



PLANNER TECH

## 3 trends to watch in 2017

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The purpose of PlannerTech has always been forward-looking. With one eye on the present and the other on the future, it has aimed to be inspiring, practical and engaging. In 2017, I will be stepping down as a contributor, but before I go, I'd like to bring you 3 trends for the year ahead.

### 'Internet of Things' making life smarter in the home, in the office and in the community

Imagine your watch telling your fridge to start preparing dinner before you arrive home after work. This scenario could just happen thanks to the 'Internet of Things' (IoT), where everyday objects are connected to a network allowing them to send and receive data but also undertake tasks and contribute to behaviour change.

A 2015 report, Enabling the Internet of Things for Australia, identified the potential economic impact of the industry to be \$116 billion by 2025. Already today, Google's Nest and Apple's HomeKit are designing smart ecosystems where the home can be managed for the first time in one app. At a larger scale, the Barangaroo Community gateway was launched in 2016, and is supported by key players in this space including KPMG, Meshed, International Towers Barangaroo and IoT Alliance Australia (IoTAA). The gateway provides a free network where up to 1000 IoT devices can connect in physical and digital space, further aiding the prototyping, testing and development of IoT applications in Sydney.

The IoT heralds an exciting new era for planners, with innovative new tools becoming available to enhance the designing and assessing of buildings, streets and communities. In 2017, data from the Barangaroo Community gateway will become available and is expected to provide valuable insights into how the IoT can be applied to existing and new spaces.

### Purchase your next home online and build it yourself

A new Australian company, Big World Homes, is responding to Sydney's housing supply and affordability crisis by creating a modular, flat-packed, tiny home (13 square metres). It's an ambitious project that seeks to promote sustainable living by utilising technology to optimise the health and wellbeing of its occupants, whilst achieving compliance with relevant building and health safety standards.

The portable home incorporates caravan technology to deliver an off-grid experience that includes rainwater tanks for the washing machine and plumbed bathroom,

solar panels for cooking and heating, and a bed and a living space for internal social gathering. Moving into 2017, we'll be seeing Big World Homes continue to roll out its affordable product along with other initiatives like the Tiny Homes Foundation who are set to begin construction of their 14 square metre houses next to Gosford Hospital.

In more ways than one, these tiny DIY homes are disrupting the industry with a revolutionary new housing attitude and product that makes the most of available technologies. They are an exemplar for the economic and orderly use of land, providing a socially responsible solution to an ever increasingly complex issue.

### Does NSW have a new 'silicon valley'?

In September this year, the Hunter Innovation Project received \$17.8m in funding from the NSW Government, Newcastle City Council and the University of Newcastle. The project aims to establish a digital precinct within Newcastle CBD, deliver smart city infrastructure and further support and attract high-tech, digital and creative industries.

Newcastle City Council is currently preparing a smart city strategy that will compliment this investment and align with other digital economy strategies in the region, including Lake Macquarie's Smart City, Smart Council strategy and smart technologies being used across the agriculture, tourism and mining sectors.

Newcastle recognises that economies driven by talent operate at a regional scale and are influenced by key attractors such as lifestyle and affordability. As these new private and public partnerships develop, the Hunter will definitely be a region to watch closely in 2017.

### Final words

After starting PlannerTech in 2013, this will be my last column as I focus on some exciting projects coming up for JOC Consulting. I'll be handing the column over to the editor and look forward to seeing its next evolution as technology, and the role it plays in our professional lives, continues to shape the future of planning ■

Stay in touch with John via twitter @John\_OCal or email john@jocconsulting.com.au



Figure 1: The first 'Big World Home' at Central Park as part of The Sydney Architecture Festival 2016 (Source: Big World Homes, 2016)