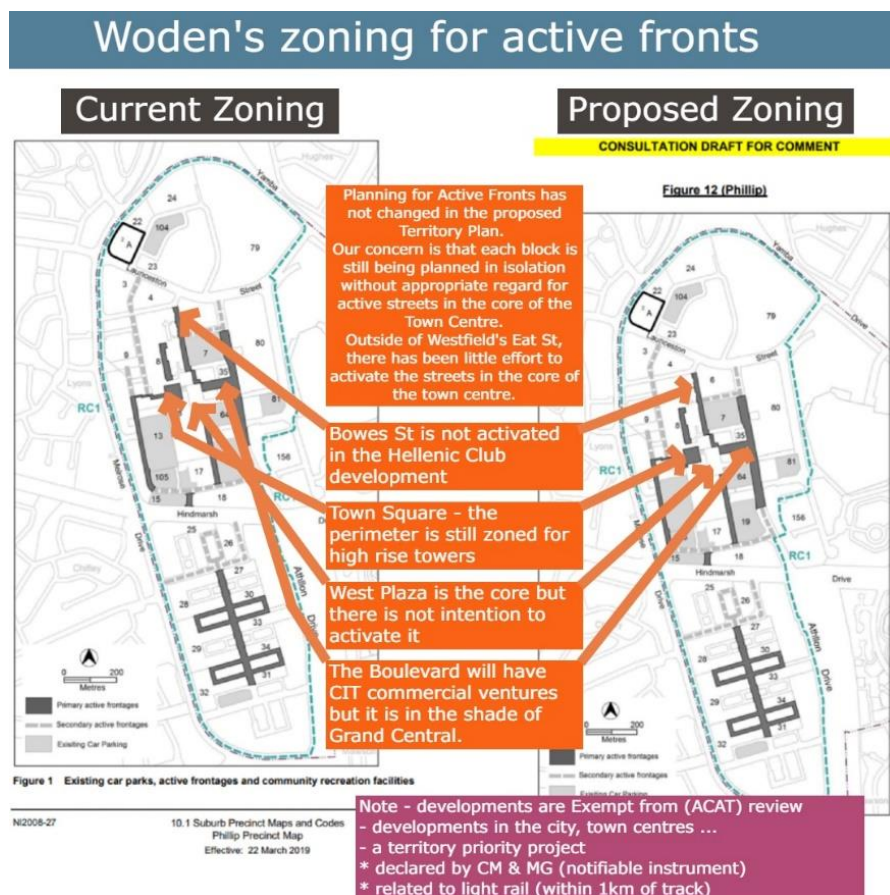
Land Use Planning – Outcomes in the Town Centre

We love the Woden Valley but to be brutally honest, the proposed Woden District Strategy is uninspiring. The anomalies in the planning and the lack of interest in fixing them to deliver a contemporary urban hub to live, work and play has led to a lack of trust in the government’s intention to deliver for the community.

2015 Woden Town Centre Master Plan - **Vision** – *the Woden town centre is a major community and commercial hub for the Woden Valley and wider Canberra region. It will be a place that attracts people to live, work, socialise and enjoy throughout the day and evenings. The town square is the central focal point for social and community activity that will connect people to a network of safe and active streets and public parks.*

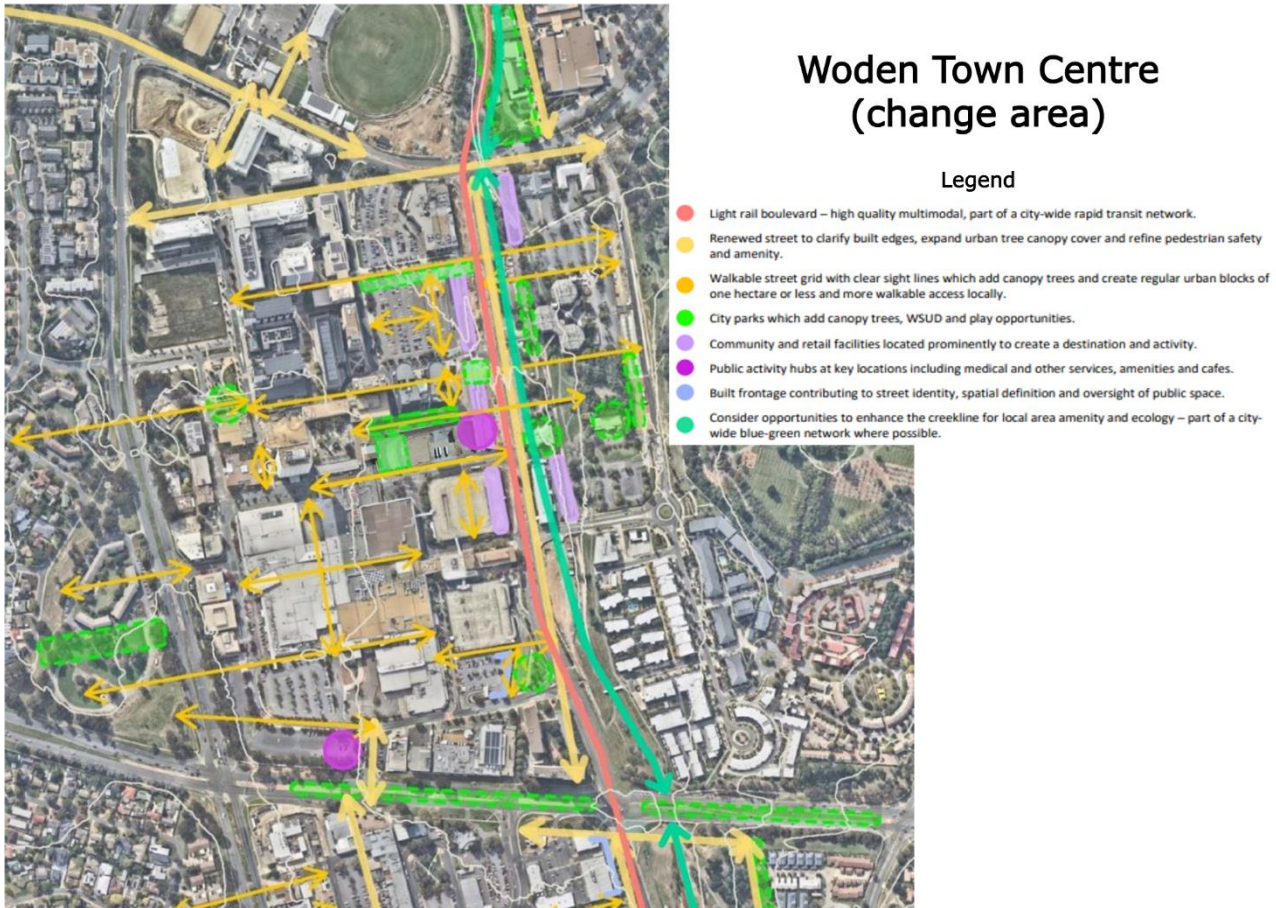
The town square is a central focal point and active streets– this requires active fronts

- the draft Woden District Strategy does not mention the Town Square
- the draft Woden District Policy fails to fix problems with the current Woden Precinct Code:
 - the current and proposed Territory Plan include a diagram of active fronts, including the town square, after 55 years, there is not one café or hospitality venue left on the perimeter of the town square.
 - the Woden town centre currently has over 30 residential towers built or in the planning process, the draft Woden District Policy failed to take the opportunity to reduce the building heights around the perimeter of the town square, leaving them at 28 storeys. Overshadowing and residents complaining about noise **will damage the future of the core of Woden.**
 - Planning should identify centrally located public spaces, allow human scale, sun and entertainment (noise).



Strangely, it appears the Woden District Strategy is moving the primary public space to the pocket park, north plaza site by the bus interchange. While it gets some sun, it is too small for events or markets and surrounding commercial activity.

With the lack of interest in the town square, the west plaza facing the Youth Foyer's blank walls and the small north plaza pocket park being next to the bus interchange – where is the primary sunny public space in the heart of Woden?



CIT – should include a multi-purpose arts facility

Unfortunately, the plans for the new CIT place the Youth Foyer (which we support but not on this site) between the CIT and the West Plaza. It has blank walls and an electrical substation and does not encourage activity and a destination in the core of Woden to provide passive surveillance and a sense of safety.

The ground floor of the CIT (opening onto West Plaza) provides a fantastic opportunity to create a space for the artists and musicians and bring creativity to the core of Woden. A meeting place for people motivated by visual and performing arts and music to create relationships and have the opportunity to collaborate and reach their goals. This facility would contribute to Revive: The Australian Government's new National Cultural Policy and the ACT Government's Statement of Ambition for the Art:

Instead, of the CIT music program being located in a space that opens up onto West Plaza to create activity, it will be on the 3rd floor and miss the opportunity to activate Woden's core.

The arts are important to a community and there is an inequitable distribution of facilities across Canberra, leaving a lack of opportunity in Woden. See Attachment B.

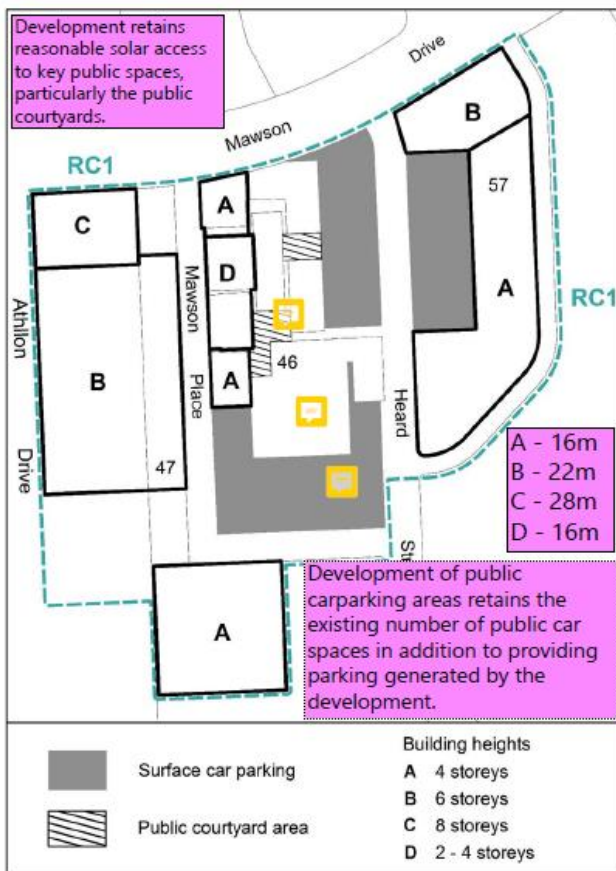


Land Use Planning – Outcomes in Curtin

See Curtin Residents Association submission

Land Use Planning – Outcomes in Southlands

Figure 7 (Mawson)

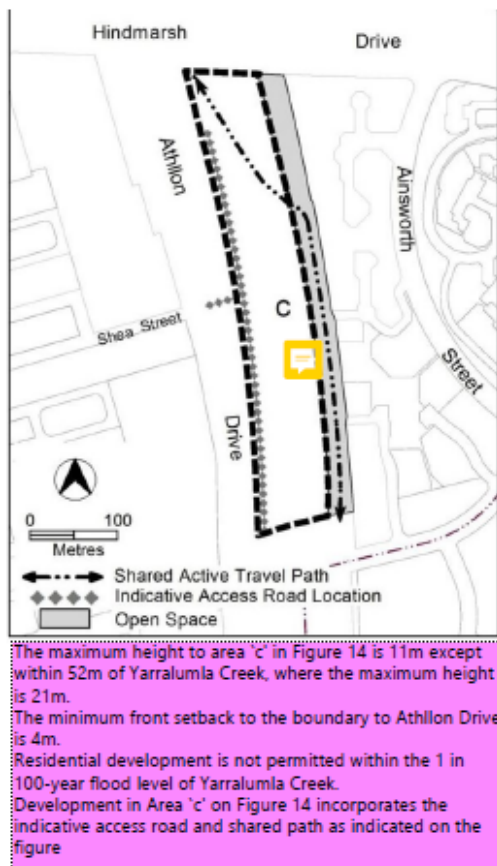


Again, there are opportunities to improve the outcomes for Southlands, Mawson.

- Reduce the building heights around the small central courtyard, keep a solar wall of 5m.
- Require Woolies to activate their side of the courtyard, at least with glass (instead of a brick wall) so activity can be seen
- Create some green space and a playground, we need to see kids playing at the shops by cafes
- Use the car park (retaining the number of carparks) between the tennis courts and Athllon Drive for a community centre and 3 x 3 basketball courts, instead of apartments
- Naturalise the creek
- Ensure car parks are accessible to the shops
- Why is there a depot on one of the car parks

Land Use Planning – Athllon Drive

Figure 14 (Phillip)



Spaces for the community to be active have not been identified in Woden 's strategy

The Athllon Drive corridor provides another opportunity to create an environmental and community corridor between Southlands and the Woden Town Centre.

Prior to land being sold for high density housing,

- a study needs to be undertaken into the environmental value of the corridor,
- the options to naturalise Yarralumla Creek, need to be investigated
- a plan needs to be developed to include the environmental outcomes, community amenity, eg a community garden and the options for an indoor multi-purpose sports stadium at the northern end of the corridor (within walking distance of the bus interchange so it is accessible from the region)

Land Use Outcomes - Phillip Service area

The Phillip Service Precinct has lacked investment for decades.

Having learned from the loss of the recreation precinct because it was zoned for housing, analysis needs to be undertaken to determine how housing and the service precinct can develop together. The outcomes for the precinct need to be made clear and opportunities for community facilities in this area need to be considered.

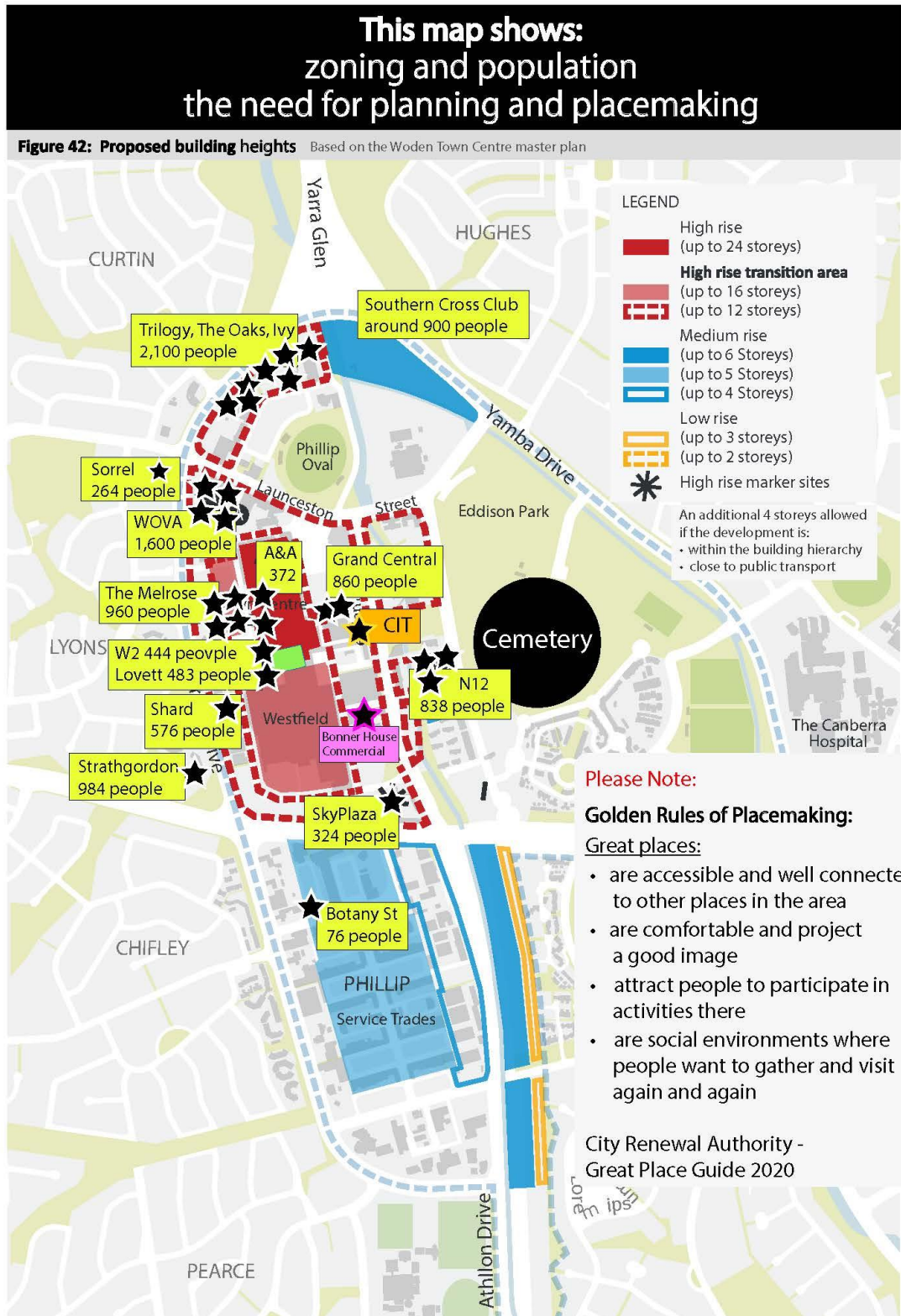
We call on the ACT Government to address the issues raised in this submission and

- improve the governance framework, and include in Part A
- improve the Woden District Strategy to include better outcomes for the people and their access to community facilities and public space in the town Centre
- move the Youth Foyer to activate West Plaza with a multi-purpose arts space
- build and own a multi-purpose indoor sports stadium and an aquatic centre in the Woden Town Centre that can be hired at a reasonable cost by local community sports groups.
- Review the Mr Fluffy blocks to determine the best development controls for great outcomes.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Carrick
President, Woden Valley Community Council
3 March 2023

High level of towers and densification in the town centre



The towers will home over 10,000 people (assume 2 people per apartment)

- given the zoning, the potential population could be significantly higher.
- placemaking will need to be planned and delivered.

Location of indoor sports facilities showing the inequitable distribution across Canberra

