

TO WHOM WHO MAY WANT TO LISTEN TO COMMON SENSE

'GROW HOUSE' concept to deal with the ongoing affordable housing crisis [May 2022]

Dear Sirs / Ms,

Back in 1985, I wrote a piece about this 'grow house' concept. I sent it to the local newspaper in Murwillumbah [northern NSW]. They refused to publish it because it could be seen as, quote "putting builders out of work". It seems that local builders advertised in the paper. At the time I was busy doing other stuff in my profession [Architecture] so I did not progress it further.

Then, when Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister and there was a 'housing crisis' concern at that time, I sent a letter to him [+ Tanya Plibersek] regarding promoting 'building smaller'. At a public forum, I recall hearing Mr Rudd answer one of the questions from the public.

"Mr Rudd, we cannot afford our dream home, what are you going to do about it?"

His answer was direct [and could have been because of my letter], "Maybe you have to make your dream a little smaller".

In the recent debate over the cost of housing I have not heard one politician/commentator say, "We need to look at and have policies that promote building smaller/smarter/cheaper/more efficiently." Tinkering around the edges with grants, mortgage guarantees, stupid 'superannuation raiding' is likely to only exacerbate the cost issue. Shared equity and sweat equity are concepts that could help but house size/cost is still the main issue. Building materials shortage also adds to that cost these days.

IT IS PLAIN COMMON SENSE - that a smaller house will be more affordable than a BIG house.

Have any of you looked out the window of a plane recently, just before landing and noticed the disgusting 'constructed' brick & tile mono-coloured suburban 'quilt' that exists in the housing developments. It looks like EVERY house is fighting for every piece of dirt. One can hardly pass a piece of tissue paper between houses. It is as if everyone is 'trying to keep up with the neighbours'- my house is bigger than yours OR the Real Estate Industry is saying, "You cannot build small, they won't sell" OR that, "Small houses will pull down the value of the other houses in the area".

I believe it is about time there was a public discussion AND ACTION led by Governments about how to EFFECTIVELY make housing more affordable [ie. smaller]. This discussion will, no doubt, have the Real Estate/Development Industry coming up with all sorts of negative comments [some noted above] over the suggestion. They have this need to protect their commissions/profits.

The Grow House Concept [refer diagram sheet]

Individual housing could be 'master planned' to a 'finished' size/design. The 'initial' build could be a sufficient setup of that house design for first home buyers [or even final home buyers]. The initial house could be a 1 bed residence with other basic spaces, to get people started [or housed in 'downsizing' retirement]. These starting stages of the house build would facilitate a smaller mortgage burden than if the whole house was fully built right from the start.

Once the 'initial' house is built and occupied, the owners [mortgage holders], would be able to choose in the future to either extend/renovate or sell on as is, [possibly to another first home buyer]. The housing market of these types of houses would vary over years – meaning some 'initial' houses would remain as such, while others would get extended/renovated as part of the master plan for that house. A serendipitous effect of this Grow House concept is that it is likely that about 2.5 'initial' [small] houses could be built in the same time it would take to build one BIG house, meaning theoretically more available housing stock quicker. This concept could also benefit public housing.

I don't see any significant problems for the Building Industry. Actually, there are builders about that are promoting this type of house build [ie the Grow House concept]. It is not a new concept. The idea also needs Government promotion/encouragement of the concept so it can get some widespread acceptance. It needs to be part of the choices first home buyers have [they either hock themselves up to their eyeballs or ease into the housing market with a smaller manageable mortgage burden]. The only possible losers will be Councils, as they are likely to collect a less amount of rates on the smaller 'initial' house properties and banks [smaller mortgages].

Regards



Geoff Grimes Architect

PS: I recently received information from a friend in the Netherlands – they have been operating a similar concept for many decades.

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The Mercury [newspaper]

The Examiner [newspaper]

"GROW HOUSE" Housing Policy Strategy
 [diagrammatic sample scenarios]
 Geoff Grimes Architect Tasmania
 May 2022

NOTE:
 The Grow House idea is not purporting 'modular housing' nor 'tiny' housing concepts.
 Far from it.
 The master planning of the houses can be of 'normal' skillful housing designs
 that are arranged to allow for partial initial construction
 then appropriate additions as required

