

City high-rise apartments 'inevitable'

Manhattan-style high-rise living in the city CBD and multi-storey apartments in Perth's suburbs are inevitable as WA copes with the impending population boom, housing affordability and sustainability challenges, leading Sydney architect and urban planner Craig Allchin said yesterday.

In WA this week for workshops with the Committee for Perth, Mr Allchin said West Australians needed to rethink their natural conservatism towards the idea of high-density living as Perth moved towards becoming a city of 3.5 million people.

"One of the big problems is every time someone sees a development application for a big change we all erupt into an angry mob and form a no-development group and try to stop the change," he said. "If we keep this local anti-development reaction as the main news around urban change then we're not going to get anywhere when we have big housing affordability and sustainability issues.

"Just looking at tall buildings isn't really bad for your health, yet we have this strange thing in beautiful cities like Perth where we think landscape is more important than city. So we don't want any height, so we spread out and out and our suburbs spread and we become more detached from our communities."

Mr Allchin believes the next generation wants somewhere more interesting to live than traditional dormitory suburbs and those housing options needed to be affordable. While New York-style high rise in the city would help get people into the city, the real challenge for Perth was creating high-density opportunities in the main suburban centres surrounding the city, including Scarborough and Cottesloe.

Mr Allchin spent the first decade of his career involved in the urban development of the Melbourne city centre, helping create the laneway and small bar culture for which the city is renowned. He has spent the past 10 years developing city master plans in Asia and the Middle East. He was invited to WA by the Committee for Perth to bring some "fresh ideas".

He said yesterday he was impressed with the East Perth Redevelopment Authority's suite of projects, including the cultural centre, as well as Subiaco and the Northbridge Link.