

Background and history

The Kurilpa Ideas Forum was arranged in response to the timely decision of the new Queensland State Government to review the draft Kurilpa Riverfront Renewal Master Plan (KMP), with increased attention to community participation. The KMP proposed nearly twenty thousand new residents and office workers to be concentrated in a collection of over fifty high tower apartment blocks to be built on 25 hectares of riverside land in West End Brisbane. In support of this process of review, the Kurilpa Futures Campaign Group (KFCG) initiated a process of innovative engagement to give the community an opportunity to express their preferences and priorities for this significant site.

Determining the best future development for the precinct requires a combination of the values and needs of neighbouring residents and future users with technical understanding of the available and emerging options. This kind of engagement requires exchange and evaluation of ideas and reflective review of options, rather than conventional market research techniques of counting consumer preferences. To make informed choices, people need to speak, listen, and consider each other's views.

A community forum

A forum was therefore designed for these purposes, combining the following activities:

1. Contributions from development, design and environmental practitioners, professionally recognized for their experience and expertise.
2. Discussion in numerous, small, facilitated and recorded focus groups to identify objectives and explore options. Thirteen different aspects of balanced urban development were selected ranging from planning densities and land uses to natural environment and governance.
3. The opportunity for members of all groups to view and rate each other's ideas.
4. Evaluation and proposal by groups mixing membership of focus groups to consider the best overall developments and principles for the Kurilpa Master Plan precinct and neighbouring areas of West End, South Brisbane and the City Centre, and for the overall city.
5. A process to rate the importance of different land uses and activities in the light of the Forum's discussions and priorities.
6. Review of outcomes and explanation of next steps and further community involvement opportunities.

The place of the forum within the consultation process

The forum was devised as a major step within an ongoing process of community consultation and engagement. Announced in the KFCG website in February 2005, and timed for mid May 2006, it was publicised through:

1. The KFCG website Ideas Forum page sharing organisational and participation details.
2. Email circulation lists of the group, the local councillor and other interested organisations such as the Brisbane Development Association.
3. Distribution of leaflets in key West End locations.
4. Three rounds of Media releases and associated interviews on radio, television and in the print media.

The forum process

The forum commenced with brief keynote addresses from prominent practitioners in architecture and urban design, transport, communications and creative arts, and community planning.

The 167 participants then moved into 13 facilitated and scribed focus groups of approximately 13 members each including resource persons with expertise in administration and governance; community development, organisation and services; ecology; economics; governance; landscape architecture; law; literature; and social, transport and urban and regional planning. Each group produced its three highest priority objectives for its particular aspect of urban development in Kurilpa for scoring by the whole forum.

During a refreshment break all forum participants scored all 169 objectives making use of 10 previously distributed adhesive red dots.

Mixed groups were then formed to consider the kind of overall development that would be most beneficial for Kurilpa in the context of neighbouring areas and the wider city.

At the conclusion of these discussions, participants were asked to prioritise a number of different land uses and activities, in the light of the deliberations of the preceding two and a half hours.