

# Case Study

## Planning Project

### GHD and the Town of East Fremantle | East Fremantle Oval Revitalisation

The East Fremantle Oval precinct is located within the Town of East Fremantle, approximately 20km southwest of the Perth CBD and roughly 2km northeast of the Fremantle City Centre. A Class A Reserve for the purpose of recreation, the precinct includes the East Fremantle Oval (including the East Fremantle Football Club Facilities), Locke Park, Sumpton Green Community Centre (including a playgroup and child health centre), the East Fremantle Bowls Club, and the East Fremantle Croquet Club. The precinct also includes some housing and the Town of East Fremantle works depot.

Opinions on how the precinct might be best revitalised were fractured and divergent amongst the wide range of interested and affected stakeholders. The East Fremantle Oval Precinct Revitalisation Project (#ShapeOurFuture) delivered an extensive community engagement process to develop a vision masterplan for revitalisation of the precinct.

The project included a four-day community design forum (charrette) to deliver a community-led design process and achieve consensus on the future direction for revitalisation.



#### What role the public had in the decision-making process:

To collaborate with the public to make this decision and define the vision for future revitalisation, the project utilised a design charrette to achieve consensus amongst the divergent views of community and stakeholders. Through the charrette, the role of the public was to collaborate with other participants to explore and develop all elements of the revitalisation vision: design, funding, implementation, and spatial concepts. The community, stakeholders and public were integral to the decision making process. It was a community-led vision, concept and visualisation.

#### The reasons for the use of the particular participation process:

As a charrette is an intensive, multi-disciplinary workshop with the aim of developing a design or vision for a project or planning activity, it was considered the most appropriate approach to engage residents, stakeholders the community and the public at large.

The Town had invested considerable resources over the last decade on concept plans and master plans for the East Fremantle Oval Precinct. A wealth of information has been gathered by a variety of methods, but so far none had led to a concept that has been implemented with the support of the local community and all other stakeholders.

A key issue in developing a successful plan for the precinct had been getting stakeholder and community buy-in and support for the most appropriate design response to the precinct. A design charrette provided a public participation process that would focus on developing that shared vision in a manner that everyone can 'see' the nature of the outcomes. The charrette was open to any and all stakeholders to participate, with invited sessions for those most affected. Overview and online sessions were available to participants with limited time to invest in the process, whilst the majority of participants committed to participate in all sessions.

The intent of the charrette was to involve people in the process of developing an idea - in this case a shared vision. By being involved in this process, the public would have a stronger and more sound appreciation of the vision and therefore more likely to give it enthusiastic support. The aim of the charrette was to develop the shared vision using visual and conceptual tools in manner that conveys spatially, in images and in words, perspectives for revitalisation of the precinct. The charrette was a four day, intensive consultation experience. Over the course of the charrette, participants were given each other to develop the shared vision. Through a range of engaging activities in the forum workshops and a complementary online design forum, community and stakeholders identified and investigated a range of scenarios for the future of East Fremantle oval.

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Describe how the public participation process responded to any challenges faced:

## **Lack of trust**

Past approaches to redevelopment of the precinct were developed from the view of some, but not all, precinct stakeholders and had been met with cynicism and distrust in the broader community. The community perception was that the decision on how the precinct was to be developed had already been made and that they, the community, were presented with a fait accompli.

This issue was directly addressed by a project team that maintained a consistent commitment that the vision would be developed by participants. The design team held no pre-conceived design ideas, and was informed directly by themes of consensus identified. This commitment was reflected in all activities. All elements of the charrette were open and located within the precinct, including the working sessions by the design team. At any point, any participant could come in and watch the technical and design team at work.

Pre-charrette interviews with those residents feeling distrust was a key way that the engagement process proactively addressed this issue. One-on-one conversations built trust and transparency with community members.

## **Competing stakeholder perspectives on revitalisation**

There were key competing interests amongst participants, particularly in relation to funding opportunities; a lack of alignment threatened consensus building. Previous concepts for revitalisation had included options for sale of land from the recreational precinct to fund required upgrades to WAFL club sporting facilities; this was at odds with views of community participants who did not support sale of local public open space to pay for state level club facilities. This was a key point of potential conflict between participants.

The engagement process managed this issue by facilitating a consensus-building approach to the vision. Through a facilitated process of appreciative enquiry, the project team was able to tease out the themes of consensus that reduced the impact of competing views as the conversation was able to focus on agreement rather than divergence.

## **Distinguishing views and preferences into meaningful design**

A key challenge for the project was to translate the varied perspectives of participants and stakeholders into a cohesive vision, based on consensus.

The charrette established a tone of individual and collective ownership of the project that endured through the project. Divergent and convergent views were shared through appreciative enquiry, participatory budgeting, and accessible design sessions. The teased out themes of consensus – in the form of consensus statements and also common themes identified in design exercises – became the vision. Multiple check in points confirmed with participants: did we hear you correctly? Is this interpretation of consensus correct?

## **Enabling participants to address key funding issues and limitations for revitalisation**

Collaborating on all elements of revitalisation, including implementation, required meaningful participatory budgeting and consensus making in the decision process. An independent quantity surveyor was used to assist the charrette participants in understanding the costs of their designs. This allowed participants to modify design based on viability, constructability and desirability. With more information available to the public, they were able to streamline and refine the design, which enabled participants to believe this design is going to work.

How did you win the support or co-operation of communities/stakeholders for the project or improved relationships with them, or participation opportunities:

The charrette held from 16 to 19 September 2018 brought together users, neighbours, stakeholders and the community of the precinct to develop and articulate an aligned vision. Over 1,000 people were reached through social media. Over 145 individuals attended workshop sessions (many of these people attending multiple sessions) and additional people participated through the online design forum.

"I just wanted to say that I think the overall process of consultation has been very good - I thank you all for leading the process to ensure that there is a strong community consultation process in the development of the A class reserve. It is very much appreciated from all residents."