

# Master Planned Communities and Governance

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**Abstract:** In the last three decades, a number of master planned communities (MPCs) have been developed in South East Queensland (SEQ) as part of the response to the housing demands of rapid population growth. Developers, state government, local councils and communities play key roles in the production and management of infrastructure and community services in these Masterplanned communities. Alongside rising community expectations regarding quality of services, there is an increasing trend for developers to be involved in either the direct provision of infrastructure, or its funding, with local councils and the state government playing a facilitating role in provision of services alongside their more traditional role of direct provision. It is imperative to understand the governance structures as well as governance challenges of master planned communities at different stages of development.

The objectives of this paper are to review governance frameworks and challenges for master planned communities at three critical stages of development: the *visioning and planning stage*, the *implementation stage*, and the *completion stage*. The paper has identified three distinct governance structures of master planned communities – *single developer model*, *principal developer model* and *government led model*. Three case studies from South East Queensland, each being representative of a particular governance structure, are used to evaluate each of the three stages of development with respect to the challenges involved in the provision of infrastructure and services. The paper provides a framework for analysing the relationship between governance structures and the development of master planned communities, focusing on the relationships that exist between institutional stakeholders, and on the potential impacts of the transfer of infrastructure and service provision from private management to community and local control.

## 1. Introduction

Masterplanned communities are defined as private sector driven, large scale integrated housing developments on 'greenfield' sites in the outskirts of the cities (Minnery and Bajracharya, 1999; Gwyther, 2005). MPCs usually have a mix of housing types, shopping and services, open spaces and recreation facilities, and sometimes employment opportunities. In most cases, MPCs are a product of long-term, multi-phase development programs that combine complementary mix of land uses (Schmitz and Bookout, 1998).

There is a growing literature about the nature and impact of master planned communities in Australia (McGuirk and Dowling, 2007; Gwyther, 2005; Gleeson 2004; Costley, 2006). McGuirk and Dowling (2007) have recently identified three key dimensions - governance mechanisms, housing market context and nature of community – as being central to the understanding of master planned estates. Gwyther (2005) argues that modern developer-led master planned estates cannot produce a genuine ideal of community. Gleeson (2004) calls the current development of master planned communities by developers as “master programming” lacking genuine participation by communities. He advocates the need for a participatory model of master planning instead of contemporary “master programming” in order to build active social networks, localized shared vision and place attachment. Costely (2006), on the other hand, is optimistic that developers have a potential to influence in the creation of successful communities through integration of innovative learning and employment opportunities. Likewise, Bajracharya et al. (2006) has argued that a strong combination of community engagement and innovative place design can contribute to making master planned committees which are livable and vibrant with a strong sense of place for local communities. Consistent throughout these debates is the understanding that the development of an interactive and dynamic community, as opposed to a simple residential location, involves community participation and involvement in decision making

Despite the growing body of literature regarding MPCs there is a paucity of studies which evaluate the governance mechanisms for master planned communities both during their development as well as after their completion (Schmitz and Bookout, 1999; Gwyther, 2005; McGuirk and Dowling, 2007). It is this evolving system of ownership and responsibility that is an integral part of the development of master

planned communities, and this paper aims to examine the changing issues related to the governance of MPCs as they progress from initial concept to fully occupied community.

The developmental processes of master planned communities have been characterised for this paper as being comprised of three main stages:

1. *a visioning and planning stage*, which involves the initial conceptual development of the MPC;
2. *an implementation stage*, where the developer secures the necessary approvals, and the community is built, marketed, undergoes initial occupation; and
3. *a completion stage*, during which time the community is more fully occupied by residents and some form of handover of responsibility is effected between the MPC developers and appropriate governmental institutions.

The paper will first make a brief review of literature on governance and master planned communities in order to provide the context for this issue. Second, it will identify three different types of Master planned communities that have emerged in South East Queensland: 1) *the single developer model*, 2) *the principal developer model* and 3) *a government facilitated model*. This system of classification has been developed in response to the varying levels of complexity that may be seen to exist in the different governance processes related to MPCs in South East Queensland. Single developer MPCs are characterised by the visioning, planning, and implementation of the community being conducted under the auspices of a single organisation. The simplicity of this arrangement may be seen to be reflected in large part by the relative simplicity of the governance processes that are associated with community development, as they are primarily standard business practices. The principal developer model describes the leadership of an MPC development process by a central controlling entity that then contracts separate companies to implement the building of separate sections or aspects of the community. This model may be seen to add a potential for extra complexity in terms of governance processes in terms of the relationships that exist between different commercial entities and any other external stakeholders. Finally the government facilitated model of MPC development describes the bringing together by government of a number of separate private land owners and development companies in order to guide the process of community building towards a set of objectives. This process of facilitation is, by its nature, a possible cause for a greater degree of complexity in terms of governance. This is particularly the case in the initial visioning and planning phase, where there is an absence of formal legal or institutional process to describe the exact nature of the relationship of participants.

Three case studies will be reviewed in the SEQ region (one at the stage of visioning and planning, one undergoing the implementation stage, and one at completion stage) to assess the different governance arrangements and challenges associated with each model of MPC development. The paper will assess the governance of the master planned communities during the visioning and planning stage, and implementation stage, with particular reference to the nature of relationships that exist between developers and institutions. The project completion stage also requires an additional focus on the potential role played by the new residential community in the governance of their local environment, an issue it is argued, of considerable concern when analysing a form of development that places such central importance on its status and identity as a 'community'. The significance of this research is to provide a method to compare and model different governance arrangements that phase responsibility for MPCs from the private to the public sector, while taking into account the differences that exist in terms of the manner in which MPCs develop.

## **2. Research Objectives and Design**

This paper seeks to examine the nature of governance arrangements and processes that relate to the development of MPCs, in particular with respect to changes that may occur in the period from initial visioning and planning to the final implementation and population of the community. In order to do this three groups of stakeholders are identified as being involved, or having potential for involvement, in the governance of these communities. The first significant group of stakeholders are the developer, or developers of the MPC. Second are the various institutions, local, state, and federal governmental agencies that are related to the financing, planning and construction of the community, and the provision of physical and social infrastructure. Finally there is the local residential community itself, the role of whom in any discussion of governance in this context is a somewhat vexed one.

Along with examining the nature of governance as it relates to these stakeholders and any changes that may occur throughout the development process, this paper also examines the potential role played by the relative level of complexity of relationships that exist between stakeholders in the development process, as described in the three models discussed in the introduction. These objectives are achieved through the examination of a variety of documentary sources, and the use of personal interviews in order to further investigate the often complex and subtle nature of the relationships that may exist between different stakeholders. This information is then analysed in terms of any changes that could be observed over the duration of the development process, and with respect to the role played by the complexity of stakeholder relationships.

### **3. Review of Literature on Governance and Master Planned Communities**

#### ***Nature of Governance***

Governance is a broadly defined concept, and various definitions exist in the literature. Bovaird and Löffler (2003) term governance as the way key stakeholders interact and negotiate with one another to influence policy outcomes, a definition that is easily able to be applied in the context of MPC development, with its many stakeholder interactions. Good governance, according to this definition, should therefore include improvement in public policy outcomes. Some of the key principles of good governance identified in literature are citizen engagement, transparency, accountability, equality and social inclusion, ethical and honest behaviour, equity (fair procedures and due process), ability to compete in a global environment, ability to work effectively in partnership, sustainability, and respect for the rule of law (Kooimans, 1993; Rhodes, 1997). Accordingly, there should be multiple stakeholder assessment in measuring good governance which measures the impact of governance upon all of those involved.

In their book *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*, Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) argue that in the present context of networked society, there is a need for facilitating dialogues and generating agreements among the key actors/stakeholders. Neuman (1998) points out the shift from government to governance - seeing urban planning as no longer government acting on the city but governance acting through the city. Healey (1999) suggest the need for transforming governance culture to include open and participatory governance through which place qualities can be enhanced. In many respects it is this conception of governance that can be seen to be guiding the process that is underway at Ripley Valley.

Central to these concerns is the fundamental question of who wields authority and power in terms of the capacity to create objectives and policy, allocate resources, and implement strategies. In the context of master planned communities this is essentially a question of the nature of relationships between the three primary groups of stakeholders previously identified: institutions - most importantly government and the finance sector; developers - who wield tremendous influence, particularly during the initial phases of an MPCs establishment; and the community - both that which surrounds the MPC and crucially the residents of the community itself. As presented in subsequent discussions, while established institutional arrangements exist to at least guide the manner in which power and responsibility is divided between institutional stakeholders and developers, this is not the case with respect to the capacity of residents to influence decision making, resource allocation, or the implementation of policy.

#### ***Governance Models in Master Planned Communities***

In the context of master planned communities, McGuirk and Dowling (2007) have identified two sub dimensions of governance - first, the type of governance mechanisms which produce master planned estates, and, second those which govern life within them. The first type focuses on the extent and nature of public regulation under which MPCs are created. They suggest that unlike in the US, with its more laissez-faire approach to legislation and policy making, the New South Wales (NSW) planning system is much more interventionist in producing master planned communities. There is extensive engagement with local and state government authorities with a long history of local, and regional environmental plans and state planning policies acting as evidence for the many ways in which governments have sought to influence the implementation of MPCs. An example of this is the detailed master planning requirements of local governments such as Sydney and Randwick City for residential developments beyond a set size threshold.

It has become common across many Australian local and state government jurisdictions that developers produce a master plan which is used as a basis for subsequent structure planning by the local council for

a detailed phased development approval process. There is a need for structure planning from the perspective of both council and developer, as this approach provides a certain level of certainty in their planning for further infrastructure while providing some flexibility in the future. This balance between certainty and flexibility is crucial in the development of master planned communities, many of which require the security to attract institutional financial backers while simultaneously remaining able to respond quickly to market trends and expectations (Minnery and Bajracharya, 1999).

Unlike NSW, which has a state government land development agency, LANDCOM, Queensland did not have a state agency solely focussed on development of land until very recently. In July this year, the Queensland Government announced establishment of Urban Land Development Authority to develop state owned land for providing affordable housing and for promoting transit oriented developments. While in the context of NSW, there are a number of master planned communities in Sydney developed by LANDCOM in private partnership with private developers ,e.g. Victoria Park, a 26 hectare estate currently under development (McGuirk and Dowling, 2007), most of the master planned communities in Queensland are the consequence of predominantly private sector development ( exceptions being the public housing estates created by Queensland Housing Authorities in places like Inala, Fitzgibbon in the 1960s).

A second type of governance within master planned communities is related to the nature and extent of private and community local access to decision making and resource allocation after the master planned communities are completed. McGuirk and Dowling (2007) point out that in many master planned communities communal spaces, collective service and infrastructure provision and community based institutions of governance exist. For example some master planned communities such as Macquarie Links in Campbelltown or Cape Cabarita at Concord have their communal areas under community title thus excluding unfettered public access while allowing community ownership and control (On Queensland's Gold Coast, Hope Island and Sovereign Estate provide similar examples of this approach). Other communities utilise a combination of community title, public access communal spaces, and parklands (Victoria Park), while some estates have no, or very little community title property. However, as shall be discussed in greater detail in the concluding sections of this paper, there are few existing formalised structures or models that support this concept of community based governance. As a consequence, MPCs have adopted a range of privatised governance structures to manage communal property, enforce restrictive covenants and guide future community development.

The Australian experience has some interesting parallels in the U.S. Halter (1998) points out that previously informal community associations have evolved into service providers in the master planned communities constructed during 1980s and 1990s, a phenomenon that would suggest that a gap exists in more established governance structures which has been filled by these groups. Now they are providing a range of services such as those related to technology, cultural activities and alliances with businesses, councils and residents. Community website software has been developed to foster links between residents, schools and local businesses, providing a number of other functions including serving as information point for babysitters, tutors, and support staff of companies.

Hyatt (1998) also points out that the developers work closely with environmental groups at the time of site development to protect natural corridors, form alliances with schools to provide quality education, although in this case the notion of community is expanded beyond the residents of the MPC itself to include the surrounding community as well. Hyatt (1999) defines community associations as a mandatory membership entity involving all property owners in the real estate development. Such community associations need to be dynamic and responsive to the changing needs of the community while protecting the rights of individual property owners. Some of the governance issues identified are the need for providing services that are currently 'between' or outside of the ambit of more established governance structures, such as child care, security, affordable housing, and the care of an aging population. There are some questions regarding whether community governance should be accompanied by more professional management and volunteering programs. The need for balance between community needs and individual property rights also raises concerns about the regulation of maintenance, particularly with respect to infrastructure and community based assets, and the somewhat vexed issue of use restrictions. The global trend towards smaller government is another factor that is acting to encourage more community based involvement in governance and policy implementation. The gradual reduction of funds available to more traditional service providers has created a vacuum into which community organisations such as those found within MPCs are increasingly moving.

A crucial difference is that in the U.S., unlike contemporary practice in Australia, developers hand over the development to the community association as an entity with ownership responsibility and have an institutionalised framework for achieving this goal. Community governance, in a similar manner to more established forms of governance, requires a legal framework on the basis of which power, resources, and implementation may be allocated and controlled. Within an Australian context there is little in the way of legislative support for this concept.

#### **4. Types of Master Planned Communities in South East Queensland**

A review of master planned communities in South East Queensland (SEQ) indicates that they can primarily be placed in three different types of governance models.

1. Single Developer model – examples are Forest Lake, North Lakes, Varsity Lakes, Robina
2. Principal developer model – Greater Springfield
3. Government led model – Ripley valley

Using this system of classification, the majority of the master planned communities in SEQ are of the single developer model, where one developer owns the land and develops the land in stages. Examples of this form of MPC in SEQ are Forest Lake, North Lakes, Varsity Lakes, Robina, all of which are, or were owned by single developer.

Despite the predominance of the single developer model, there are two other types of MPC development emerging in SEQ. The first is a principal developer model of Greater Springfield where one very large developer (in this case Springfield Land Corporation) owns a very large parcel of land (about 2,860 hectares) and have been identifying and subdividing sections of land for different uses, which are then developed by other companies under the Land Corporations guidelines. For example, residential developments at Springfield Lakes are being developed by Delfin Lend Lease, Brookwater by Medalist Development, the shopping centre is being built by Mirvac, and the education city precinct in joint venture with Mirvac with the University of Southern Queensland as the tenant. The other alternative to the single developer model that has emerged in SEQ is the government led MPC. An example of this approach is the proposed Ripley Valley master planned community in Ipswich where land is owned by multiple owners and Ipswich City Council has taken a lead in bringing them together with the establishment of Ripley Valley Task force to develop a master plan for the area which aims to produce the largest master planned community in South East Queensland.

#### ***Stages of Development in Master Planned Communities***

Delfin Lend Lease has identified six stages in planning and development of master planned communities: 1) project selection; 2) project assessment; 3) masterplanning and urban design; 4) construction, marketing and sales; 5) asset maintenance and handover; and 6) ongoing administration. For the purpose of this paper, we have combined these original six phases into three key stages of development:

1. Visioning and planning stage ( project selection, project assessment and masterplanning, and urban design)
2. Implementation stage (construction, marketing and sales)
3. Completion stage (handover and ongoing administration)

In terms of the case studies discussed within this paper Ripley Valley master planned community is still at a visioning/planning stage while Springfield is in the middle of its' implementation stage and Forest Lake is at the completion stage (See Figure 1 for locations of these master planned communities). These communities will now be discussed in further detail in order to illustrate some of the challenges of governance in these communities both in terms of their stage of development and the overall shape that the development has taken.

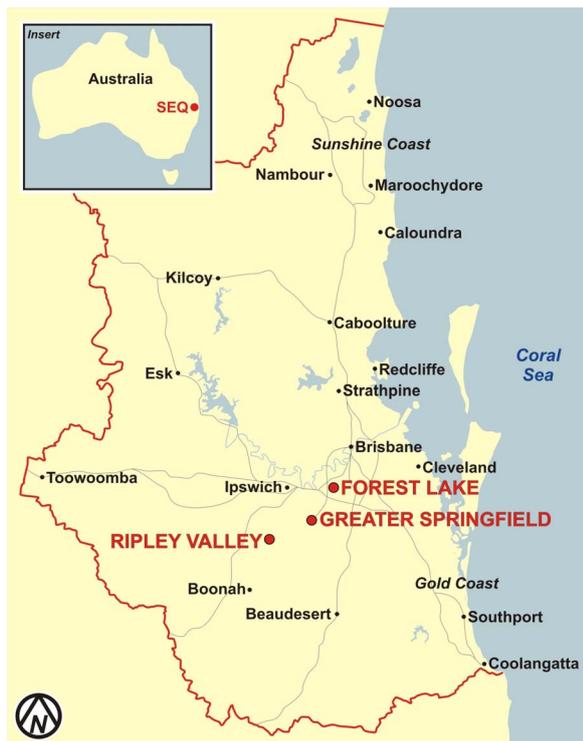


Figure 1: Location of Ripley Valley, Greater Springfield and Forest Lake

## 5. MPC in Visioning and Planning stage: Ripley Valley Master planned Community

Located south east of Ipswich, Ripley valley is planned to commence in 2008, and will be a 20 year project that will be the largest master planned community in Australia with a projected population of 100,000. The impetus for development came with the Queensland State government identifying the western growth corridor as key element of growth management in SEQ (housing 10 percent of SEQ's population growth over the next 20 years), with this identified growth corridor containing the Ripley Valley area.

The project is a partnership between Ipswich City Council, landowners, business groups, and the community largely due to the efforts of a small number of key planning staff at the Ipswich city council who believed that the area could be more than a standard set of subdivisions. It is still at an initial stage of development with preparation of master plan for the development of area in its final stages as this article is being written. The governance framework for this MPC is the establishment of *Ripley Valley Master Planning Taskforce* which is chaired by the mayor of the Ipswich city council. It has the task for preparing the budget and time line for the project as well as job of preparation of masterplan and infrastructure plan.

A *community reference group* (CRG) was established in early 2006. Its role is to enable members of the community to contribute their local knowledge to the master planning process. The community reference group includes local owners, local residents, representatives from various non government and government agencies as well as members of 'special interest' groups working on issues such as koala protection and heritage, community service provider groups, and business groups. The CRG plays an advisory role and is an important link and interface between masterplanning team and local community.

The Ipswich city council and task force has appointed a consultant team of Robert Day and DPZ Pacific to prepare the master plan. They organised a week long Enquiry by Design workshop with representatives of key stakeholders to develop a shared vision for the Ripley Valley. The Enquiry by Design (EBD) began with an initial six months of data mining process, which was followed by a further 12 months of refining the design. Upon completion of this process the consultants prepared the draft masterplan and reports which were reviewed by the Task Force and community reference group. Based on the masterplan prepared by the consultant and after feedback form community, the council has recently prepared a structure plan

reflecting the vision which was open for consultation till June 30 2007. (The paper has considered the subtle difference between a master plan and structure plan. While master plan has been used to explain the draft physical development plan prepared by developer, structure plan has been used to describe the statutory plan prepared by the councils based on the draft master plan prepared by the developers. Preparation of structure plan is an important part of planning process of Greenfield sites in the SEQ Regional plan).

Once the structure plan becomes statutory document, after approval by the state government and local council, the task force is planned to be dissolved as it is intended that the processes outlined in the plan along with involvement of government in ensuring compliance will form the fundamental governance structure as the community evolves. There is some discussion with respect to setting up a new advisory committee with representatives of community, developers and council to make decisions on development application in the Ripley Valley. This advisory committee may also be able to develop procedures for infrastructure agreements for roads, community health hubs and education hubs.

### ***Governance Challenges at the Visioning stage***

When the authors interviewed one of the key planners involved in the planning for Ripley Valley, he identified three key challenges to governance: vision, coordination and negotiation. Community involvement in the visioning stage of master planned communities is by its very nature a somewhat problematic exercise. While it is possible to gain community input from surrounding stakeholders and other interested parties, as was part of the process of development for the three communities that are used as case studies in this paper, the eventual residents of the community are, of course, unable to have input as they are at this stage of a master planned community's life a purely hypothetical concept.

One means of addressing this fundamental difficulty is to regard the visioning process as being an ongoing one, with an initial set of objectives being adapted through time to meet evolving expectations or particular spatial realities. This approach has at least in part been adopted by Ripley Valley, where a general vision statement is used to provide the framework for a large number of identified sub-areas, each of which is able to produce its own objectives, all of these vision statements being subject to ongoing community input at a decentralised local level. Ripley Valley is a complex project and a variety of issues affected the visioning stage. A selection of the factors that impacted the visioning process is briefly described as follows.

### **Developing a shared vision for community**

Discussions revealed that in this instance developing a shared vision of the community and stakeholders was a somewhat long and arduous process. Despite the effort involved in developing a shared vision there remains some criticism that the fundamental urban design approach has been imported wholesale from overseas in the form of New Urbanism.

### **Building mutual trust**

The second major challenge was that of encouraging all the developers to come together and envisage common interests in developing the site. These developers are often in direct competition with one another and as a consequence negotiation was long and arduous. Building trust was very important to make the task force work and for the developers to work together, and this was a time consuming process.

### **Political support**

It also helped that there was strong political support for this collaborative process. – Ripley Valley development can be seen as the growth coalition formation with partnership between local council and developers. As will be discussed below the support offered by political events at a state government level was also vital in enhancing the prospects of this unusual approach to MPC development.

### **Context**

It is important to understand the context in which the Ripley valley MPC is being produced. First the new South East Queensland regional plan required all local governments to prepare a local growth management strategy (LGMS) as part of growth management of the area. For new Greenfield developments, the councils are required to prepare a structure plan. With the SEQ Plan identifying Ipswich as being at the epicentre of the regions major growth corridor, it become possible to develop a

integrated structure plan and importantly to have the legislative teeth and political will to enable its implementation.

### **Coordination between stakeholders**

Fundamental to such a potentially complex approach to MPC development with its many developer stakeholders is issues surrounding the coordination of funding, timing, and responsibilities for providing different levels of infrastructure. The proposed master plan aims to integrate the various stakeholders involved in the community; however it will require the implementation of the project to discover what impact issues of coordination and integration will have.

Of key importance to any involvement of community residents and stakeholders within the governance structures of master planned communities is their access to resources, either in their physical or financial form, or in terms of the capacity to utilise power. As has been previously discussed, contemporary governance arrangements within master planned communities, and indeed within most residential communities, have established institutionalised processes for the provision of resources to governmental agencies or to developers, but there is little in the way of similar access to community members themselves. In this initial visioning stage formal practices to facilitate involvement in governance are limited to the statutory requirements embodied within planning legislation related to formal notification and appeals. Even this is probably ineffective in the early visioning stages of master planned communities as much of this early development work occurs prior to the need for formal public notification of development. Any legislative or policy mechanisms to formally establish community involvement in governance beyond that implied by local government elections does not generally extend beyond this early phase of a master planned communities life. However, developments such as Ripley Valley demonstrate that it is possible to incorporate recognition of ongoing community involvement in the visioning process, although it must be stressed that this process is yet to be implemented.

## **6. MPC in Implementation Stage: Greater Springfield**

Greater Springfield development, with a current population of 9,000, is being developed by master developer Springfield Land Corporation in 2,860 hectares of land west of Brisbane. It is currently the largest master planned community in Australia with an expected population of about 80,000 people when fully developed. It includes the suburbs of Springfield, Brookwater (in alliance with Medalist golf development) and Springfield Lakes (in alliance with Delfin Lend Lease). It has a campus of University of Southern Queensland, a new town center, and office parks as part of the development. It also has a number of educational facilities such as Springfield College, Woodcrest College, and St Augustine's College.

Greater Springfield is under the single ownership of master developer Springfield Land Corporation. It has an alliances and partnerships with a number of local governments, universities, TAFEs, banks, and other private developers in order to realise the vision of development. For example, Delfin Lend Lease developed a strategic alliance with the master developer in 1999 to develop Springfield Lakes, which is expected to have a resident population of about 30,000.

State and local government planning processes played an important role in facilitating development through the formulation of special legislation and other infrastructure agreements related to MPCs (Minnery and Bajracharya, 1999). For example, a special act of State parliament was used to rezone Springfield and develop its social infrastructure. The Queensland government has also committed more than 1 billion in infrastructure investments to improve transport links between Springfield and the surrounding region. In another example of the type of partnerships involved in this development Greater Springfield signed an agreement with University of Southern Queensland to establish a campus within the development to initially provide undergraduate courses in business and IT by 2006 for about 500 students.

Unlike the previously discussed Ripley Valley development, Greater Springfield is under the ownership of a single entity, Springfield Land Corporation, which provides opportunities for the types of specific partnerships that have been a part of the development without the need for lengthy multi-stakeholder negotiations. By utilising the skills of particular sub-developers to implement specific aspects of the community it is possible to make use of their expertise, and to share considerable amounts of the cost and organisational burden, while retaining the original vision that was created in order to market the community successfully.

### **Governance Challenges at the Implementation stage**

The primary governance issues at this implementation stage of an MPC's life cycle are those related to the act of construction and development. These may be described as being related primarily to *compliance, integration, and community development.*

#### **Compliance**

Compliance issues are those which are a part of the legislative framework that surrounds construction and building. There is a need for compliance on the part of the developer, any sub-contractors or sub-developers, and on the part of individual property owners. In the case of a master developer model such as that adopted at Greater Springfield the existence of this key stakeholder may act as a pivotal point with respect to compliance related governance. Springfield Land Corporation is able to act as a central reference for any governmental requests and enquiries, while at the same time they are able to enforce compliance with design and building codes, and its local interpretation through its role as land owner. In an SEQ context this local enforcement of design and building guidelines is often facilitated through the use of covenants that are attached to the sale of property from the land corporation to individuals. As a result, residents in master planned communities often confront a two fold process of compliance, the first being the traditional local and state government one, which is overlaid by a set of covenants, often related to design, that have been created during the earlier visioning stage of the process. The involvement of residents in this aspect of governance is primarily through their interactions with one another and the various approval bodies. In such situations the position of the residents with the governance system is without any real capacity for dialogue or ability to meaningfully affect outcomes. The compliance framework that they are adhering to has limited capacity to adapt to changing resident objectives.

#### **Integration**

Integration in a development such as Springfield concerns the ability of the Land Corporation to coordinate the efforts of the various sub-developers involved in the project. Its role as land owner is an important aspect of this capacity to integrate the various activities that occur in the development area enabling an overall vision to be pursued with a vigour that would be very difficult in a multiple land owner context such as that which exists at Ripley Valley

#### **Community Development**

Community development is the final challenge to governance at the implementation stage of an MPC that will be discussed. Springfield Lakes, as is the case with a number of other MPCs has engaged in activities designed to foster and maintain a range of community groups in the area. This is an integral part of the manner in which MPCs are presented and represent themselves, as places with an integrated and active community life, and developers expend considerable resources in order to achieve this environment. In both the Springfield and Forest Lake communities the developers have provided support and resources to the development of a range of resident groups and associations. The formation of these forms of community groups is recognised by the developers as being important to the sense of community and customer satisfaction that is experienced, and the facilitation of their growth is seen as an important aspect of the process of creating a successful master planned community. This understanding has its formal academic equivalent in the contemporary study of what is referred to as *social capital*, a concept most commonly associated with Robert Putnam (2000). Putnam uses the sorts of community organisations fostered by developers during the implementation phase of master planned community development as a form of barometer of community strength and interactions.

As such the role played by developers in the fostering of these organisations is an important one. They are widely regarded as important aspects of the social capital of a place, and are an important component of an interactive community (Shapiro, 2001; Sandefur, 1998). However their role in the governance of master planned communities is possibly best described as a potential one. In the absence of formal institutional arrangements that allow for residents to exercise power in shaping their local environment the existence of interconnected networks of community groups creates the opportunity to effectively mobilise the population and lobby politicians and commercial interests.

This community input into the governance process is at one step removed, however, being power exerted through an intermediary such as a local politician. To date none of the communities reviewed as part of this paper have formal institutional arrangements that recognise the need for resident participation in governance of master planned communities beyond that of issues of compliance or providing support for

the creation of voluntary associations. This support itself may also have some problematic aspects particularly when the formal involvement of developers in a project ceases.

## **7. MPC at Completion Stage: Forest Lake**

Forest Lake is a master planned community with a population of about 25,000 covering approximately 1000 hectares of land. It was one of the first planned developments built by Delfin in South East Queensland in the early 1980s and was completed recently. One of the significant ideas implemented by Delfin at Forest Lake has been the attempt to provide housing mix, including small lot developments, to cater to different demographic groups. Further distinguishing features include: (i) schools which shared resources and facilities in a more integrated education precinct; (ii) the provision and support for community facilities co-located near schools and shopping centers, and, (iii) a comprehensive network of recreational facilities that aim to enable community interaction. This model represented an example of leading practice in Australia through the decades of 1980s and 1990s. According to Andrew Brimblecombe, general manager of Delfin Queensland, there were 60 community groups within Forest Lake, varying from service club Lions to young mothers' groups, investment groups to dancing clubs and sports teams. There are 40 separate groups at Springfield in Ipswich.

### ***Governance Challenges at the Completion Stage***

#### **Community building**

A major challenge in master planned communities is encouraging diverse group of residents to contribute to the sense of community and on-going community development (Bajracharya et.al, 2006). To address this challenge in Forest Lake, Delfin have undertaken a facilitator role in community development by initiating and guiding the management of sporting clubs and interest groups as well as hosting special events and neighbourhood meet and greet functions. During the final development stages of Forest Lake, Delfin has gradually decreased its involvement with community groups in order for them to be self-sufficient. To assist in securing the longevity of community groups, Delfin offered training to community groups on various aspects of operating their groups, including fundraising, risk management and general administration. This approach appears to have been successful in leading early steps in community engagement and empowerment in both developments. A lesson learnt from this is that developers of master planned communities should consider in initial planning the implications for community groups of their eventual withdrawal once the development is completed, including facilitating supporting empowerment of community groups to help safeguard their longevity.

#### **Maintenance and management of Open Spaces**

Open space is used in master planned communities to create areas for community events and activities, in addition to providing a suburban character and aesthetic design. master planned communities such as Forest Lake have a strong emphasis on landscaping along streets and in public parks, including significant landscape and dense tree planting. While the developer is involved in development activities and selling allotments within the development, they are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of this landscaping. Once the development is finished, it becomes a local council responsibility. The developer has an interest in maintaining this landscaping to high standards during development as this is a major selling point. When the council takes over the maintenance programs, it becomes a part of the general maintenance schedule of the city and this schedule does not allow for maintenance to the same high standard of the developer. To ensure the longevity of the open space even after the hand-over to the council, a collaborative partnership between the councils and the master planned communities can be formed to ensure initial landscaping is suitable to the council maintenance schedule. This includes tree and plant selection and landscape design. A lesson learnt from the Forest Lake MPC is that the budgeted money for maintenance and upkeep by developers of communal open space areas may not be sustainable by the Brisbane City Council.

#### **Transition to local and community governance**

The completion stage of a master planned community is characterised by the handover of responsibility and management from the developers to the relevant government authorities. It is a fundamental transition, and marks the return of the community to a more mainstream approach to governance. However, master planned communities at least in terms of their projected image and appeal are premised by a more traditional notion of community than that which is perceived to exist in their chief competition, the suburb. These are places to which you belong, in which you participate, and this is supported by

developers as they facilitate the creation of an interactive and engaged community at least in terms of providing initial resources.

What does not exist, however, is any formalised capacity for residents to influence their residential environment. There is little, if any, capacity for the community to mobilise and direct resources, or to have input into the legislation that governs the character of their environment, beyond that which exists as part of the formal processes that attend the adoption of planning instruments. The difficulty faced by residents of master planned communities is that these planning instruments, often specialised in nature as is the case in Springfield and Ripley Valley, were devised well before homes had been built. The Draft Ripley Valley structure plan does recognise this problem and provides a conceptual framework for a system of locally based decision making and plan amendment with respect to neighbourhood planning. However current Queensland planning legislation, such as the Integrated Planning Act, does not cater for the formalisation of such a process making its implementation difficult and largely dependant on the goodwill of existing governmental stakeholders.

As mentioned earlier the support given by developers to establishing community groups, while an important aspect of community building, does have a problematic aspect, particularly at this phase of a master planned community's development. With the handover of responsibility by the developers also comes a very likely cessation of their funding for these groups. While many may have achieved enough of a financial and social critical mass to continue without developer support, the long term sustainability of groups that are supported by an entity with at best medium term involvement in the community is questionable.

## **8. Conclusion**

The paper has identified three distinct forms of master planned communities in South East Queensland based on their ownership and control as well as leadership in the development process. The first is a *single developer* model which is owned and managed by single developer. The second are communities based around a *principal developer* model, where a major developer leads and initiates the overall vision for the development of the whole MPC and later subcontracts parcels of land to other developers for specific development in line with the broad strategic vision of the overall masterplan (Greater Springfield is one such example). The third is a government facilitated model where multiple developers and stakeholders come together under the leadership of the local or state government to develop a masterplan for the whole development. There are important subtle variations in the roles and power relationships that operate across these types of master planned communities. For example, the primary distinction between the second and the third model is the leadership role played by the principal private developer and the government agency. Likewise, although a government authority or a single developer may be the key agent for development, they may be closely engaged with or even controlled by other stakeholders, In the case of Ripley Valley development, the lead agent is the local government but it still has to closely interact with the major land owners and developers who have greater control over the land and financial resources.

Based on the discussion of three master planned communities in South East Queensland, we have identified the following key governance tools and challenges at different stages of their development (see Figure 2). At the visioning and planning stage, some of the governance tools used are the preparation of master plans and community consultations (such as enquiry by design in the case of Ripley Valley) to produce a long term vision for the area. The key challenges at this stage are to develop a shared vision for the community, to establish mutual trust among stakeholders and to gain political support for development. Likewise, during the implementation stage, the governance tools are structure plans to guide development, covenants to maintain the character and property values within the estate, and infrastructure agreements to provide a range of hard and soft infrastructure. Community groups and services are established at the implementation stage to facilitate development of sense of community. The key challenges of governance at this stage are compliance (with planning and building regulations), integration (of various development activities) and community development (for residents and surrounding areas). Finally, at the stage of completion, the focus is on transfer from private to community governance, management and maintenance of the services by the community and local councils.

The nature of the development process means that during the initial period of building and construction activities the private companies that build master planned communities are responsible for creation and maintenance of infrastructure and community services. However, once the development is completed,

management of local infrastructure and services becomes the responsibility of local councils or communities. Both of these entities may have limited resources to maintain these services, raising concerns about a possible decline in quality of services and suggesting that the issue of governance, particularly with respect to the creation and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure is an issue of great importance to master planned communities.

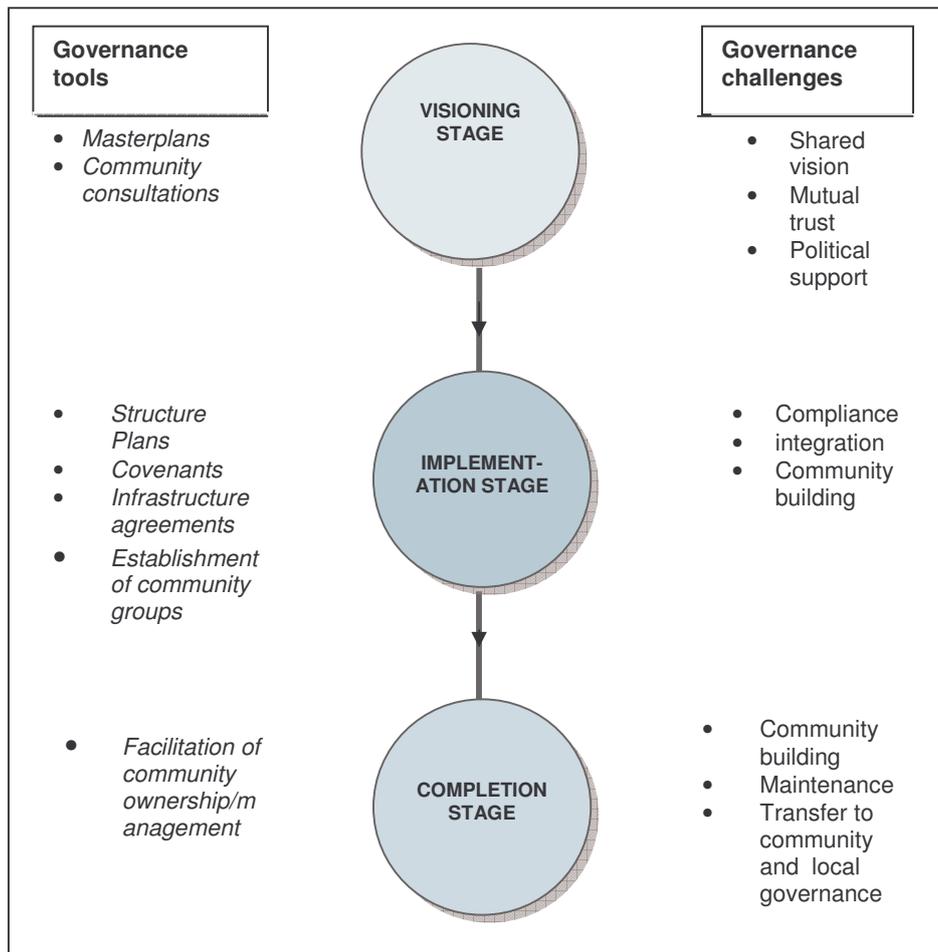


Figure 2: Governance in master planned communities

Despite the apparent emphasis on an engaged and interactive community that is a consistent aspect of the image portrayed by master planned communities some fundamental challenges confront any attempt to include greater levels of community involvement in their governance. At Greater Springfield, there appears to be less community involvement or engagement by the principal developer. On the other hand, Delfin seems to involve the new community in Forest Lake once they have settled. At Ripley valley, there are no residents yet and some involvement of residents has occurred through Enquiry by Design and consultation with Community Reference Groups.

The first and foremost challenge for community engagement is the absence of any formal structures that allow for the exercise of community based control or input into the shaping of their environment beyond that which exists as part of the normal planning and development process. This is a purely reactive process, and is in many ways not reflective of the emphasis placed on community in master planned developments.

Some developers have made substantial and important contributions to the creation of community associations, as can be seen at Forest Lakes. These associations are recognised as being an important yardstick for a community's social capital, and provide great potential to effectively mobilise residents around particular issues. However, any power that they can exert is indirect in nature and outside of the formal processes of governance.

This is, of course, not an issue unique to master planned communities. The lack of institutions to allow for direct resident input into community planning, management, and design is one that is common to most of the contemporary built environment. Master planned communities offer an opportunity to build these institutions. Governed as they frequently are by specialised local planning instruments the potential exists to develop interfaces between existing governance structures and the associations and organisations that are being fostered as part of the implementation stage of a community's development. It is important to ensure that governance systems that are used to manage a master planned community is supportive of resident amendment and even implementation.

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