



# Placemaking Sandbox Summit Documentation Report

## Future Suburbs for a New World City

UQ Placemaking Summit 2018

UQ Brisbane City, Brisbane

27 November 2018

### Event Background

## Future Suburbs for The New World City

By UQ Project Team

The UQ Placemaking Summit 2018 was held on Tuesday, 27 November. The summit was one of two state-based engagement initiatives required to be delivered by The University of Queensland as part of the Placemaking Sandbox Project. The Placemaking Sandbox Project is a national research project funded by The Myer Foundation and delivered by the Place Agency – a national multisectoral consortium of placemaking, research and design organisations.

The theme of the summit 'Future Suburbs for the New World City' was developed by the Queensland-based consortium partners and reflects the 'unrealised' ambition of local policy-makers, politicians and public commentators to create a future South East Queensland (including Brisbane) which can compete in a global market, but delivers a vibrant, safe, green and connected place for local residents, investors, businesses and visitors.

The Queensland team deliberately chose to focus on the middle and outer suburbs as case-studies in placemaking, to offset the property and planning professions focus on the inner city, and to create the opportunity for a new conversation of placemaking and tactical urbanism within the unique constraints and challenges of lower density urban settings – places where the majority of Australians live.

The UQ Placemaking Summit 2018 attracted 115 participants including academics, established and emerging planning and design professionals from government and private sector. 20 students, and a number of community activists and organisations also attended.

*"The UQ Placemaking Summit 2018 explores, tests and debates the 'why' of placemaking – how 'place is imagined, designed and delivered in the middle and outer suburbs of Australian cities – drawing upon case-studies from key actors in government, industry and community in South East Queensland."*

To maximise reach and engagement with those who commission, fund as well as deliver placemaking projects and programs; the UQ Project Team entered into an event partnership with The Committee for Brisbane – a not-for-profit organisation whose objective is to promote good planning and development outcomes and whose membership is over 500 organisations and individuals. The event was also promoted to industry associations and networks including the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and Planning Institute of Australia; as well as placemaking consultancies active in Queensland.

Mapping and building a distribution list of placemaking advocates and practitioners has been an indirect benefit of the event management process.

### Structure of the Day

- Welcome and Opening Session:**  
Presentations to set the cultural context, placemaking as part of city strategy and within a national research agenda.
- Keynote Presentation: Change and Disruption in the Suburbs.**  
Presentation and panel discussion to position placemaking within a contemporary understanding of urban change.
- Upsizing Placemaking for a New World Agenda**  
Presentations from industry and panel discussion, on experiences on embedding placemaking in community and city-shaping projects. Moderated by The Committee for Brisbane.
- Placemaking in Action – Expect the Unexpected: What's happening in Salisbury**  
Short film and facilitated conversation with community change agents and businesses in Salisbury. Moderated by ABC Radio Presenter.
- Plenary Session** with the Queensland Government Architect

Running in parallel with the day, participants had the opportunity to provide feedback on placemaking opportunities across South East Queensland via interactive mapping activity and feedback wall. An online poll was also used as a vehicle for audience engagement.

## Summit Findings

### PLACEMAKING IN CONTEXT

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has been called the 'Century of the City' in response to the rapid urbanisation of global population and the economy. In Australia, there is strong public interest in the changing nature of our cities. Issues such as population growth, housing density, traffic congestion, and impacts of development are explored on a daily basis on both traditional and social media platforms.

The suburban streets and footpaths are some of Australian cities most undervalued assets. Placemaking and tactical urbanism practice has the potential to transform this essential urban infrastructure to bring new life to these communities and create places which are rich in experience and opportunity.

### Drivers for Contemporary Placemaking Practice

The UQ Project Team identified the following issues to be explored through summit dialogue and inquiry:

- Suburban dynamics – deepening our understanding of the impact of population and demographics, social-economic trends, property and development cycles, transport and mobility on the suburbs
- Disruptors, connectors and catalysts – how the environment, climate change, places, activities and infrastructure investments are shaping, re-shaping the lived experience of residents, businesses, government, consumers and visitors in the suburbs
- Role of planning, design, and infrastructure investment in creating great places (and experiences) in the suburbs – how can placemaking approaches be used to reimagine life in the suburbs, and what does it look like? What are the opportunities or barriers to delivering these approaches in the suburbs?
- Critical success factors for effective placemaking projects – how are projects conceptualised and commissioned, what quantitative and qualitative evidence is used, where does equity and sustainability fit? Is placemaking an inclusive or exclusive process? - what learnings can we take away from experience to date
- Critical success factors for effective placemaking practice – the success (or otherwise) of top-down and bottom-up placemaking and tactical urbanism approaches in the suburbs.

### Making PLACE in the New World City: A Proposition

*As we stitch up the old and dream up the new, could PLACE be the key driver for The New World City?*

*People make PLACES for themselves.*

*We long to be in PLACE with meaning, yet often struggle to find it in the modern world we make.*

*How can we ensure that PLACES deliver what people want and aspire to?*

*PLACE is physical but it is also emotional and spiritual.*

*PLACE connects us to each other and the environment and the rest of the world.*

*What processes, knowledge and skills create great PLACES?*

*How could we enliven PLACE in our future suburbs?*

### Key Insights from the Presentations and Discussion

- ☑ **Deep Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** is critical. First Nations people can lead local narratives on place and local landscapes and are essential to designing place futures.
- ☑ **Demographic and Social Change in the Suburbs is Real** There is real change occurring in the suburbs driven by shifts in migration patterns and numbers, age profiles, household incomes and urban development. There is variation across inner, middle and outer suburbs; and between new and established communities.
- ☑ **Paucity in transport infrastructure is already impacting on the suburbs**, and neighbourhoods with poor or congested connections or services are experiencing decline. Future suburbs should plan to deprioritise cars.
- ☑ Climate change, adaptive design and resilience are not factoring sufficiently in city strategy and placemaking programs.
- ☑ Industry leaders in residential and commercial development are implementing urban design and placemaking tactics as part of long-term return on investment strategies. Local government planning frameworks are often impediments to innovation.
- ☑ Strong and ongoing engagement between government, community and industry is critical to ensure place-based planning and regulatory systems are responsive to impacts and opportunities presented by economic and technological disruption.
- ☑ Local community and businesses are pushing back against inflexible regulations and cultures to create places with meaning – not without significant effort and expense.
- ☑ Successful placemaking and innovation in design is driven by values-driven clients, investors, communities and projects.
- ☑ Densification of our cities and suburbs, as well as smaller dwellings is driving increased demand for new models of 'Third Places' as spaces for personal interaction and community life.
- ☑ City-strategy and large-scale transformation projects can benefit from embedding placemaking in their planning, development and engagement strategies.
- ☑ Participatory planning processes underpinned by local democratic norms may not fit some suburbs with high levels of temporary residents.
- ☑ Equity and inclusion are important considerations in placemaking – who are we making places for?
- ☑ Crowdfunding and new social enterprise and impact funding models have the potential to reshape how our suburbs operate at both the community and business level.
- ☑ City-strategy and neighbourhood planning must not lose sight of the need to ensure that there is sufficient space allocated to support current and future community ventures.

### Places and Projects

- Sunrise, 1770
- Brolga Lakes, Burpengary
- Ellen Grove, Brisbane (UQ)
- Harmony, Sunshine Coast
- Everton Park Plaza Project, Brisbane
- Oxley Creek Transformation Project
- Urban Ground Guideline and Civic Open Space Study, Gold Coast City Council
- Chrome Street Salisbury – Reload Café, Ballistic Beer, Food Connect, Dance Studio



**THEMES FROM THE DAY**

Malcolm Middleton OAM LFRAIA led the Plenary Session, and identified four themes which were woven through the day’s presentations and discussion:

**Theme 1: Authenticity**

Aunty Ruby Sims’s opening comments and Acknowledgement of Country, and Michael Myer’s presentation underscored the cultural and environmental imperative for the community to ‘make change’ in their own way in their communities.

For investors and developers placemaking tactics needed to reflect ‘local strengths or stories’, and this was integral to delivering social, environmental and economic return on their projects.

**Theme 2: Change**

Suburbs are experiencing significant change in their age profile, cultural mix, and income. Access to transport infrastructure and development trends mean new approaches to creating places may be required. What is the ‘tipping point’ for local activation to create ‘place’?

**Theme 3: Long Term**

Being invested in a place for the long-term, whether as community actor, government agency, investor or developer, allowed for placemaking projects to mature and evolve over the long-term. Having a shared vision for a place was critical.

**Theme 4: Access**

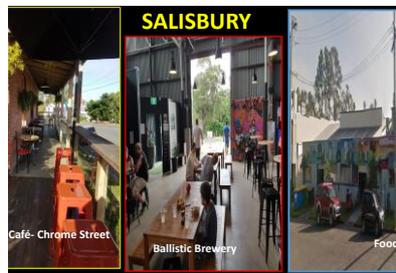
How people connect and move across the city and neighbourhoods is being disrupted, through new mobility services. i.e. e-bikes and e-scooters, and what will this mean for the shape of the city.

**WHAT WE HEARD FROM PARTICIPANTS**

**Key Conversations**

Participants were eager to engage in discussions with speakers and other attendees. Key conversations heard over the day:

- Urban Planning– what is government’s role in regulating vs. guiding good design, environmental or community outcomes?
- Urban Management – asset management regimes and low budget allocations for maintenance are impacting on the quality of public space.
- Innovation in placemaking requires a long-term view and patience.
- Community Planning – governments need to provide sufficient space for community to evolve.
- Placemaking needs to be an inclusive process, and placemaking tactics need to respond to the project and community context.
- Is there a definition of ‘placemaking’?
- UQ should share its knowledge on the change drivers for Brisbane with placemakers in community, business and government.
- Understanding the conditions which have shaped Salisbury as a potential community and economic hub.



**Online Poll - What do great places look like?**

Participants described a great place as:

1. Friendly/Inspiring/Real
2. Safe/Engaging/Active
3. Flexible/Timeless/Inclusive
4. Alive/Activated/Populated

**Great Places Mapping**

Locations and projects described as a ‘great place’ included:

- Cluster of established inner and middle local centres e.g. West End, Southbank.
- Hub in the suburbs (well connected, close to public transport, broad offer of experiences. e.g., Sunnybank.



- Thriving streets in the suburbs e.g., Blackwood St. Mitchelton
- Enogerra Reservoir (outer suburb): Fabulous place for the community to connect with nature.
- Natural environments: Logan River Walk, Brisbane Forest Parks.

Locations described as a ‘potential place’ included:

- Cherside, outer suburbs (great bikeway) but resolve congestion issues
- Rocklea outer suburbs: better transport needed/enhance Rocklea markets to become a destination

Locations where placemakers should act immediately included:

- Resolve traffic congestion (different locations in the outer suburbs, e.g., Cherside)
- Foster civic pride (different locations in the outer suburbs).

**Suggestions for Partnerships**

- Springfield Land Corporation
- University of Sunshine Coast
- The Committee for Brisbane
- Nature Play Queensland

**Suggestions for Future Research**

- Implementation of placemaking
- Children and young people – ‘hearing the child’s voice properly’
- Walkability in the suburbs
- Inner suburbs - lifestyle, household and family opportunities and challenges
- Inner-middle suburbs - raising families in the inner-middle ring
- Climate change
- Cultural diversity – inclusion and welcoming people, beyond food
- Wildlife conservation and green spaces
- Respecting and remembering Brisbane’s radical history

## QUEENSLAND RESEARCH FOCUS

The Queensland research is focused on understanding how placemaking and tactical urbanism can be delivered successfully in the middle and outer suburbs of Australian cities – where the majority of Australians live.

The University of Queensland's Urban Planning Program is leading a consortium of industry partners and practitioners to deliver a targeted program of education and engagement which will form the state's contribution to the Placemaking Sandbox Project.

Queensland consortium members include:

- The University of Queensland
- John Mongard Landscape Architects
- Gold Coast City Council
- Office of Queensland Government Architect

## PLACEMAKING PRACTICE IN QUEENSLAND

Currently 'placemaking' in Queensland is seen as an urban design-led process, either driven by local governments seeking to renew a precinct or street; or by a private developer seeking to optimize a commercial return from a project by promoting a design concept which aligns with a contemporary approach to 'place branding' and project marketability. Queensland universities are not seen to be active 'placemakers or tactical urban strategists' within government or industry.

There is a number of experienced practitioners, designers and creative firms who are driving innovation and the development of a body of good practice in placemaking in Queensland. They are active contributors to industry events and discussions on social media.

Placemaking approaches are not yet integrated in local climate adaption strategies, and this provides as good opportunity for future research and engagement with government and industry leaders.

## APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

Through 2018 – 2020, The University of Queensland will bring together interested researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, students and industry stakeholders to explore and debate the role and impact of placemaking in the suburbs of Brisbane and beyond.

Through a series of facilitated discussions and workshops, UQ and program participants will unpack and discuss what comprises successful placemaking practice, with the results shared as part of the Queensland consortium's contribution to the National Placemaking Sandbox Project.

## Proceedings from the UQ Placemaking Summit 2018

To access more information from the 2018 Summit, or to express an interest in the 2019 engagement activities, please go to the UQ Place Agency website:

<https://uq.placeagency.org.au/>

or visit the UQ Planning Blog: <https://uq-urbanplanning.org/>



## Planning for UQ Placemaking Summit 2019

The UQ Placemaking Summit 2019 will be in a master class format to share lessons and skills on placemaking in the suburbs. In response to participant feedback, the day will have a strong emphasis on the potential for placemaking to meet the challenges of climate change and to create resilient suburbs and communities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks to the speakers and moderators for the generous contribution of their time and insight. It made for a very rich discussion on placemaking and suburban change in the Queensland context.

## QUEENSLAND RESEARCH PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS



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#### Event Partner

The Committee for Brisbane



#### PHOTO CREDITS

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