

90 Day Design Innovation in Social Housing Project – Case Study

Housing that supports health, wellbeing and independence for older people is an important aspect of developing South Australia's capacity as an age friendly state. It also presents a social and economic opportunity for both the ageing and housing sectors now and into the future.

Between December 2016 and March 2017, Office for the Ageing (OFTA) undertook a 90 Day Design Innovation in Social Housing Project to discover how housing and precinct design can respond to the needs of older Housing SA tenants as they age, enabling designed-for-purpose living that can cater to diverse support, care and lifestyle needs.

Collaborative relationships with industry, combined with effective cross-government engagement and a focus on empowering older people as project partners were key to the success of the project.

The role of Change@SA, particularly in the planning phase, was valuable in ensuring the project was well defined and that the team approached the task with a sound understanding of the brief and the breadth of the potential stakeholders.

An expert advisory panel was convened to guide the process, with membership from the University of South Australia (Uni SA), Flinders University, the City of Adelaide, Housing SA, Renewal SA, OFTA, The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI), SA Health (Public Health), ECH, Helping Hand Aged Care, and Council on the Ageing SA (COTA SA).

The agility with which the project was able to garner support and focus the collective skills and knowledge of a wide range of key stakeholders is indicative of the level of interest and commitment to building an age friendly South Australia that exists across the government, non-government and community sectors.

Engagement was a significant component of the project, involving three separate workshops with Housing SA tenants and industry professionals both separately and together. The first workshop, facilitated by TACSI, explored the concept of "home" with older Housing SA tenants. The second workshop, facilitated by Uni SA, invited industry professionals from the building, design and aged care sectors to discuss age friendly housing design. The third workshop took the form of a co-design forum, with Housing SA tenants, Renewal SA, Housing SA and industry stakeholders coming together to co-design age friendly housing and precinct design features. The outcomes of the co-design forum are intended to inform innovation in the future design of social housing.

The small group discussions at the co-design forum were led by a small number of 'Community Conversationalists'; older volunteers who have been specifically trained and supported by OFTA as peer facilitators. The active engagement of older South Australians as tenants and as peer facilitators demonstrated the principals of *Better*

Together: A practical guide to engaging with older South Australians and was a key feature enabling the voices of older people to be heard and their contribution to the process valued.

A series of key principles emerged at the co-design forum as critical to embed into any future planning around housing and precinct design for older Housing SA tenants. Ideas for practical design features from the engagements have been synthesized into a set of practical age friendly design ideas to guide future social housing and precinct designs. These have been made available to Renewal SA and are being used to inform the inclusion of age friendly elements in current housing developments.

To meet the changing needs of people as they age, the design of houses, precincts and communities needs to consider a broad range of factors. These include: accessibility and walkability; how spaces can support social interaction and physical activity; whether they are adequately serviced by public transport; and their proximity and access to shops, services, community and faith. Other considerations, such as individuals having some control over where they move and into what type of dwelling, also play an important role in people's sense of stability, self-determination and belonging as they age. One of the biggest outcomes to come out of the process was a strong message that when it comes to housing, one size does not fit all; housing options should be as diverse as the people who live in them.

There were positives and challenges regarding the project timing, which spanned the Christmas period. The 90 Day project format, with its finite timeframe, is well understood across state government and provided a positive imperative to accelerate the project. However, more time with the project partners and earlier involvement with the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure and the Office for Design and Architecture South Australia would have enhanced the process even further.

Feedback from Housing SA tenants and industry professionals indicated that they found the engagement undertaken as part of this project to be valuable and productive, providing opportunities for older Housing SA tenants to have their voices heard and for industry professionals to both increase their understanding of the issues and use their expertise to develop creative and innovative design solutions. Renewal SA is considering the role of this approach in its future consultative processes and is working with TACSI to hold workshops with incoming tenants to further inform current projects. It is intended that the findings of this project will also be shared across government and with the broader housing sector in the future.