

Strata Social Interaction

CASE STUDY: Broughton Street Canterbury

Never Stand Still

Built Environment



Street Library

The Case:

The Canterbury strata scheme was built in 1995 and has 102 lots across nine buildings. Social interaction in the building had been sporadic. There were initial get-togethers run by the developer when the building was first built and some privately organised Christmas parties by residents.

Residents in the building were hoping to increase the social interaction in the building. The Strata Committee was also concerned about incorrect rubbish dumping in the garbage disposal areas, and came up with some ways to inform residents about correct disposal.

Innovations: Preventing improper garbage disposal, setting up a communal garden and starting a Street Library.

Innovation

Overcoming challenges

Garbage Sign Poems

Communication

Incorrect garbage disposal was a major issue for the building. One of the residents wrote a poem on a sign about correct disposal, and had a graphic designer friend design the signs. The poem was playfully written and the signs caught people's attention. When the signs were put up, the garbage issues were alleviated for about 3 months, and have since remained manageable. After this, signs were put up for the pool to outline the pool rules as well.

Costs

The design and editing work was done voluntarily by residents and friends.



Communal Garden

Communication

The garden project started with a volunteer group of 6 people. Some of the group were committee members and committee approval was easy to obtain. Initially flyers about the garden were put around the buildings, the garden was discussed at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) and promoted through word of mouth. An email list and blog were set up. The volunteer group set up working bees and organise garden days every 6 weeks that last 4-5 hours. There were about 20 units involved with the gardens, and mostly the residents that did the planting used the produce. More recently involvement in the garden has decreased and most communication has been via e-mail. Residents are currently considering other means of communication to encourage greater involvement in the garden as it has been effective in building community relationships.

Communal Garden (cont.)

Maintaining Interest

A significant challenge was maintaining interest in the garden maintenance, advertising the garden to other residents and encouraging their involvement. Less people are involved now than when the garden was initially put in place. More residents come to the organised working bee events, but then do not have ongoing involvement. Advertising the garden requires ongoing flyer letterbox drops which can be time-consuming.

Access

The garden is not equally accessible to all residents. The garden is fenced off and is located at the back of the property, creating a disincentive for some people. One resident suggested implementing a new lock that would make it easier for all residents to have access.

Costs

The initial start-up costs for the garden included costs for soil, seedlings, and raised beds. The volunteer group that set up the garden asked for \$50 from each interested member, which came to about \$600. When undertaking projects like this, one resident noted the need to be prepared to personally finance the project due to ongoing costs for plants and fertiliser. Asking people for money – even if it is only a small amount – has been a barrier. One way to overcome this may be to get approval from the Strata Committee to use common funds.

Street Library

Communication

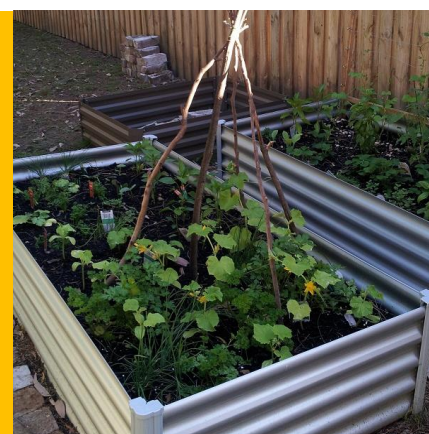
The organisers of the scheme's Street Library made a flyer to let people know about the implementation of the library, and sent emails to contacts previously collected through the communal garden. A 'launch party' for the street library was held immediately after the AGM and around 20 people attended both from within the scheme and along the street. The library has been well used with new books appearing regularly.

Costs

The costs of the library box and associated materials were about \$500. Some residents were concerned about the costs and whether the Street Library was a necessary use of funds. This issue was alleviated when the local RSL contacted Canterbury Council looking for a project to give them community exposure and a contact at the Council suggested the Broughton Street strata scheme. The RSL covered the entire cost of the street library.

Outcomes:

- Entertaining garbage signs – mitigated inappropriate garbage disposal.
- Communal garden – has connected residents outside the Committee and been successful at supporting a sense of community.
- Street Library – well utilised and connected residents with others in the neighbourhood.



Communal Garden