

## Developing Multi-unit Housing Without Developers. Or, “Without a developer, who does the ... .. ?”

Jasmine Palmer

*University of South Australia, South Australia, Australia*

**Abstract:** Motivated by discontent with the quality, design, and cost of speculative multi-unit housing provision in Australia, households and professionals alike are increasingly seeking alternatives. Recent years have seen an increase in the number and diversity of households seeking to collectively self-develop multi-unit housing in our inner cities. Housing projects have formed from ground-up movements, professional provocations, and state and local government interventions. This paper firstly summarises the previously identified benefits of ‘developing without developers.’<sup>1</sup> Secondly, it investigates how the alternative structures of provision currently emerging across the country redistribute the tasks traditionally undertaken by developers among other network actors. This is done through the thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with key professionals from three multi-unit housing projects currently ‘developing without developers’. Asking the question “Without a developer, who does the ...?” the research identifies distinctly different perspectives are held by different professional groups. In conclusion, knowledge gaps and capacity deficits are identified among professionals assisting households to self-develop; outcomes which can be utilised to direct professional training programs and increase the capacity for multi-unit self-development.

**Key words:** collective self-development; multi-unit housing; housing consolidation

### Introduction

Australian homeowners have a tendency to personalise their domestic environments through construction, renovation, remodelling, and extension. Individualisation of free-standing dwellings commences with the owner directly engaging in the contract-based provision of individual dwellings for individual households. This is an entrenched system with which Australians are relatively familiar and which

*...reflects Australia’s distinctive form of ownership as it carries individualism to greater lengths than in other ownership societies. Every Australian purchaser of a new detached dwelling has the ability to mould it to their individual needs and tastes in a way that only the very affluent can do in other societies. (Burke and Hulse, 2010)*

Multi-unit housing provision is supply-led. Led by speculative developers, it involves more complex relationships between larger numbers of stakeholders than free-standing housing, and seldom offers equivalent opportunity for individualisation. Easthope *et al.* (2014) identify the design of multi-unit dwellings for anonymous residents means “many social, environmental and economic factors pertinent to a building’s design cannot be addressed during the development approval phase” . Similarly, little, if any, potential for variation of internal planning or exterior appearance exists in the use phase.

Research on both Australian and international markets describes speculative, supply-led housing provision as slow to innovate, conservative, risk-averse, and delivering poor quality product (Harty, 2008, City of Melbourne, 2013, Wallace *et al.*, 2013, Sharam *et al.*, 2015). As speculative developers carry all financial and development risk they naturally seek substantial profit reward for their risk exposure. Consequently, they also carry substantial decision-making capacity, determining dwelling function, design, materials, and environmental ambitions. Building to sell for profit, developers have short-term relationships with the buildings they produce, meaning decision-making is informed by priorities and objectives misaligned from those of potential owner-occupiers; generating “split incentives” (Easthope and Randolph, 2016) on matters relevant to use value, lifecycle management, and maintenance.

An unintended consequence of strategic plans promoting multi-unit development is the increase in speculation and distancing of future occupants from housing provision, resulting in an increase in the mismatch between household desires and available dwellings. In pursuing infill development as the

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<sup>1</sup> Term coined by researcher Christian Junge discussing German building group developments. Junge, C. (2006) *Developing without developer*, London School of Economics, London.

dominant form of new housing provision, Australia's strategic urban plans indirectly ask households to forego the historic privilege of housing individualisation entrenched in the Australian psyche. If supply-led provision persists, it is more likely designated consolidation areas will offer limited diversity of housing type and function, be comprised of buildings with poor quality design and construction, and be home to a larger than average proportion of rental households with associated high mobility rates.

## 1.0 Why 'develop without developers'?

The market dominance of supply-led multi-unit housing provision is not unique to Australia. The vast majority of privately owned multi-unit dwellings in developed nations are realised speculatively, with dwellings produced for sale to others; be they owner-occupiers or investors. However, around the globe, a long history of demand-led multi-unit innovations exists as a minority contribution to housing supply and has been the subject of renewed interest from both housing researchers and practitioners in recent years. Past examples include collectively owned and managed housing co-operatives in Mumbai, India commencing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (2008), in inter-war Athens (Kafkoula, 1994), and during the early years of the Turkish Republic (Çakin, 1991). Post-WWII saw a boom in privately-owned multi-unit construction in Southern California, with documented examples of collaborations between property developers and future occupants (Lasner, 2009). Each of these past examples emerged in the context of housing shortages resulting from conflict, rapid urban growth, or social inequality, and a dominant housing system failing to meet the needs of a segment of the population. Similar conditions persist in western nations today, with dwelling shortages in many urban locations, declining affordability, and an ongoing prioritisation of housing's role as investment and commodity (Achtenberg and Marcuse, 1986, Smith, 2008, Higgins and Moore, 2015, Watt and Minton, 2016). In this context, contemporary demand-led multi-unit housing systems are emerging in a number of locations, either through the collective action of households, civil society groups, industry professionals, or policy change. Contemporary examples include both private and social housing programs in locations such as Austria (Lang, 2015), Germany (Hamiduddin and Gallent, 2015), the United Kingdom (Hill, 2015), and the United States (Jarvis, 2015b). In some jurisdictions, an increase in demand-led housing projects is advocated as tools for achieving urban consolidation and sustainability (Rerat 2012) and incentivised by government policy (Cuperus, 2002, Geraedts *et al.*, 2011).

Elsewhere, demand-led multi-unit housing has evolved without government support. For example, during Argentina's 2001 economic crisis an alternative form of multi-unit development known as Fideicomisos flourished (Zang *et al.*, 2009, BuenosAiresHabitat, 2010). Fideicomisos place the architect at the centre of the process (Redstone and Mihotich, 2012, Donald, 2013), enabling development without a developer and realising significant financial savings (Wainwright, 2013). Like Fideicomisos, many demand-led multi-unit projects are privately-funded in Europe, with Tummers observing households who initiate the design and/or construction of new multi-unit dwellings

*anticipate that the housing market is not going to provide their needs, be it for typology (lay-out, mixed use) finance or ecology. Moreover, they expect developments in technology (sustainable energy for example or support for the elderly) and want to implement them directly instead of waiting for general distribution. (Tummers, 2011)*

These brief examples demonstrate the diversity of markets and motivations for demand-led multi-unit housing. An equally diverse and growing collection of academic research provides both historical and contemporary insights into alternative multi-unit housing opportunities. The benefits of demand-led or self-organised development are agreed to be multiple and diverse (Horelli and Vaspa, 1994, Scotthanson and Scotthanson, 2005, de Haan, 2011, Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, Fromm, 2012, Vestbro and Horelli, 2012, Brenton, 2013, Bresson and Denéfle, 2015, Colini and Czischke, 2015, Labit, 2015, Sandstedt and Westin, 2015, Hasanov and Beaumont, 2016, Sørvoll and Bengtsson, 2016). Reviewing literature observing mature self-organised housing sectors alongside that advocating for its implementation, four themes of benefits are evident; benefits to the community, affordability, environment, and urban regeneration.

### 1.1 Community Benefits

Involvement in the conceptualisation and planning of multi-unit housing has community development benefits (Ache and Fedrowitz, 2012, id22, 2012, Gerohazi *et al.*, 2014). In a US study, Glass (2012) observed residents who work together to create their living environment generate a sense of community through coherent shared experiences. Discussing projects in Finland, Korpela (2012) suggests the resultant sense of community is not merely a positive consequence of self-development, but a desirable

end in itself which justifies building together – preferably around a common ideal. Self-developed housing has been described as providing supportive environments which encourage care-giving and care-receiving (McCamant *et al.*, 1994, Jarvis, 2015b), and reflect the recent growth of collaborative economies and individual collectivism (Bernheim and ADAM Architecture Limited, 2014, Gerohazi *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, residents developing housing together build skills “to work through differences, hold the group together and ensure that individual aspirations align (to a sufficient extent) with those of the group” (Hamiduddin and Gallent, 2015). Municipalities in both France (Bresson and Denèfle, 2015) and Germany (Junge, 2006) observe less formal disputes in self-developed and self-managed housing than in the broader multi-unit sector; an important community benefit in light of high rates of disputes in Australian multi-unit developments observed by Easthope *et al.* (2014).

### **1.2 Financial Benefits**

Inner urban residential developments in western cities are frequently polarised, with two distinct markets. The first being low cost or affordable housing supported or required by social housing policies, and the second, high-cost dwellings which return a maximum profit to speculative developers. Many markets exclude middle-income households from inner urban consolidation areas as they do not meet the criteria for social housing and cannot afford the dwellings produced by speculative developers. Following a review of European self-organised housing across a range of densities, Gerohazi *et al.* (2014) concluded costs to residents can be reduced by as much as 10-20 percent compared to market prices, increasing both access and choice (Brouwer and Bektas, 2014). Researchers also credit self-organised housing with the capacity to: avoid the overheating of markets (Gerohazi *et al.*, 2014); diversify the structure of the house building industry making it more resilient to market variations (KPMG in the UK and Shelter, 2015); and lead to “a decline in speculative behaviour and a concentration on longer-term efficiency” (Brouwer and Bektas, 2014). Households engaging in self-organised development as owner-occupiers prioritise use value over profit (Junge, 2006, Kerimol, 2012), in many cases generating dwellings noticeably different from those of speculative developments.

### **1.3 Environmental Benefits**

Self-organised housing is described as a form of sustainable urban development (Tummers, 2015), as increasing resilience (Scanlon and Arrigoitia, 2015), and as particularly suited to urban brownfield and infill sites (Rerat, 2012). Discussing the sustainability of collective housing, self-organised or otherwise, Nicol asserts “the sustainable use of housing stocks is only possible if the most important user-actors remain the same over several phases of the lifecycle of housing stocks” (Nicol, 2013). By engaging future residents in production, self-organised housing not only achieves the consistency promoted by Nicol but also ensures investment and design decisions regarding lifecycle sustainability are made by those who stand to benefit from them. Collective action reduces the perceived risks of implementing innovative environmental technologies individually (Marckmann *et al.*, 2012). Inquiring as to whether or not self-organised housing achieves the environmental potentials it is credited with, Marckmann *et al.* (2012) conclude it tends to integrate progressive and highly visible technologies, and that some, but not all, “hold the ‘critical potential’ for more profound changes in consumption practices and lifestyle that could potentially challenge modern consumer behaviour”.

### **1.4 Urban Regeneration Benefits**

Observers of occupied self-organised communities note they “strengthen the commitment of residents to their own built environment” (Brouwer *et al.*, 2014), build collective responsibility for place (Hamiduddin and Gallent, 2015), and can contribute to neighbourhood “stability and repair” (Fromm, 2012). Studying social cohesion in three areas of the German city of Freiburg, Hamiduddin and Daseking (2014) found familiarity and sociability to be higher in areas with significant numbers of self-organised housing projects, both among the self-organising residents and their neighbouring community. Multiple researchers describe self-organised housing as capable of contributing to large scale urban renewal, such as that promoted in Australia’s strategic urban plans. Projects in Berlin, Germany and Buenos Aires, Argentina, in particular, are credited with initiating or supporting the regeneration of neglected neighbourhoods (Donald, 2013, Adamo, 2014, Ballhausen, 2014, Eyrich, 2014). Since the emergence of the urban consolidation agenda, the discussion has continued as to *who* will inhabit the new dwellings proposed, *what* will that dwelling form be, and *where* is it to be located? These questions are directly addressed when the prospective inhabitants themselves are free to speculate on their own behalf and “build for their own use” (Millington, 2000).

## **2.0 Current Australian efforts to ‘develop without developers’**

Frustrated by the lack of diversity, innovation, and quality in current Australian multi-unit housing provision, community members and industry professionals are increasingly pursuing alternatives to the status quo. Inspired by the benefits of 'developing without developers' evidenced in other locations, projects seeking to increase the influence of future residents on multi-unit housing outcomes can be identified in numerous Australian urban centres. The majority of projects are in relatively early stages of development, with few having realised physical housing outcomes at this stage. Although these projects are acting independently and employing different terms to describe their activities, they collectively represent an emerging minority housing sector with the potential to address the needs of a segment of the population currently unmet by speculative provision. This research project will follow the motivations, ambitions, and challenges in this emerging housing sector over time. Taking an action research approach, stakeholders in four Australian capital cities will be periodically interviewed by the researcher at key stages of project development to document the maturation of the sector (Bliss, 2009) and provide insights to build capacity.

This paper presents the outcomes from a pilot study of three alternative multi-unit housing projects currently being pursued in Fremantle, Western Australia. The projects studied feature both commonalities and distinctive differences. The complexity of describing such commonalities and differences, along with the inconsistent use of terms such as co-operative, co-housing, self-build, and self-commissioning (among others) has contributed to a lack of transparency in research into alternative housing provision in other jurisdictions and limited the application of research outcomes in recent years (see for example, Czischke, 2017). Past attempts have been made to categorise different types of projects based on instigation processes (Parvin *et al.*, 2011, Wallace *et al.*, 2013, Jarvis, 2015a), stage of future resident engagement in development (Bektas *et al.*, 2014, Brouwer and Bektas, 2014), extent of collective facilities, process of construction (Brown *et al.*, 2013), ownership structure (Sudiyono, 2013), tenure and re-sale restrictions (Sørvoll and Bengtsson, 2016), group decision making processes and core values which bind residents (Gerohazi *et al.*, 2014), and the degree of assistance provided from central or local government authorities (Brunoro, 2013). This lack of consistent international terminology is the subject of a forthcoming collection of articles edited by Czischke, Carriou and Lang. Future outcomes from this research will likely engage with alternative descriptors over time as the research community continues to propose and debate the most effective terminology to be employed; a debate to which the researcher is an active contributor (Palmer, forthcoming) but which extends beyond the scope of this paper.

### **2.1 Western Australian Pilot Study**

All three Western Australian projects were in preliminary stages of development at the time of interviews being conducted, with none yet having 'broken ground'. They are all to be located within the same high-demand Local Government Area which increasingly faces affordability and gentrification challenges. All three projects benefit equally from the local council elected members and staff demonstrating enthusiasm for housing innovation. In anticipation of purposeful categorisations and definitions for the sector emerging in the near future, the temptation to categorise the three Western Australian cases is avoided here. Instead, they are initially differentiated by who is currently 'leading' the project, a key variation between them.

Project One has been instigated by a motivated community member with expertise in sustainability in the built environment and past personal experience in self-commissioning small scale in-fill housing projects together with others. The instigator is currently establishing themselves as a consultant facilitator supporting self-formed collective of households to pursue their own housing developments as well as establishing development opportunities for interested households to participate in. In pursuit of the latter, the instigator has gathered a group of highly skilled professionals who are together currently developing financial and legal processes via which 20-30 households will collectively self-develop as a legal co-operative to produce strata-titled apartments with shared facilities (self-described as co-housing). Sufficient households have actively engaged with the proposal and indicated interest in developing collectively, although final commitments have not yet been sought. With financial and legal arrangements nearing completion the group is currently pursuing opportunities for acquiring appropriate land. One option is a land parcel currently offered for sale by the local council.

After being proposed by an influential stakeholder, Project Two is being led by a team of highly experienced industry professionals. The team includes architects, government and private development managers, a sustainability consultant, and a real estate advisor; many of whom have previously held or currently hold leading roles in their state professional bodies or as state policy advisors. The team aims to produce a replicable process by which households can self-develop in the future. Their proposal draws directly from the relatively mature German building-group (baugruppe) process with some local modifications. The project, to be located on land currently owned by the state government land authority, has been encouraged by the state government development authority and, having proposed a highly flexible architectural solution which future residents will have the capacity to spatially individualise, is currently recruiting households into the development trust.

Project Three is architect-led. Building on financial, legal, and design knowledge gained from other architects undertaking 'architect-led' developments in Melbourne, the architect in this project has partnered with a development manager, proposed a preliminary building design and at the time of interview was in the process of recruiting up to 15 households to participate in the project. Unlike Projects One and Two, in which future residents collectively finance development, Project Three is funded by a project specific company loaning funds against equity provided by third party investors. Future residents have opportunity to influence collective design decisions and purchase their home at completion via a pre-sale contract. The three projects are compared in Table 1.

**Table 1: Comparing Western Australian alternative multi-unit housing projects**

	Project One: Advocate-led	Project Two: Industry-led	Project Three: Architect-led
Instigation	Civil Society Group under the guidance of individuals and skilled professionals.	Project resulting from advocacy by influential parties. Led by a project advisory group constituted of leading industry professionals. Encouraged by State Authority as land owner.	Architect-led development following procedures previously established by others. Future residents to be engaged in design development.
Proposed development entity	Co-operative	Unit Trust	Project specific development company Pty.Ltd.
Proposed funding	Co-operative accesses funds from financial institution. Equity contribution required to leverage funds. Possible third party guarantee and/or shared equity in some cases.	Unit Trust, comprised of future residents, accesses funds from financial institution. 30% equity required from participants.	Development company leverages loan from financial institution against equity funds provided by third-party investors. Investors receive a pre-negotiated maximum ROI. Future residents purchase 'off-the-plan'.
Proposed resident involvement in design	Collective decision making throughout entire design process.	A highly flexible architectural proposition is made. Site and building wide decisions made collectively. Opportunity for individualisation of interiors within the design framework.	Potential residents surveyed to inform design.
Proposed Ownership	Strata-titled units. Re-sales proposed to be restricted to a waiting list. Resale pricing mechanism unknown.	Strata-titled units. Re-sales proposed to be price limited for 5 years to limit speculation.	Strata-titled units. Re-sales defer first to a waiting list. Sale prices limited to initial cost plus average local appreciation for 20 years.

Progress at time of interviews.	Future resident households engaged. Collective vision established. Professionals establishing legal and financial arrangements. Currently seeking to secure land. One land option is a site currently owned by local government.	Preliminary Design in place. Promoting proposition to future individual resident households who will collectively self-fund development. Legal documents nearing completion. Land facilitated by state government authority.	Preliminary Design in place. Promoting proposition to potential equity investors and future resident households. Project specific development entities legally formed. Land owned by lead architect.
Stakeholders Currently Engaged (* indicates interviewees)	*Group Facilitator (Primary Instigator) *Architect *Development Manager Cooperative Advisor Future Residents (approximately 30 households)	*Housing Advocate (Primary Instigator) *Architect *Development Manager *State Authority as current land owner *Real Estate Agent Legal Advisor Sustainability Consultant	*Architect (Primary Instigator of project and land owner) *Development Manager *Advisors with experience on previous similar developments interstate. Accountant Legal Advisor

## 2.2 Data Collection

Multiple stakeholders from each of the three projects were invited to participate in semi-structured in-depth interviews. A total of 15 interviews were completed by the researcher in July 2017, each of approximately 60 minutes duration. Interviews were audio recorded and notes taken. The recordings and notes were thematically analysed.

Table 1 indicates interviewees from the specific projects. In addition, interviews were conducted with two elected councilors and two employees of the Fremantle City Council who are actively engaged in housing policy. Interview questions were tailored to the different stakeholders, with common questions relating to motivations, barriers, ideal housing systems for multi-unit provision, accessing required knowledge and professional roles. The data collected on professional roles in alternative housing provision is the focus of the remainder of this paper.

## 3.0 'Without a developer, who does the ... .. ?'

Similar to other Australian and international projects, these three Western Australian cases aim to 'develop without developers.' In doing so, they disrupt the status quo and require other actors in provision to redefine their own roles, relationships, and responsibilities. In traditional multi-unit projects, developers hold a central role as financier and all consultants are employed to serve the developers' objectives. One of the key challenges in bringing collective self-developed housing to reality is the effective redistribution of roles traditionally assumed by a developer. Relatively little research has been undertaken on the role of professionals in facilitating households to collectively self-develop. A study of alternative housing models in the UK by Jarvis *et al.* (2016) highlighted the importance of role definition with the conclusion that:

*Cohousing could become much more widely adopted if planning, financial and institutional infrastructures were better designed to support it ... Detailed agreements and models must define the roles and responsibilities of residents and other stakeholders at the outset so as to avoid confusion later on. (Jarvis et al., 2016)*

Studying professionalisation and expertise in alternative multi-unit (co-)housing developments in France, UK, US and the Netherlands, Tummers and Arrigoitia (2016) observe that in parallel to experts or professionals providing services directly to households seeking to self-develop, 'co-housing specialists' tend to emerge as sectors mature. These being individuals who "have developed their own co-housing projects and use this experience, rather than formal training, to advise other groups. This is a unique position between activist and expert, stakeholder and professional ..." (2016, p.6). In the Western Australian cases we see existing professionals adapting their services and skills to redistribute roles as well as new professionals emerging in a central role of facilitation.

All interviewees were asked questions in relation to how their professional role is adapted or modified to achieve their proposed project and if they have access to the skills required to effectively execute the modified role. Additionally, all interviewees were asked to make similar reflections as to the roles of other professionals and participants and the capacity of the sector more broadly. Analysis of the interview data identified that stakeholders generally agreed:

- 'developing without a developer' requires knowledge of the status quo,
- a common vision is required to bond participants and professionals

In relation to stakeholders' views of professional roles:

- different perceptions of existing sectoral skills and capacity between strategic stakeholders and project stakeholders are seen
- Development Managers self-identify the greatest need for change as occurring within their own roles; a view supported by other stakeholders,
- Architects self-identify the need for significant change in their own roles although this is not consistently identified by other stakeholders,
- a re-evaluation of value and services is required by all consultants and professionals

These items are expanded here under the headings of common views and professional roles.

### **3.1 Common views**

All interviewees, without exception, emphasised the need for a detailed understanding of existing processes of multi-unit housing provision to effectively propose alternatives. Importantly, comprehension of which elements are fixed and which are flexible is seen as essential. The vast majority of professionals recognised they have been required to expand their knowledge of existing provision beyond their traditional role.

*"... trying to do something different I now understand how business as usual works ... for example, in finance negotiations, what they will move on and what not." (Architect)*

Reflecting this need for detailed knowledge of the existing, stakeholders in the industry and architect led projects challenged Junge's term 'developing without developers', identifying that the alternative provision they propose can benefit from accessing a developers skillset while shifting decision-making to others.

*"not necessarily taking developer out, but changing what they do and expectations of what they get back. In the longer term, limit their impact and how they can rot the system." (Architect)*

*"not throwing developers out. Take what they do well and adapt it. We can learn from developer-led efficiencies." (Local Government Elected Member)*

Taking a compatible but alternative view, the instigator of the advocate-led project suggests their role is not to understand the minutiae of existing provision themselves, but to actively and persistently question other stakeholders who hold that knowledge and encourage it to be challenged.

*"I actively look for people with knowledge and expertise to find new and alternative solutions.... professionals are reluctant to push boundaries, they just accept things and think 'you can't do that' ... what I bring is, I seriously push their boundaries ... I ask why, why, why?" (Project instigator)*

The construction of a professional team with compatible values was seen as essential in all projects, including the capacity to embrace the values and objectives of the collective of clients. Interviewees all described their professional teams as working toward common visions and as working more collaboratively in comparison to their work on other housing projects. The common vision was attributed with providing guidance in decision-making as well as a common language between all parties. Having not recruited residents at the time of interview, the industry and architect led projects have established visions which future residents will be invited to participate in. In contrast, the advocate-led project will engage residents prior to commencing building design and hence interviewees from this project identify a

distinction between the values of the professional team and those of the residents, with the former requiring the capacity to adapt to the latter.

*“[We need to be] aligned with the values and the spirit of the project and understand what it will take.” (Developer)*

*“The values are taken on as clients own values, not as a market differentiator”  
(Architect)*

Every interviewee who raised the importance of common values and visions identified difficulty in recruiting financiers and lawyers to engage with these as enthusiastically as other professionals. Some, but not all, identified similar challenges with recruiting landowners to share their visions. Given the criticality of land, finance, and legal arrangements to the success of any development (with or without developers) this situation was seen by all as the main barrier to effective implementation.

*“need to change mindset about what innovation is really like ... to take and manage some risks ... acknowledge some innovations fail ... celebrate and learn from them.”  
(Project Instigator)*

*“everyone needs to make informed judgement of risk ... attitudes of lending institutions need to change, very risk averse.” (Local Government employee)*

### **3.2 Professional roles**

When engaged in existing multi-unit provision all professionals are contracted by the developer as the central actor in development. The developer is the client and key decision-maker. Without them leading the process the roles of other professional actors will inevitably be altered. The interviews conducted identified that all professionals are confident the construction sector has the skills and capacity to realise multi-unit housing on behalf of self-developing households. Strategic stakeholders from local and state government, not directly engaged with provision of individual projects, do not identify any significant changes in the roles of professionals, suggesting the only differences between the proposed projects and existing development are in relation to legal processes and finances. In contrast, at the project level, professionals all identify the construction sector will require a degree of skills development; including greater flexibility and increased capacity for problem solving.

*“... a redefinition of roles within projects, maybe not new skill but a change in how consultants are engaged – a more integrated approach.” (Architect)*

While all professionals suggested some changes in roles are required, the views on whose role will change differs greatly. Development Managers self-identify the greatest changes as occurring within their own roles, with a need to be ‘more open minded’, to:

*“go in with a wider perspective of what people want and expect and what is important to them ... now I have a person in front of me, not a prediction based on demographics. Now I need to understand what those people need.” (Development Manager)*

Development managers indicated their roles in the early stages of the projects differed from their normal experiences to a greater degree than anticipated and that they have been on a steeper learning curve than expected. They expressed a common view that the projects were not requiring new skills, but they were required to customize and apply existing management skills in a different way and that process was to date “enjoyable but hard.” Two of the three development managers interviewed also suggested their role in relation to accessing construction funding has changed significantly. One had been surprised by how much the potential residents’ priorities and concerns vary from those previously assumed in developer-led projects.

*“I am learning a lot from the questions people ask, every day, straight forward questions.” (Development Manager)*

Other strategic and professional stakeholders agree the Development Managers role in self-developed housing projects varies significantly from the status quo, with one architect stating the “manager becomes really important. I hope to hide under their skirts to some degree.”

Architects also identify their professional role as requiring significant change. The change from having a developer as client to having a collective of households is seen as requiring a reconceptualising of the values to be applied in design decision-making, with one architect describing the challenge as “designing in backwards land” in comparison to developer-led projects. Designing for multiple clients and balancing wishes of all was of great concern to all architects and something which all had consciously engaged with, often through the flexibility of building designs and construction techniques proposed, and also via the design process. All architects identified a need for increased skills in managing the collective client through group and individual decision making processes; including skills in people management, mediation, communication, public speaking, and decision-making processes. One architect stated, “I know additional skills are needed in that area, but I don’t know what they are yet,” while others indicated a willingness to engage specialist mediators or facilitators if necessary. The changes identified in the architects’ role are positively embraced as an opportunity to innovation, but also acknowledged as increasing uncertainty. All architects also identified increased engagement with the financial aspects of the projects required additional skills in their organisations and described the process as involving greater collaboration with other professionals.

*“I am not so much design leader, but design facilitator ... I have got to learn how to design for a client with 30 heads ... I see that as an opportunity, not a threat ... Architects need to put their ego aside. My job is to express the vision of the people making it possible.”*

*“like doing a house for somebody who is getting divorced”*

*“The actual provision of architectural services not different, but as architects we feel we are in control of the vision of the architecture. This is about architecture in service of the vision of others ... need new skills in facilitation. Skills in how to get people together, that is a very specific skill set”*

Two of the architects interviewed had actively pursued training and development in skills they had self-identified as needing upgrading. All had sought guidance from other professionals, asking “advice from people I respect in the area.” Despite architects self-identifying the need for substantial changes in their professional roles and skills development, this is not identified by other stakeholders as it is with the development managers; with local government staff indicating there is no change to architects’ roles.

All interviewees, be they at the strategic or project level, identified one common requirement for change across all professions in the sector, that of the need for a sectoral mind shift away from working for maximum profit, toward a fee for service. To achieve this “every person has to think laterally ... to adapt their own process” (Local Government employee), to be flexible (Architect), dynamic (advocate), responsive (Development Manager), and think beyond capital cost (Architect).

*“ the philosophy is so different. It’s a change from how to make bigger profits to what do we want our communities to be like.”*

Professional stakeholders in both the industry and architect led projects expressed a degree of discomfort when unable to confidently answer questions from potential residents and generally felt anxious about having sufficient time to explore “the plethora of things that could possibly go wrong” (Development Manager). Most professionals had sought to expand their knowledge and found the need to seek multiple mentors to gain confidence around the diversity of skills required of them. An architect described the skill building journey as “not just a journey of business ... about journey of you as a person, to improve skills so the idea can be improved.” Views differed as to how best to access the skills required, with one Development Manager stating:

*“I don’t think there is a course you can go and do ... not a rubber stamp thing.” “I don’t think you can mould someone to be the perfect person. Professionals have to have the willingness and interest in this sort of development. It is not just a job, youre creating a new way of people getting a home, not selling real estate. It is up to you*

*and your ability to learn ... you can be made aware of difficulties and you will come across them, it is then up to you how you overcome them."*

Despite all professionals interviewed identifying these projects will be "high maintenance compared to normal projects" (Local Government employee) little variation of traditional fee structures has been implemented. One development manager has introduced an alternative fee structure for his own services based on an established model used for similar developments in Sweden. No other interviewees have implemented fee changes, with most establishing project feasibility using standard professional fees for multi-unit construction. One architect identified this as needing change in the future, but for now "I am treat[ing] it as professional development; gaining skills from a new experience that benefits you and your practice in the long term. It gets a lot of attention. I don't feel like I am doing an extra role and not getting paid ..."

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Professional stakeholders in these three Western Australian cases have provided insights into the unique multi-unit provision processes they are currently executing. It demonstrates that the redistribution of the property developers role among other stakeholders in projects 'developing without developers' varies substantially between individual projects and that the roles and responsibilities of professional and non-professional participants remain somewhat fluid at the current stage of sector maturation. The research identifies initial knowledge gaps and capacity deficits among professionals which can be utilised to direct professional training programs to increase the capacity for multi-unit self-development.

The data collected in this pilot study sets a baseline for the comparison of future interviews which aim to record if and how stakeholders' perceptions and skills change or develop over time. It also adds to the currently limited international research data on professional roles in alternative housing provision.

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