

Social Media Networking and Urban Planning - Can we be friends?



Social media networks can be described as technological means of providing highly accessible social communication.

Networks including Facebook, Twitter, Linked In and Four Square are a key part of modern communities, influencing the way people communicate with their peers, friends and families.

Given that Australia ranks highest for average use of 'Facebook' with almost 9 hours each month from over 9 million users, the relevance of social media networking as a method of communication in our community is significant. (1)

So what does the increasing importance of social media networking mean for the way planners interact with clients, colleagues and community?

While social media networking offers opportunities for better engaging and sharing of information, its use is not the sole solution to engaging with an increasingly 'consultation' weary community.

Rather social media networking represents an opportunity to complement the more traditional forms of community engagement. However with the sheer volume of information available and organisations and individuals asking us to 'friend them' how can planners capture the attention of social networkers and convince them to participate in the urban development process?

Other issues to consider include:

- Does social networking have a particular application in regional areas where the 'tyranny of distance' may

preclude communities being engaged via traditional methods?

- Can social media networks rejuvenate public interest and participation in strategic planning for our cities and remove the focus from development assessment?
- Can social media contribute to the re-establishment of a sense of community within our towns and cities, and if so how will this impact on the planning, design and construction of our cities?
- Are virtual communities just as vibrant and functional as physical communities?

This is the first in a series of articles exploring the use of social media networks and how they can assist in allowing the planning and urban development industry to engage with communities.

To contribute to this dialogue tell us how you think the planning professional can embrace the use of social media networking and any examples of how social media networking has been used in engaging communities in planning.

Darren is Vice President of PIA (SA), Chair of the Urban and Regional Planning Chapter and Discipline Leader Town Planning for FYFE.

(1) <http://www.socialmedianews.com.au>

SAYP UPDATE

Michael Arman MPIA (Graduate) and Matthew Walsh MPIA (Student)
SAYP Mentor Program Coordinators

PIA (SA Division) is launching a new round of the Mentor Program for Young Planners to assist young planners to successfully adjust to the workforce and develop their professional skills.

We are currently looking for people interested in being mentors and mentees. Mentors will ideally have at least 5 years post graduate experience in a variety of planning fields.

Final year undergraduate planning students, postgraduate planning students and planning graduates with less than 5 years graduate experience are eligible to apply to be mentees.

All mentors and mentees must be PIA members.

For more information on the Mentor Program [click here](#):

Please register your interest before Friday, 17 June 2011 with the Mentor Program Coordinators at mentoring@planning.org.au

