

Summary of findings and recommendations for Airds Bradbury.

Executive Summary.

Airds Bradbury comprises three different though interrelated communities: an existing long-term community with strong social connections and established facilities, but also living with various structural failures in the management, maintenance and continuity of services; a community in transition and at times disruption as the current Renewal Project is implemented; and a future community not yet established that will need to be integrated and provided with new facilities that will encourage healthy behaviours, particularly good levels of physical activity and social interaction.

Study participants indicate a high degree of awareness of the importance of various behaviours to their health, particularly the need to keep active even though many also cited limitations due to age or disability; to maintain social links (personal contacts were important, and also participation in groups relating to food or hobbies, and the Men's Shed is popular); and to eat well, though mobility and low income presented difficulties for some (addressed in part by a subsidised food box program, and spasmodically by community garden produce). However, various neighbourhood features make achievement of healthy behaviours more of a chore than something that happens easily and without undue conscious effort, and/or hinders additional healthy behaviours. Engagement in physical activity is quite high, but only 60% achieve recommended minimum levels and car use (for those with access to a car) is high due to a lack of local destinations, an efficient bus service, and poor footpaths; and only 50% of participants would be "sad" to leave Airds Bradbury.

Positively, many existing deficiencies are to be addressed in the current Renewal Project, and some new or renewed facilities are already established. However, explicit attention to healthy built environment objectives needs to be maintained to ensure details do not get overlooked in the 10-year program. The Study identifies a need for attention to:

- an engagement with the private ownership of the existing Airds shopping centre and hotel in order to achieve the intended vibrant local centre, with fresh food and other shops, and recreation, social and other community facilities; thus promoting its use and access by walking and cycling, and greater incidental and formal social interactions.
- a viable public transport (here, bus) system for trips to other necessary destinations, including the regional swimming pool.
- comfortable, safe and amenable walking and cycling routes within Airds Bradbury itself.
- a range of social and recreation facilities to meet the needs of different age groups; as well as physical activities in semi-formal groups to alleviate current personal security concerns.
- attention to any need for financial assistance or subsidy to ensure these facilities are actually available to those on low incomes.
- progressive removal of security grills, etc to improve feelings of neighbourhood congeniality.

Overview of findings and recommendations.

People seem to be quite contented here in Airds?

We've been here a long time.

Yeah. I think there is a lot of complacency too. Those of us that have been here a long time, just we adapt to this place yeah. But, having been involved with the renewal stuff, and seeing what they're planning on doing. That does revitalise the interest. ... I mean we don't get everything we want, but we're certainly getting some of it. That's very good for the mental condition.

They need a bit more things around here for people to do. If they're going to bring a whole pile of people in here, cram them in, there's got to be some outlet.

You're still going to need transport.

They're still going to need facilities for their children, they're still going to need childcare.

You're going to need a better shopping centre than just trying to get down into Campbelltown or Bradbury all the time. You know you need another satellite like the one at...Market Fair.

1. There is in a sense three different though interrelated communities within Airds Bradbury:
 - (i) an existing long-term community that has raised and is raising families, and with strong social connections; with established schools, community and recreation facilities, and a shopping centre. However this community has also had to live with a number of structural failures in its underlying management, including a lack of continuity in provision of support services and social facilities and maintenance generally;
 - (ii) a community in transition, as the social and physical infrastructure components of the current Renewal Project are progressively implemented. Some improvements in community services and facilities have already commenced. Other larger structural and potentially disruptive changes are on-going; and
 - (iii) a future community of new residents not yet established that will need to be integrated with the existing community. Further, this new community will need to have access to facilities that will discourage, in this outer-urban location, the propensity for the motor car to become the default mode of transport - with consequent likely detrimental impacts on physical activity and incidental social interaction.

2. Amongst Study participants there is a high degree of awareness of the importance of various behaviours to their health, particularly the need to keep active even though many also had mobility limitations due to age or disability (here, the need for better facilities for walking and swimming were cited); to maintain social links (here, personal contacts were important, but participation in groups relating to food or hobbies were also cited, and the Men's Shed is popular); and to eat well, even though mobility issues and low incomes presented difficulties for some (and addressed in part by a subsidised food box program, and spasmodically by community food garden produce).

3. However, there are also features about the neighbourhood that make achievement of healthy behaviours by participants more of a chore than something that happens easily and without undue conscious effort, and/or hinders additional healthy behaviours. Although engagement in physical activity is quite high, only 60% achieve recommended minimum levels:
 - a lack of local destinations and an efficient bus service means car use is high for many participants (with access to a car).
 - the walkable neighbourhood centre is uninviting, meaning the nearby Campbelltown Mall has become a default centre for those with the ability to access it.
 - a large proportion of participants were aged and/or had reduced mobility and require a generally higher standard of quality of the built environment than currently exists.
 - the available social and recreation facilities are often in poor repair, not currently or only intermittently available, or not easily accessible.
 - generally low incomes means a reliance on various social service programs, the continuity of which can be variable.
4. Only 50% of participants said they would be “sad” to leave their neighbourhood, compared to the NSW average of 73.4%, although a higher proportion (80%) are either satisfied or neutral in respect to AirDS Bradbury as an overall “a good place to live”).
5. Participants indicated strong concerns about their ability to undertake and access facilities for recreational physical activity, citing transport, cost, continued local availability, better footpaths with seating to facilitate walking, and safety in public areas. Other strong comment related to the need for a revitalised neighbourhood shopping centre.
6. It is a positive indication for the future of AirDS Bradbury as a healthy built environment that most of these matters are being addressed in the current Renewal Project and that various new or renewed community facilities and services have already been established. That said, the delivery program is scheduled over a 10 year period meaning some improvements will not be available for some time and also that the current sense of upheaval will remain (though with hopefully also a sense of progressive improvement as these changes come on-stream). Explicit attention needs to be maintained to ensure the details of the intended improved outcomes do not get “lost” as the larger overall development is implemented.
7. Here the Study identifies a number of matters for attention:
 - the establishment of sufficient local fresh food and other shops, and recreation, social and other community facilities within walking and cycling distance.
 - a viable public transport (here, bus) system for trips to other necessary destinations.
 - comfortable, safe and amenable walking and cycling routes within AirDS Bradbury itself.
 - a range of social and recreation facilities to meet the needs of different age groups, and semi-formal group physical activities to alleviate current personal security concerns.
 - active engagement with the private ownership of the existing AirDS shopping centre in order to fulfil the intention of a revitalised and viable neighbourhood centre, with resultant important co-benefits for physical activity, social interaction, and nutrition.
 - attention to any need for financial assistance or subsidy to ensure these facilities are actually available to those on low incomes.

Physical Activity
“Getting people active”

Facilitating “active transport”

Facilitating recreational physical activity

Current condition.

Although designed to facilitate walking and cycling (with cross-paths through central green spaces, underpasses, quiet cul-de-sacs), this is essentially not achieved.

Low densities encourage car use and limit effectiveness of the bus service. Personal mobility levels are low for those without access to a car. Many have physical mobility issues due to age or disability, limiting ability to walk, cycle or take a bus, requiring a higher standard of provision which does not exist, eg. uneven footpaths, circuitous routes (resulting in some more direct but informal unpaved paths), lack of seating to rest on, a bus service that only meets some needs in terms of routes and timetabling, lack of facilities and places to go to generally in the neighbourhood, and feelings of insecurity for those older and less-mobile (particularly at night).

Current condition.

The respondent survey group was older, and tend to be less active; however there is variable provision of active recreation facilities for all groups. Facilities previously well-supplied have been progressively closed (eg. pool, squash courts, gym equipment). Current low population density and low incomes may make funding of continued provision and establishment of commercial facilities difficult. There is inadequate public transport to neighbouring pool at Bradbury. Outdoor basketball facilities near youth centre are open to all. There are weekly men’s and women’s exercise classes. Open space areas do not have any recreational equipment/exercise stations and there is a problem with discarded needles, discouraging use. A lack of longer walking tracks to sustain interest is exacerbated by personal safety concerns within public open space areas.

Response.

The Renewal Project addresses current structural deficiencies in footpath design and routing, provision of shade, bus routing, marking of cycle ways, and local “places to go”. Additional attention is required in respect to the bus routing to the Bradbury swimming centre, provision of bus shelters at all stops, provision of public seating, making secondary streets “complete streets” to encourage bicycle safety, and encouragement of a regenerated local shopping centre to avoid the need to default to Campbelltown for most purchases.

Where able, some improvements should be done now, eg. maintenance of footpaths to be retained, provision of public seating, provision of bus shelters at stops to be retained, marking of cycle ways.

Response.

Fundamental under-provision of facilities needs to be resolved, by: improvements to equipment/facilities in open space areas, effective public transport or cycle access to neighbouring facilities, and space for commercially-provided facilities (in conjunction with the new, future population) within the neighbourhood centre. Most of these matters are to be addressed in the Renewal Project. Additional attention is required to the provision of recreational activities organised on an informal group basis to increase uptake and address current concerns about personal safety in public open space areas; to provide for potential recreation space within the new neighbourhood centre, and to improve public transport access to the Bradbury swimming centre.

Social Interaction.
 “Connecting and strengthening communities”

Facilitating incidental n’hood interaction

Making community spaces

Build for crime prevention

Current condition.

Incidental interaction limited by low density of people out and about in streets and local centre given low use of “active transport” and walking generally, and lack of a neighbourhood focus. Security fences and aggressive dogs in residential yards also reduces opportunities.
 High incidence of running into people at Campbelltown mall and positive interactions at the aged housing clusters cited. Uncomfortable or negative interactions are also cited (in public areas, the shopping centre and within housing blocks).

Current condition.

The neighbourhood centre and shops is not a place to go to. Other community spaces have been developed (Mens’ Shed, AB Central, Tharawal), but have low visibility given design and/or location. Hostile dogs can limit streets as comfortable community space. There is abundant green space but no parks as “community spaces”, except for Airds Pond which is the location for events. Individual housing blocks do not appear to have a common space to encourage sociability, and the need for a social “catalyst” has been suggested.

Current condition.

There are high levels of feelings of insecurity, due to higher than average crime rates, and groups involved in anti-social activity. Age and low mobility means some feel extra vulnerable. The scattered development means casual surveillance is low. The internal design of the shopping centre and community buildings, security fencing and one-way windows results in a general ambience of alienation. Concern that youth do not have enough activities to keep them occupied, encouraging anti-social activity that inhibits general use of public space.

Response.

The Renewal Project addresses this through fundamental re-designs of streets, public transport, and neighbourhood centre to be more user-friendly, which will then encourage a greater density of incidental interactions.
 Extra attention required to:

- the overall design and integration of the shopping centre and other privately owned and operated facilities in the neighbourhood centre.
- the additional active transport” responses cited above.

Response.

The Renewal Project addresses this through fundamental re-designs of open space areas, the neighbourhood centre, and provision of a new multi-purpose community centre. Extra attention needs to be given to the overall design of the neighbourhood centre to integrate the shopping centre. Support for community groups needs to be maintained and consistent. Consider support for residents acting as catalysts within housing blocks. A Welcome program to ensure integration of new residents is likely to be required.

Response.

The Renewal Project addresses this through changes in population make-up, denser street development and use of active transport to promote greater passive surveillance, and more community facilities. Extra attention needs to be given to a fundamental re-design of the neighbourhood centre as a “place to be”; with then removal of alienating security devices, and sustained activities and public transport mobility to occupy youthful energy.

Nutrition
“Providing healthy food options”

Facilitating access to healthy food.

Current condition.

Although achieving a good score in the Study food survey, the local supermarket is not seen as supplying fresh food (though has done in the past). Rather, fresh food is sourced from shops in Campbelltown (or on-line by one respondent with mobility issues). Concerns that packaged quantities do not suit singles. A subsidised “food box” program services some residents with lower mobility and disposable income (and skills).
A food garden at the Mens’ Shed is popular and productive, with a dedicated supervisor. Others are less successful due to management issues. Some food grown in own gardens (with an example given of surreptitious replacement of “landscape” planting in housing blocks. Awareness/experience of food shows and of cooking groups with residents of other cultural backgrounds mentioned as generating an interest in the importance of food and healthy eating generally (and social interaction).

Response.

Provide space, subsidised if necessary, within the new development on publicly-owned land in the neighbourhood centre to ensure shops retailing healthy food are established. Maintain and extend opportunities for community gardens/allotments and provide support if required. Provide space within the neighbourhood centre for distribution of their produce.
Ensure the “food box” program is maintained for as long as required by residents.
Provide residents opportunity to use common garden spaces to grow food within housing blocks if desired.
Community programs to include healthy food events.

Promote responsible food advertising.

Current condition.

There is good awareness of the importance of fresh food amongst Study participants, evidenced also by the interest in community gardens. However the participants also cite examples of poor awareness and/or action by others (at shops in Campbelltown). Supermarket foods are considered to be fresh. There is no noticeable advertising of non-healthy foods in Airds itself – probably corresponding to a lack of food retailing and food premises generally in the neighbourhood. However low visibility of fresh foods in the local shops tends to mean a relatively higher noticeability of non-healthy food options. The residential zoning of the suburb means prominent advertising panels are unlikely. Little general awareness that residents generally could access (by request) fresh foods grown in the community gardens, and the gardens themselves are somewhat hidden from public view.

Response.

Ensure the design and (lease) management of new development in the neighbourhood centre, including any renewal of the shopping centre gives prominence to healthy food shops, and diminishes prominence of less healthy foods.
Increase awareness of the possibility to become involved in the community gardens (which can also achieve social interaction objectives). Provide space within the neighbourhood centre for distribution of community garden produce, and to give the community food box program greater visibility. Consider provision of space for allotment gardens as a further option for residents to grow their own fresh food.