Trade-offs galore in tackling urban sprawl

STREET WISE
Anthony Duckworth-Smith

There has been substantial attention given to the need to consolidate Perth and win in urban sprawl.

However, the reality is there is a largely market-driven housing sector and the absence of strict regulatory measures such as urban growth boundaries.

Regulators can offer housing supply to support this vision by changing land zonings and recently these have been concentrated in locations which make sense from a certain perspective, such as proximity to public transport.

But in a city with an enduring affair with its sky, air, coast and space, is this enough to tip the market away from the suburbs and create widespread change planners envisage?

The Australian Urban Design Research Centre developed 39 criteria reflecting the range of qualities present for a house in a particular location.

We then developed ways to measure these and benchmark them against a typical standalone home in a new suburb and an apartment in Perth city centre.

Finally, we did some preliminary analysis on the relative performance of typical models of infill dwellings against these benchmarks. This research is available in an easy-to-read format in the book published last year, Sprawl and the City.

Results are varied. For example, the background night-time noise level in the city apartment is twice that of the suburb.

City dwellers, however, typically walk and cycle six times more than their suburban counterparts and have access to a much wider pool of jobs.

But in the suburbs, with a bit of clever planning you can grow up to half of your daily fruit and vegetable needs, work on that special project in the shed and potentially still see the Milky Way when you relax at night with a cold one.

The results were perhaps unsurprising in many instances, illustrating the diverse range of qualities Perth has to offer but also reinforcing the powerful allure of a house in the suburbs.

If we want to offer an attractive and durable housing alternative to this and truly overcome urban sprawl, then we need to find a way to incorporate or offset these charms.

The focus of planning has been on density next to transport.

However, the research suggests that we should take a closer look at the broader quality of these locations offer and also ask if we have truly explored the potential of sensitively renovating our existing suburbs to accommodate more households.

Anthony Duckworth-Smith is assistant professor at the Australian Urban Design Research Centre.

To combat sprawl, we need denser housing options to have more appeal. Picture: AUDRC

North West Countercyclical Opportunity
Velocity Sites - Karratha WA

For Sale
Lot 10, Lot 1069 & 570 King Way & Cherratta, Karratha WA

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- For sale individually or in combination

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- 3 bedroom residence onsite
- Amphitheatre onsite with capacity of up to 4000 guests
- For Sale by Private Treaty

Chas Moore
0419 964 789
cmoore@savills.com.au
Barney Dear
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- Holding income to CBA of $200,180 p.a.
- High profile corner position in tightly held CBD location
- Suite wide range of uses and development possibilities
- Plot ratio 4:1

Closing 2pm (WST) Thursday 7th June
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