Design Strategy
Strategic Design

SYDNEY’S BUILT ENVIRONMENT: THE FUTURE ISSUE

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IN CONVERSATION
Jim Betts CEO of Infrastructure NSW
David Pitchford CEO of UrbanGrowth NSW

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This issue of Architecture Bulletin is dedicated to addressing the future of the built environment in Sydney. As the guest editor invited to tackle this subject, with the support of the NSW Chapter Built Environment Committee, I have curated a survey of contemporary architectural thinking and architects that are strategically involved in the creation of our built environment, urban form and public domain.

With contributors from the Government Architect’s Office, leading architectural firms, landscape architects and experts in urban design and infrastructure, this issue of Architecture Bulletin considers the possibilities for the future of the built environment in major cities through the specific lens of Sydney. I would like readers to consider how the role of architecture is evolving and how it may be most effective in the development of our built environment. Where and how is this happening? How do other disciplines involved in the built environment perceive the role of architects and how might architects better relate to broader contexts?

The future of the architecture profession lies in understanding of, and respect for, the other disciplines involved in the built environment, urban transformation of Ultimo-Pyrmont; Parramatta and Sydney Council’s positions on strategic design; Russell Olsson reflects on the urban transformation of Ultimo-Pymont, Paul Walter examines the role of institutions in city making, Representing the fundamental importance of landscape architects in the design strategy space, Barbara Schaffer outlines the Green Grid – a key strategy, now policy, for Sydney. Gerard Reinmuth offers a view on the state of the profession in NSW with direct comparison to Denmark, a country that demonstrably values the strategic function of the architect.

The architect’s ability to negotiate complexity and optimise competing agendas with creative intelligence is valuable to society. A strong future for our profession and our cities lies in the strategic capacity of the discipline. However, to best position ourselves in this future involves developing a contemporary interdisciplinary understanding of, and respect for, the other cooks in the built environment kitchen.

Contributors:

Nicola Balke is an urban designer at McGregor Coxall. Philipp Graus is a director of Cox Richardson Architects and Planners in Sydney. Timothy Horton is the registrar of the Architects Registration Board of NSW. Russell Olsson is the director of Olsson & Associates Architects and a registered architect and urban designer. Gerard Reinmuth is a founding director of TERROIR and a practicing architect and designer. Barbara Schaffer is the principal landscape architect for the NSW Government Architect’s Office and chairperson of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Built Environment Committee. Bridget Smyth is the Design Director at City of Sydney. Sophie Solomon is the principal of the architecture studio sol.

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CHAPTER NEWS

2015 NSW Architecture Awards

Congratulations to all members shortlisted for this year’s awards and thanks to the jurors for their generosity in recommending 53 awards and commendations, equivalent to nearly a third of all entries. This will give our award recipients a good chance of success in the judging of the national awards.

I was impressed by the strength of competition in the new Education category, justification enough for its emergence as an awards category in its own right. The awarding of the Sulman Medal to the Westmead Millennium Institute also demonstrated the importance of design excellence in the health sector to meet the needs of our growing and aging society.

It was particularly gratifying that the Government Architect’s Office was the recipient of four awards and a commendation, including the Lloyd Rees Award and the Blacket Prize. Deputy Government Architect Helen Lochhead was also the worthy recipient of the President’s Prize. This demonstrates both the depth of talent in the office and its central role in the state’s architectural culture.

SEPP 65

The recently released State of Australian Cities report from the Australian Government reveals that in Sydney, semi-detached and apartment dwellings make up 56% of all new dwellings built over the last decade, whereas in 2001 they accounted for only 35%. Three years ago, apartment construction reached the tipping point where it exceeded the number of new freestanding homes.

This says two important things. Apartment construction is on the rise - and therefore so is density.

As if to confirm the fact, the revised SEPP 65 and the new Apartment Design Guide governing the design of apartments commenced operation in mid July. NSW is still the only state in Australia to have its own design legislation mandating the use of architects for any building type.

The impressive crop of entrants to the multi-residential category of this year’s awards proves that our members are up to this privilege - and this challenge.

The strategic design challenge

But our potential impact on the improvement of the built environment is much greater than this one building type. We have the opportunity to use our strategic design skills to help create a much more livable Sydney.

This issue of Architecture Bulletin, expertly put together by the Chapter’s new communications officer, Hannah McKissick-Davis, and guest editor Ben Hewett for the Built Environment Committee, places the strategic application of design skills at the centre of the urban renewal challenge.

I was privileged to conduct interviews with the CEOs of two key government agencies, Infrastructure NSW and UrbanGrowth NSW, for this issue.

They both told me of the importance of design thinking in making the immense changes underway across the whole metropolitan area. They agree with the Institute that the city needs to be both bigger and better.

UrbanGrowth CEO David Pitchford sees us as his allies in the war against mediocrity (see page 28), while Infrastructure NSW’s Jim Betts fully recognises the need for excellence in infrastructure design which is sympathetic to human amenity (page 10).

These are strong messages from two key executives guiding Sydney’s growth – and architecture and architects are well placed to work with them in achieving a bigger city that functions better and is also more livable.

Gender Equity

Last week the Chapter’s future Champions of Change had their second face to face meeting. I am heartened by the honesty with which these men are facing the challenge of gender equity in their workplaces - and their willingness to join others working to change the culture of the profession. I will keep you posted on further developments.

Shaun Carter

NSW President
CHAPTER NEWS

Chapter Manager’s report

This is my first Chapter report since taking the helm of the NSW Chapter. It has been a busy number of weeks, with observing, absorbing and learning. I am looking forward to working with the dedicated Chapter committees and their members, continuing to drive excellent initiatives and programs to the membership.

The Gender Equality Taskforce (GET) is at the forefront working hard to formulate initiatives around gender equality in the architecture industry. The Champions of Change program, an initiative of the NSW Chapter, is now in its second year. The program is facilitated by Dr Jess Murphy for the NSW Chapter, and has also joined our committee which will allow us to better support our student members. We thank, Bob Young, Glenn Spencer and Sarah Mannes for their years of dedicated service to the committee.

The Newcastle Division has been active in the preparations for the Lower Hunter Urban Design Awards, 46th Anniversary Awards. This year, as a special anniversary celebration, the awards will be a reflection upon the past four decades of winners. The jury has now completed the assessments, and we look forward to the announcement of the winners at a gala event to be held later this year.

This year, our committee is actively looking to expand collaboration with programs and initiatives of which will be announced very soon.

We are taking Chapter Council on the road again. Our next excursion will be to Bathurst in September in conjunction with the Country Division and is now in its second reprint. If you are interested in reading the first edition, please contact the Chapter Manager, NSW Division.

Noni, Ela and Dominique for their hard work in making the evening a success. Thank you to Chapter staff, Hannah Burgess, Noni, Ela and Dominique for their hard work in making the evening a success.

Audrey Braun
Chapter Manager, NSW Division

Newcastle Division

The Newcastle Division has welcomed four new committee members who are proving to be a great asset to our leadership: Rebecca Whan (Jackson Tecez), Joel Chamberlain (Shaw & Suter), Shane Smedo (EJE), and Matthew Tarriss (Schmitz Hamilton). The University of Newcastle SONA representatives, Mr. Jia Murphy, has also joined our committee which will allow us to better support our student members. We thank, Bob Young, Glenn Spencer and Sarah Mannes for their years of dedicated service to the committee.

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Thank you to all the members who submitted in this year’s highly successful NSW Division Conference, held from 2-5 October. Organised in conjunction with the Lower Hunter Urban Design Awards, the conference ‘We’ve come so far, so far’ investigates the idea of success in architecture. Joining David Neustein of Sibling, Kris Allen of Clare Designs, Utzon Utzon of UTAS and David Neustein of Sibling, Kris Allen of Clare Designs, Utzon Utzon of UTAS and Claire McCaughan of Archrival and Claire McCaughan of Archrival and several schemes that focused on addressing Australia’s affordable housing crisis.

In July we invited David Neustein of Other Architects to co-curate and moderate a Tuesday@Tusculum panel discussion on the idea of success in architecture. Joining David was Kerry Clare of Clare Designs, Timothy Moore of Stirling, Cristina Goebbe of FAKE Industries Architectural Agonism and Tim Horton the NSW Registrar. The talk was structured into three categories, project, practice and career, with the speakers taking turns to discuss each. What was notable was the diversity of approaches and positions taken by the panellists, with each allowing for a different perspective on what constitutes success. Ultimately, the message was clear for the audience: that despite this diversity there was a common thread of engagement, commitment and passion for the profession and that success in architecture can be achieved in many different ways.

To keep informed about future events please join the EmAGN DARCH mailing list or find us on Facebook.

Debra McKenzie-Hunt
Chair, Newcastle Division

NSW Country Division

Country Division awards will be presented at the annual conference in Bathurst in September after a record number of entries this year. The conference ‘We’ve come so far, so far’ investigates how architectural history informs the future through a program of speakers, events and workshops. The 2015 events program culminates in a celebration of iconic works with an exhibition and seminar in the Deangere Woolshed near Armidale.

Sarah Alridge
Chair, Country Division

DARCH

Over the past couple of months EmAGN DARCH has hosted a series of Tuesdays@Tusculum talks. Following the June announcement of the NSW Student and Graduate Awards recipients for 2015, we invited students from across all four schools of architecture to present their work to the profession. This was an excellent opportunity to hear firsthand about the thinking that went into some of this year’s successful projects and to chat to the award recipients. The projects presented ranged from an archive for the work of JEen Utzon – this year’s Design Medal awarding project – to a habitat bridge on the south coast and several schemes that focused on addressing Sydney’s transport crisis.

Patrons news

A&C

In July, Allen Jack + Cottier (A&C) CEO and principal Michael Heaven spoke to a full house as part of the London Festival of Architecture, focusing on Sydney’s future as a world city by the year 2030. A&C’s shortlisted projects in the education and residential categories for the 2015 World Architecture Festival Awards were also on display in London, with winners to be announced in November in Singapore. Back home, A+C’s Residential Care Facility at Quaker’s Hill has been shortlisted for the UDIA Awards for Excellence.

Other recently completed projects include a new multipurpose assembly and ballroom hall for Abbotsford School for girls; a converted inner city warehouse which is attracting a lot of attention with the insertion of a very unusual, insulated and sound proof sleeping pod; and a floating bar atop of Sydney Tower which is the highest event space in the southern hemisphere. A&C also continues to work on a number of transformational urban renewal, multi-residential, public and commercial projects in Sydney, Parramatta, Perth and regional NSW.

Bates Smart

In June HASSELL teamed up with the not for profit organisation Archikids to create PLAY[ground] – a place that would inspire tomorrow’s thinkers and city makers to play, experiment and toy with ideas about the future of our cities. In partnership with Sydney Living Museums, Hyde Park Barracks was transformed by PLAY[ground] into a captivating destination for spontaneous, uninhibited play.

The Archikids brief called for a single playground. But after testing early plans with a group of children, HASSELL created a collection of interactive installations to inspire different types of play featuring multi-coloured ball pools, light-weight structures, and lists of multi-coloured ribbons made from old parachutes.

The program for PLAY[ground] included more than 30 workshops about city-making and the built environment. Kids, parents, grandparents and friends immersed themselves in green and white workshops, drew their visions for the future city and experimented with new ways of travelling through the city. At the end of it all, everything was repurposed, returned or recycled to create the ultimate low cost, low impact event.

Two new pedestrian linkways connect the street frontages and the buildings have generous street setbacks. A moderate amount of ground floor retail space will activate the through site link and a public plaza. The project is due for completion in 2017.

NEWCASTLE DIVISION NEWS

Muirac

Construction has started at Wharf’s Entrance - Muirac Design’s next stage at Yarra’s Edge. Docklands. The project consists of South Wharf Park, a 28 storey, 228 apartment residential building, 18 waterfront terraces and a recreational facility which consists of gym, pool and café. The recreational facility also features an occupiable green roof that morphs out of the landscape and forms part of the park. Completion of the terraces is slated for 2016 and the apartment building for 2017.

Bates Smart

The DA has been approved for the Greenland Group’s Leichhardt Green development, designed by Bates Smart. The project consists of five residential buildings arranged around a landscaped communal courtyard. The individual buildings are articulated to respond to their orientation and the immediate public domain, while connecting with the local context through material and scale. A range of dwelling types from studios to three bedroom terraces have been designed with abundant natural light, views and generous access to the landscaped open space.

Two new pedestrian linkways connect the street frontages and the buildings have generous street setbacks. A moderate amount of ground level retail space will activate the through site link and a public plaza. The project is due for completion in 2017.

render for Leichhardt Green, Bates Smart.
Design Strategies for City Shaping

South Australia’s 5000+ strategy offers a model for urban development based on collaborative and design thinking. Ben Hewett presents the framework that brought about the success of this project.

In South Australia the Integrated Design Commission (IDC), operating 2010-12, and its key project, the Integrated Design Strategy for inner Adelaide (5000+), created step changes in design consciousness, urban planning, city vibrancy and quality of architecture that are now clearly evident.

The formation of the IDC was a key recommendation from An Integrated Design Strategy for South Australia – Building the Future, the final report from Thinker in Residence Laura Lee. In her report Lee identifies the centrality of integrated design as an agent for a sustainable city and a better human experience. She also advocates the importance of collaborative engagement across sectors and disciplines.

The IDC was founded on a collaborative leadership model – a state government architect, an independent commissioner for integrated design and a public sector director – located within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. A small interdisciplinary support team made up the IDC, with an extended additional team for 5000+.

Ten principles of 5000+:
1. Be human centred
2. Take a systems approach
3. Engage the community
4. Develop a shared vision and guiding principles
5. Establish an evidence base early
6. Design test and visualise
7. Collaborate
8. Utilise technology
9. Use demonstration projects to showcase exemplary procurement
10. Set up ongoing monitoring and measurement

These principles offer a way into articulating both what we need in our urbanised regions and the benefits of what strategic or integrated design thinking offers cities.

To develop the shared vision for the city (refer Vision and Guiding Principles: A vision for an authentic, inclusive and innovative Adelaide), a process of design testing and prototyping was intertwined with design-led community engagement processes (refer Engagement Feedback Report: Great Ideas for a Great City).

While the Government elected to dissolve the IDC after a change in political leadership (Premier Jay Weatherill assumed leadership from Mike Rann at the end of 2011), the 5000+ process and the value of design thinking for government was recognised by politicians. At the final exhibition which delivered the project recommendations, Premier Weatherill said the Integrated Design Strategy represents “much more than just an urban design proposition, it’s actually a recipe for the way in which we want to run this state. If we get this right, then this is the image we can project to the whole world.”

Deputy Premier and Planning Minister John Rau in opening the exhibition stated: “Engagement is something that can catalyse the many disparate thoughts of individuals in the community and bring them together into something meaningful, which can be developed for the benefit of the whole community and that has been one of the tremendous outcomes of this 5000+ project. This has been a catalyst. It’s been a catalyst for thinking. It’s been a catalyst for engagement … but we can’t lose the momentum … we have to keep the pressure on ourselves.”

Demonstrating the fundamental nature of design as both a process and a product, the various reports, proposals and recommendations were as much about how to do things as about what things to do (refer Place Shaping Framework). The final 99 recommendations were grouped in three areas of future directions:

- People: the way that we engage, govern and take responsibility for the future of inner Adelaide
- Process: the way that we procure, measure and manage the best outcomes for inner Adelaide
- Urban Networks: the way we integrate and connect our physical environments to create better places for people.

Furthermore, a series of priority precincts and opportunities for inner Adelaide were identified within the Place Shaping Framework through working with project partners. These areas were drawn from projects already underway by state and local government as well as industry and community groups. By continuing to foster an integrated approach, focusing on three places could demonstrate and deliver the framework and achieve the long term vision.

The project raised the consciousness of design significantly, with an implicit agenda to inform and educate decision makers. Working collaboratively and in partnerships on every initiative, participants were inspired to look beyond traditional processes and methodologies employed by the 5000+ team. In exploring new relationships and spanning divides between disciplines, sectors and tiers of government, a strong network was established that continues despite political and bureaucratic changes. The Office for Design and Architecture (ODASA) the design agency following the IDC, continues the trajectory of some of the initiatives within the reformed Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure.

The success of the project lies in the subsequent take-up by government agencies of many proposals as their own, albeit with changes to meet their own KPIs, but fundamentally recognising the premise of the project. Specifically this has resulted in a number of initiatives: a state focus on city activation with an integrated public domain; formalised, consistent and robust design review processes for any project with strategic significance, government or private; recommendations for a revised planning system to place design quality centrally (with some early implementation); and a joint agenda for government of supporting South Australian architectural and design professions internationally.

In addition, following the advocacy and speculative work from the IDC and 5000+, significant political, government and industry focus has been brought to the Riverbank area with an overall strategic framework and spatial master plans undertaken for specific precincts such as Festival Plaza precinct, the Bio-Medical and Health precinct and the Integrated Cultural Campus. Processes of engagement and broader inclusion devised during the IDC remain and have also informed some of these, most notably the open competition for the Old Royal Adelaide Hospital Site. Given the reluctance of the bureaucratic environment in 2010, when the IDC started, to even contemplate the need for master planning when delivering key infrastructure projects in the city, the built consequences are still catching up; however the political comprehension of the need for quality an integrated public realm is now well understood and forms the basis of ongoing decision making. Further, IDC and ODASA staff have spread through to diverse government agencies, into local government, and have started new practices ensuring the ideas and ways of working continue to find new opportunities for innovation and adoption in design.

Ben Hewett
Director of 5000+ An Integrated Design Strategy for inner Adelaide 2010-12
South Australian Government Architect 2010-14

To access all 5000+ reports mentioned in this article please visit: 5000plus.net.au/library_resources/reports

IN FOCUS

"Integrated design thinking connected the three tiers of government, education and industry in a collaborative process that raised ambitions, fostered creativity and offered viable alternatives to established norms." Ben Hewett

the 5000+ project consisting of architects, landscape architects and graphic designers performing traditional design roles, but also leading community and stakeholder engagement and participation, policy formation and design thinking workshops.

200 precedents from around the world involved in city renewal to develop principles to guide the development of the integrated design strategy - itself an evolving, emergent, experimental model. Ten principles were synthesized from the research to guide the development of the project.
An Independent View

Jim Betts and Shaun Carter talk health checks, urban transformation and infrastructure investment.

Our role is principally advisory. We provide a long term view to government on infrastructure priorities over a 20 year time frame, and we’re required to do that every five years. That enables us to look across all the different sectors of infrastructure delivery - transport, water, schools, hospitals, cultural infrastructure, sporting infrastructure - and advise the government on what the priority should be.

We also take projects which the government has decided it wants to pursue or explore and we provide independent health checks on those projects from their inception, through business case development, the procurement process, through delivery and beyond.

We also have a limited role at this stage around project delivery. The big project we’re delivering is the Darling Harbour redevelopment.

Shaun Carter (SC): And going at a pace also.

Jim Betts (JB): It’s amazing the rate at which it’s going, it’s a transformative project, but one of the best things about it is it’s not a project that sits in isolation, it’s part of the transformation of the whole western flank of the CBD, including obviously Barangaroo, but also the light rail in George Street, the upgrades to the Wynyard precinct, so it’s great to be part of something which is creating a new place rather than just building a piece of infrastructure.

SC: I noticed on your website that there was that spend, $35 billion to $18 billion, but the forecast increase in revenue as a result of that was about $30 billion.

JB: There’s a big payback from it. What we try to identify are infrastructure investments which will provide an enduring dividend to the community.

SC: When you say health checks, Jim, when you’re looking at a project at its inception, is that a cost benefit analysis or a triple bottom line approach?

JB: We’re making sure agencies remain accountable for developing projects, but we provide health checks on them in the sense that we’re making sure relevant considerations are taken into account, that there is a proper analysis of the cost and benefits and the risks associated with projects, that the agency understands what they’re proposing and then can go out and deliver it.

If you think about the infrastructure program in New South Wales - $15 billion plus per annum - that’s a lot of resources being deployed, so it’s important that projects are planned and delivered in the right way.

We work very collaboratively with agencies, we don’t operate like auditors, but we are able to give them, as much as anything, advice on where we think there might be areas that need more attention.

“… there is a lot riding on Parramatta and we have a lot to say about cultural infrastructure, transport infrastructure and hospital infrastructure in that location because it is a city-shaping proposition.”

Jim Betts

SC: I noticed when you’re looking at Parramatta, it stands as good a chance as any location in any capital city in Australia of becoming a functioning second CBD. It’s important that it does, because if Parramatta takes off in the way we think it will, it will create a big centre for employment that is far closer to where the population growth is going to be in the north-west and south-west, and it provides a hub from which Liverpool and Penrith and other regional centres can develop.

That’s why there is a lot riding on Parramatta and we have a lot to say about cultural infrastructure, transport infrastructure and hospital infrastructure in that location because it is a city-shaping proposition.

SC: I like that approach. A whole community approach to infrastructure - rather than just isolating different elements - which is critical in proper city making.

JB: Absolutely right. Government agencies need to organise themselves into silos. I know that because I used to run the transport network in Victoria. The holy grail for me is always getting agencies to genuinely collaborate with each other and think about the place that they’re going to leave behind once they’ve gone in and built their infrastructure. It’s very hard to create fantastic places for people to live and work and relax unless you’ve got a genuinely joined-up approach.

Transport agencies, historically, build stuff without really caring about the place and so you need an integrated approach at the planning level, but you also need excellence in design, and design which is sympathetic to human amenity. Otherwise you end up with basically building...
ugly transport infrastructure, which is very functional and Sydney becomes an easy place to get around, but it’s not the kind of place where you want to live - and that’s what none of us want.

SC: What opportunities do you foresee in your organisation’s connection and collaboration with the strategic function of the Government Architect’s Office?

JB: Huge. Not least in terms of making sure that we are in partnership with the Government Architect’s Office and are helping them carry the cause of good design into the agencies which are actually going to be doing the delivery of these projects on a day to day basis. I have a really strong belief that, notwithstanding this kind of inherited engineering culture in some agencies that tends to regard design and architecture with suspicion, that it’s not an expensive add-on, it’s absolutely fundamental to achieving value for money to have design expertise and architectural expertise on the ground floor on these projects.

You can actually drive significantly better design outcomes and significant value for money by having your architects embedded in the process and regarded not as people who sit on one side but they’re actually in the room when the key decisions are taken.

SC: That design thinking at that crucial phase?

JB: Yes, and design at the interface between traditional transport infrastructure at the wider end to make them sympathetic to each other.

SC: From your perspective, what are the opportunities for design in the strategic planning process and city making?

JB: I think it’s hard for design to get traction until you’ve got a certain level of strategic planning which is already marked out, so you need to mark out the territory within which you want the design to operate. But I’ve talked a bit about Parramatta and a bit about the western part of the CBD, you’ve got to the point there where you have a clear commitment of significant investment resources and a number of projects which need to be built in a way which is clearly city making.

That’s the point I think early in the process, once those investment decisions have been taken up in principle – that good design can make a huge difference, integrating the whole project and making sure that the individual component parts are sympathetic to each other. Those are absolutely critical examples, and we can see that playing out right now.

For a full transcript of this interview please visit architecturebulletin.com.au.
Good Governance

How do we sustain Sydney’s global city status? Philip Graus reviews the need for metropolitan governance and greater integration.

Effective metropolitan governance avoids the out of date paradigm of state level top-down versus local bottom-up planning by developing a framework that integrates both. Professor Mark Temple-Jones, Adjunct Professor, University of New South Wales (UNSW) and Professor of Planning at the University of Newcastle, UK believes that there is an increasing demand by the community for a more local and meaningful form of participation in decisions that shape the city. At a recent governance roundtable Temple-Jones stated that citizens have lost interest and trust in traditional forms of democracy. This cynicism and disinterest in democratic governance does not impinge upon the public’s robust interest in cities and place-making – communities are simply unable to see how they can participate in the current system.

The challenges for the architecture profession is to develop strategic design thinking and advocate for its place in metropolitan governance and city making. At the forefront should be strategies for architecture and public realms that effectively encompass economics, politics, and design. The integration of these three elements was the basis of PlaNYC, the plan for New York developed by Alex Washburn, Chief Urban Designer for New York City. This thinking can integrate the top-down need for economic growth with the bottom-up desire for physical improvement – it is not the case of one or the other. It requires macro and local scale design thinking – both are spatial – macro design thinking is strategic, while local is physical.

THE PUBLIC REALM – INVOLVEMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS

The London based Centre for Cities advocates urban growth that benefits as many people as possible, stressing the need for governance to focus on equity and building cities that are bigger, better, and fairer. Goran Hydén has described effective urban governance as “enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm”.

“In the forefront should be strategies for architecture that effectively encompass economics, politics, and design.”

Philip Graus

FOOTNOTES
1. Governance: a review and synthesis of the literature, Ruthanen, Scott, Richie and Tkaczynski, UQ, (also Fifth Estate) be.unsw.edu.au
2. The Metropolis Resevoir, Katz and Bradley, Brookings Institution Press, 2014
3. UNSW Built Environment, News and City Futures Blog – A Discussion on City Governance – with iss (also Fifth Estate) be.unsw.edu.au
4. UNSW/COG Urban Conversations Roundtable 23rd April 2015
6. Governance: a review and synthesis of the literature, Ruthanen, Scott, Richie and Tkaczynski, UQ, (also Fifth Estate) be.unsw.edu.au

Greater Sydney Commission

Currently the NSW Government is considering a Greater Sydney Commission. There has been strong support for a governance body with meaningful representation tasked with implementing and aligning the hierarchy of strategic to local plans in the Greater Sydney Region. There are existing models for this both in Australia and abroad that should be examined for their structure and effectiveness.

There are currently planning commissions in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, with a commission also proposed in South Australia (SA). The SA proposal has been developed by an independent enquiry if such a commission were adopted in NSW it would be the first of the larger eastern states to adopt such a structure. In all the above scenarios, there is a common view that as our cities grow and become more complex, a strong and independent planning commission could deliver and align planning policies from state to local. This would establish consultation with the range of stakeholders in a significantly less politicised environment. This approach could potentially address concerns raised by the community, business, industry groups, and local government. This integration will undeniably involve a design thinking approach and will be a key challenge for the Greater Sydney Commission as well as for architects.

Philip Graus

Director, Cox Richardson Architects and Planners
Conjoint Professor, Built Environment, UNSW
IN FOCUS

Sydney 2015 - 2050

As part of understanding Sydney and informing the conversation on strategic thinking for the built environment, the Built Environment Committee has developed this high level map and timeline of key infrastructure, regional planning and urban transformation projects currently identified or being undertaken over the next 35 years.

Project Types

Rail and Rapid Transit
Light Rail Projects
Roads and Motorways
Airport Infrastructure
Urban Renewal
Greenfields Development
IN FOCUS

10 Lessons from the Revival of Ultimo-Pyrmont

Russell Olsson defines the key elements that ensured the success of this benchmark redevelopment.

“The city in all its grandeur and beauty is made from many parts, each different from the other ... if we can read the city as having continuity, it is because of the predominance of its formal and spatial character.”

Aldo Rossi, The Architecture of the City, 1966

The Ultimo and Pyrmont area was desolate in the 1980s; it was an urban precinct peppered with empty warehouses, redundant powerhouses, uninhabited terraces and vacant sites. The residential population of 19,000 in 1991 had dropped to 1,591 by 1981. In the past three decades, the population has grown dramatically, returning to its 1901 population of 19,000. This turn around was achieved by coordinated state, federal and local government planning that provided a clearly demarcated framework for private sector development. The success of this redevelopment can be summarised in 10 key points.

1. A statutory plan – the 1992 Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 26 City West (REP26) – guided the social, economic and environmental outcomes in the peninsula’s re-development.

2. REP 26 was backed by an urban design precinct plan, a public domain plan and comprehensive building envelope designs for every site sold by the government.

3. Many sites were sold with approved development applications that were the result of limited architectural competitions. These competitions set benchmarks for residential design on the peninsula.

4. Affordable housing was provided by City West Housing, which was set up to implement the State Government’s Affordable Housing Program. This resulted in 365 dwellings being provided in 11 locations to house 800 people.

5. The community was regularly consulted. Input to public domain and built form designs was gained at regular meetings and information sessions. In 1996 and 2000 there were 620 post-occupancy surveys conducted.

6. New parks were provided at a rate of 19.8sqm per resident, which was a 24% increase on the target originally set in the 1991 plan.

7. The peninsula, including the preparation of REP No 26, is a low-rise, partially empty and underutilised densely populated part of Australia, with well proportioned urban spaces, extensive parklands, many heritage items, enhanced public transport, affordable housing and a strong sense of place. This has been established by a cohesive set of urban planning instruments suffused with design thinking and complemented by the vital input of the private sector and the community.

Russell Olsson
Director, Olsson & Associates Architects
Registered architect and urban designer

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Many architects were involved in the planning of the peninsula, including the preparation of REP No 26 (Cox Richardson); the Ultimo-Pyrmont Precinct Plan (Michael Harrison of Architects); the Public Domain Plan (Combe Marrisons); urban design at the City West Development Corporation (Jan McCredie); the Building Envelope Designs for CWDC (Ted Alexander and this author); and the Ultimo-Pyrmont DCP (Margaret Petrykasiewicz).

Urban design considerations informed decision making at every level. An important principle was that the desired type of urban space influenced and generated the built form framework. Urban space was viewed as positive, continuous, and uniting. In Ultimo, for example, many 20m wide streets were formed with a 1:1 proportion, by continuous nine storey buildings, with seven storeys built to the street and the top two storeys set back. In Pyrmont Point, view corridors were created to the harbour, and to sites such as the Harbourside Bridge or the REVY building (Royal Edward Victualling Yard) tower. These view corridors sometimes cut across development sites and were defined by building envelopes before the sites were sold for development. The creation and retention of view corridors minimized the sense of density inside the peninsula, by opening views to distant places. In Pyrmont west of Harris Street, public streets provided the basis for the City of Sydney development controls of the Land Lease re-development. A low-rise, partially empty and underutilised peninsula has been transformed into the most densely populated part of Australia, with well proportioned urban spaces, extensive parklands, many heritage items, enhanced public transport, affordable housing and a strong sense of place.

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Population density was achieved with a high quality environment. Pyrmont-Ultimo is Australia’s most densely populated suburb. It had 13,850 residents per square kilometre in June 2012. This was achieved with well proportioned streets, extensive parklands and the retention of heritage items.
The City of Sydney (the City) employs over 50 architects, landscape architects and urban designers in various aspects of city shaping and design. It is this combination of experience and skillsets that informs our vision for strategic development in Sydney. Together, we help resolve the issues facing our city today: climate change, housing affordability, traffic congestion, and how their experience can be enriched through greater connectivity, accessibility, and creativity as we shape every project.

MODELS FOR COLLABORATION

To implement the strategic design work flowing from the City’s Sustainable Sydney 2030 plan, in Sydney’s complex governance environment, we must collaborate with our government counterparts the Government Architect’s Office, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Bays Precinct Delivery Authority, Barangaroo Delivery Authority and UrbanGrowth NSW and numerous private developers. We can only achieve a coherent city of public space, parks, streets, lanes, community buildings, libraries and pools.

We seek to synthesise the often complex and competing requirements of transport planning, planning controls, quality of the public domain and fiscal constraints into opportunities to improve our city’s built environment - often square metre by square metre. Our focus is typically the human condition, the pedestrian, and how their experience can be enriched through greater connectivity, accessibility, and creativity as we shape every project.

IN FOCUS

The City of Sydney's George Street Concept Design – George Street and Barrack Street. Artist Impression by Doug and Wolf 2013.

A broad experience of complex infrastructure projects (Boston’s Big Dig and the Sydney Olympics) to award-winning projects (Sunny Hill Library) and public art works, we hold an optimistic view that strategic design can contribute to enhancing the quality of public life in our cities. We serve to translate the community and stakeholder aspirations into a global city context supported by a network of vibrant villages.

As leader of the City Design team, Bridget Smyth is acutely aware of the importance of design skills and collaboration. Here, she reveals the strategies and principles used by the City of Sydney to ensure the ongoing success of their built environment developments.

**CITY DESIGN - SHAPING SYDNEY**

I lead the City Design team at the City: a small team of architects, urban designers, landscape architects and curators whose role is to think strategically about Sydney’s built environment, primarily the public domain. It is the core team that established Sustainable Sydney 2030 and is currently developing many of its key strategic directions with new policy, strategy and concept designs for projects that make the SS2030 vision concrete. This includes: developing concept designs for the new Sydney Light Rail project; public domain plans for the city centre and Green Square; directing the City’s public art program, City Art and finalising design codes for the public domain.

The City Design team is involved with the micro (new public domain furniture) and the macro (public domain strategies for Green Square, Chinatown and George Street) to ensure strategic design thinking and principles are embedded in our own projects, the work of the private sector and other government agencies within our local government area.

As a small team of 11 architects, urban designers, landscape architects and curators with a broad experience of complex infrastructure projects (Boston’s Big Dig and the Sydney Olympics) to award-winning projects (Sunny Hill Library) and public art works, we hold an optimistic view that strategic design can contribute to enhancing the quality of public life in our cities. We serve to translate the community and stakeholder aspirations into a global city context supported by a network of vibrant villages.

GRAND STRATEGY TO DELIVERY

The City Design team is fortunate to not just speculate on the future of Sydney through developing strategic design ideas but also to be part of implementing these projects through the City’s capital works program. The City’s City Projects division subjects our strategic design projects to a rigorous delivery process where upon the community will benefit from the likes of

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The Parramatta Council City Strategy Unit has recently developed a number of strategies all of which involve design methodologies and collaboration, and demonstrate how effectively design-led approaches can inform strategic thinking about the city. These strategies include: Centenary Square, the Green Grid, the City Centre Planning Review, the 10 Big Ideas, the City Centre Lanes Strategy, the Parramatta City River Strategy and Design Parramatta. The most design-focused of these was the Design Parramatta project, where the collaborative, design-led approach generated many outcomes in addition to its original public domain framework purpose.

Design methodology - analysing problems from several perspectives, generating a range of options, testing, prioritising and developing a preferred solution - provides excellent training for designers to contribute to developing both general strategies and design strategies. The presence of the urban design team in City Strategy strongly influenced the multi-disciplinary City Strategy teams to use design thinking and design skills in developing many of their successful strategies.

Design Parramatta, used design methodology to generate the Parramatta City Centre Public Domain Framework Plan 2012 - a vision and spatial hierarchy for the upgrade of Parramatta City's entire public domain network. The multi-designer approach developed consensus (amongst participating designers at least) as well as diversity in design response.

Once created, along with other key Council strategies described above, Design Parramatta made its way into submissions to the State Government and the Department of Planning, pitching the importance of Parramatta's development as a CBD for the whole of Sydney. This proposal was realised when the Metropolitan Strategy 2014 upgraded Parramatta from being a regional centre to Sydney's second city. A key component of this was demonstrating that improving Parramatta was central to improving metropolitan Sydney.

Design Parramatta was also an incubator for the Green Grid Project in the Metropolitan Strategy. Helen Papathanasis (Manager Environmental Outcomes Parramatta Council) and I initiated this concept as the Environmental Big Idea in City Strategy's suite of 10 Big Ideas for growing Parramatta. During Design Parramatta, the Government Architect's Office (GAO) Landscape team led by Barbara Schaffer conceptualised a 4km long green linear loop surrounding the city, as part of their Design Parramatta scheme. This made the GAO a clear choice as consultant team to develop Council's Green Grid (now Parra Ways) for Parramatta. With this project in hand, the GAO was able to successfully champion the idea for the whole of Sydney, and it now forms part of the Metropolitan Strategy as the Green Grid.

Another Design Parramatta site, Church Street Mall, has now been transformed into Centenary Square, designed by JMD. Centenary Square has become the city's busiest pedestrian and civic space. The program was to declutter, improve views and create sufficient flexibility for diverse programming - ranging from weekly markets to a 5,000 member audience such as the 2014 Paul Kelly concert - while still accommodating the city's daily community. The square's transformation reveals a new image for the city, supports better retail, encourages people to linger and creates a safer, more popular space.

The Parramatta City River Strategy 2014 built on four Design Parramatta Projects, albeit within a wider foreshore context. This strategy was designed by McGregor Coxall and managed by Callantha Brigham from Parramatta City Council Urban Design Team, and has been adopted by Parramatta Council. The first built project to be realised will be an upgrade of the Parramatta Wharf with funding from Transport for NSW and the strategy will also inform many additional concurrent projects along the city’s waterfront including the Riverbank Development.

Design Parramatta also influenced the city’s DCP, with the setback definition condition for George Street, (Australia’s oldest planned street still in existence) being strongly influenced by the Design Parramatta proposal for George Street project by Hill Thalis, JILA and Turpin Crawford.

Design Parramatta brought many designers to Parramatta, and both the city and council benefited from this exposure - a kind of design bombarding. Further, a prioritised funding and implementation plan for the city’s public domain is currently being prepared, and it is hoped that ongoing implementation of Design Parramatta projects will continue. In just three years the scale of proposed rebuilding for Parramatta City has increased dramatically and the projects will necessarily evolve to accommodate this.

The inclusion of urban design within Parramatta’s City Strategy team allowed design thinking to inform many recent key strategies that have impacted on the city and metropolis. In particular, Design Parramatta, illustrates the wide range of important outcomes that may be generated by design strategy. In this instance they include: the illustration of a vision for the city’s public domain that is appropriate to its elevated status as second CBD, the inoculation of additional further strategies; the further stimulation of built public domain projects and the generation of improved policy and planning guidelines. Along with more traditional urban design strategies such as the Parramatta City Centre Lanes Strategy and the Auto Alley Strategy, Design Parramatta has contributed to embedding design and design methodology into growing Parramatta City to ensure the city’s success and livability.

Kati Westlake Manager, Urban Design, Parramatta City Council

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The array of recent strategies developed by the Parramatta Council City Strategy Unit has collaboration and design methodology at its core. Kati Westlake explains how strategic thinking has influenced the establishment of Sydney’s second city.
IN FOCUS

The Green Grid

The Sydney Green Grid brings our open-space environment to the forefront; Barbara Schaffer explains the need for this green investment in the face of urban growth.

Sydney’s population is forecast to increase 80% by 2054, resulting in an additional three million people living and working in the metropolitan area. As population density increases, the challenge will be to shape the built environment to ensure that Sydney remains one of the world’s most distinctive and liveable cities.

In acknowledging that green space is a key hallmark of liveability, the Government Architect’s Office (GAO) proposed the establishment of a network of high-quality green areas that connect town centres, public transport networks and major residential areas. Now known as the Sydney Green Grid and regarded as an integral part of the Metro Strategy, this network aims to anchor sustainable development while maximising quality of life and well-being.

Although Sydney has many green and water enriched spaces, what is missing – and this is the aim of this project – is an overarching schema that approaches them in a connected way, ensuring that their contribution to our quality of life, the environment and the economy are maximised, rendering a working whole that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Sydney Green Grid is a green infrastructure, design-led strategy that includes the full range of open spaces: national, regional and local parks; the harbour, ocean beaches, wetlands, rivers and creeks; playgrounds, playing fields, golf courses and cemeteries. Furthermore, interconnected linkages are fostered within the wider public realm through enhancing creek corridors, transport routes, suburban streets, footpaths and cycleways. The Sydney Green Grid is therefore an open-space interconnecting network that will keep the city cool, encourage healthy lifestyles, enhance biodiversity and ensure ecological resilience.

Green infrastructure has an increasingly important role to play as we face the challenges of population and urban growth on the one hand and climate change on the other. Well designed and planned green infrastructure will help absorb flood water, cool the urban environment, clean the air, provide space for local food production and ensure the survival of Sydney’s fauna and flora as well as providing space for recreation, sport and leisure.

GREEN ECONOMICS

The Sydney Green Grid proposes an economic case for investment in green infrastructure beyond the provision of open space for recreation alone. Consequently, it is now understood by many arms of urban planning and design (in both the public and private sectors) as a value proposition, where benefit outweighs cost by raising the overall quality of investment in both the open space and investment alike.

Having demonstrated the value of applying this thinking at the subregional and metropolitan scale, the GAO has since been working with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to create an evidence-based, open-space audit across metropolitan Sydney. This audit acts as a baseline for exploring opportunities to create an interconnected metropolitan network that will support the projected population, housing and employment targets.

“How was the Green Grid initiated?”

Inspired by the All London Green Grid, the GAO undertook a pilot project in Parramatta where the provision of open space at regional, district and local levels was assessed. The project targeted open space deficiencies and determined where additional open space was required in order to ensure equity of access. The result was an interconnected network of open space for Parramatta, proposing the optimisation of creek corridors for flood management as well as for walking and cycling. The street networks were examined and potential infrastructure corridors - such as light rail - were investigated, key suggestions for integration of the unique heritage components of the city were also made.

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Barbara Schaffer

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In support of this economic investment the GAO benchmarked ideas against initiatives from around the world, where the benefits from reduced flood risk, improved health outcomes and increased ecological resilience are being quantified. For example, in Chicago the greening of only a small percentage of the city’s rooftops has significantly reduced air pollution. Chicago estimates that this investment could result in avoided health costs of $29 to $111 million USD...
annually. In 2011, Philadelphia created the Green City Clean Waters program—a 25-year, $2.5 billion plan to protect and enhance the city’s catchments by managing storm water with innovative green infrastructure. The city estimates that using green infrastructure in lieu of traditional approaches could save $8 billion USD over the life of the program.

Based on Sydney’s unique character, the GAO aims to articulate a clear and compelling economic rationale for future investment in green infrastructure. Initial research has uncovered a number of cost/benefit analyses, but they are limited in scope and the implementation is fragmented. Sydney’s current parks, open spaces and other green features—such as street trees—are managed by over 42 different public authorities and agencies. This results in an approach to planning and management of a suite of assets that does not fully realise the potential that could be harnessed by a more integrated approach. To successfully create green infrastructure at the landscape scale, we must transcend conventional silo modes of thinking within government and pursue an approach to planning, design and implementation where key agencies work together to support a common goal.

THE STRATEGY

The GAO is actively promoting and advocating the Sydney Green Grid across government, influencing planning strategies, local government open space network plans, and UrbanGrowth NSW’s urban transformation precincts. This strategy needs to be owned by many.

The Sydney Green Grid envisions green infrastructure as a three-dimensional envelope that surrounds, connects and infuses buildings, streets and utilities. The concept of landscape as green infrastructure provides a potent framework for integrating the work of designers, planners, developers, policy makers and others, and leveraging this collaboration to achieve larger metropolitan goals.

The delivery of the Sydney Green Grid vision is a complex and challenging task. It is a long-term, evolutionary process that will require bipartisan support at all levels of government—national, regional and local. In London, the Greater London Authority is establishing a Green Infrastructure Task Force to advise on a long-term strategy for London’s green infrastructure and the options for governance and funding. A similar move has been made in Sydney, with the NSW Government establishing the independent Greater Sydney Commission to oversee the implementation of A Plan for Growing Sydney—a strategy for extending the Sydney Green Grid and growing Sydney sustainably. The awareness of landscape as both a vital resource needing protection, and a countervailing force that can be used to positively shape city and subregional development patterns, has seen this initiative included as a key policy directive in the most recent metropolitan plan—A Plan for Growing Sydney—in which implementing the Sydney Green Grid is designated a primary action.

When we see green infrastructure as an asset, that is integral to Sydney’s metabolism as its roads, rail lines and storm water pipes, and valued for the whole range of social, health, environmental, economic and educational benefits it brings to Sydney, then the importance of an integrated approach to management, enhancement and extension becomes paramount. Green infrastructure requires the same kind of protection, investment and innovation we afford more familiar types of built infrastructure. Investing in a comprehensive and well-managed green grid will provide the living thread that binds sustainable communities together and contributes to the future economic, social and environmental success of our city.

Barbara Schaffer
Principal Landscape Architect, NSW Government Architect’s Office

“Green infrastructure requires the same kind of protection, investment and innovation we afford more familiar types of built infrastructure.”

Barbara Schaffer
The Missing Link

Universities and healthcare institutions provide the backbone for many cities, informing urban design and the lifestyle of citizens. Paul Walter considers the recent developments and plans for Parramatta that are providing the building blocks for transformation.

University education and student life is changing. Living on or near campus in a cheap run-down terrace house, surviving on sandwiches and falafels, days on end in the library, all these are things of the past. Today students produce their final assessments while juggling a thousand other things they need to do. They rush from work to home to a lecture - doing this without a car in Sydney is very difficult, in Western Sydney it is virtually impossible.

Connectivity and location have become all important to universities. Campus planning and development approaches have also shifted significantly. In the 1990s and 2000s the thinking was around town and gown: should we build a town environment in the university campus? Should universities open campuses in town centres? There are now seven major universities present in the Sydney CBD (not counting the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS)). Newcastle University is about to start construction on its eight-storey building at Civica and the University of New England has a presence in a sandstone building on Church Street in Parramatta. As universities redefine the way they operate, they distinctly shape their context. Recently, there has been a lot said about anchor institutions and about eds and meds (education and healthcare) as valuable cluster-creating forces. Parramatta is in a position of having both: the internationally significant health precinct at Westmead to the west, University of Western Sydney in Rydalmere lies to the east.

There is real change in Parramatta: commercial office space value is higher than North Sydney, a string of public domain projects are changing the feel of the place and for the first time the street life is getting an urban vibe. In July, Parramatta city’s CEO Greg Dyer named the three most transformational projects for the city: Parramatta Square, the light rail and the UWS CBD project. It is becoming possible to imagine a student, studying, working, even living without a car. It seems that together, UWS and Parramatta City Council are determined to join town and gown in a city between the eds and meds.

Paul Walter
Director, Atlas Urban Design and Strategy

The Rydalmere campus has a traditional campus feel. It was formerly an orphanage then an asylum, before it became a university campus in 1998. The potential of this site is somewhat limited because of its great heritage significance: the riverside Female Orphan School building is its nodal role, however during the previous state government term the only major transport corridors (north west and southwest heavy rail) reinforced Sydney’s primacy.

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Paul Walter

The Rydalmere campus has been confronted with the very question of town versus gowns. Should investment flow into Parramatta CBD or the Rydalmere campus? With ongoing investments in Rydalmere and the decision to make a large commitment to Parramatta Square, the university is investing in both.

UWS presence in the CBD will be part of the Parramatta Square redevelopment, one of Australia’s largest renewal projects. The flagship vertical campus will become home to over 10,000 students and will include new learning environments that promote greater flexibility and collaboration. The new facility, to be built and owned by Charter Hall, totals 26,000 square metres over 14 storeys. UWS will initially use approximately 20,000 square metres with the remaining floor space an option for expansion as the university grows over the next decade.

IN FOCUS

The Missing Link

School of Medicine, University of Western Sydney by Lyons. Courtesy: University of Western Sydney.

IN FOCUS

The Missing Link

Map of University of Western Sydney campuses and hospitals. Courtesy: University of Western Sydney.
IN FOCUS

The Goods Line: a New Spine for Ultimo

As a director at ASPECT Studios, Sacha Coles has worked on numerous landscape architecture and urban design projects in Sydney. Sophie Solomon spoke to Coles about one of his most significant projects – The Goods Line - to find out what strategies and considerations were taken in the design of this urban transformation.

Sacha Coles (SC): Could you frame the process of strategic design around your Goods Line Project?

Sacha Coles (SC): The initial brief for The Goods Line Project was to create a shared path for old affordable space in close proximity to the city fringe, but it has a vacancy of usable, open space. There are the universities (UTS / TAFE), the Powerhouse Museum and the ABC. From the outset there have been multiple agencies and influences responsible for setting agendas, briefs and aspirations for what the site could be. It is a whole of government project, there are many champions of this project and it has been a highly participatory process.

Sophie Solomon (SS): How do you relate this project to other projects you have completed?

SS: How is the project funded?

SC: Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA), our client, is the main land owner. Other landowners and key stakeholders include TransGrid, Rail Corp, UTS, TAFE, the Powerhouse Museum and the ABC. From the outset there have been multiple agencies and influences responsible for setting agendas, briefs and aspirations for what the site could be. It is a whole of government project, there are many champions of this project and it has been a highly participatory process.

SC: The Goods Line is somewhat unique for us as a project type and not immediately relatable to our previous works beyond material choices. It does not sit easily as a landscape type. It is part urban park, plaza, walkway and campus spine. It is all these things and yet hopefully it has a strong identity of its own, as a generous public space which has knitted together a formerly disconnected city spine.

Sophie Solomon
Principal, ssd studio

The underpinning to our whole project was to take this piece of industrial infrastructure and turn it into social infrastructure, creating a new spine for Ultimo.”

Sacha Coles

Sophie Solomon (SS): Could you frame the process of strategic design around your Goods Line Project?

SS: How is the project funded?

SC: The Goods Line (north) is funded by the state through SHFA. We have advocated to extend The Goods Line beyond its current project boundary and funding will need to be secured to enable future stages and connections.

SS: Are you working collaboratively with other consultants to deliver the project?

SC: The initial design process was very collaborative, both with our architects – CHROFI and the participatory design process with our steering committee. Whilst ASPECT Studios has lead the project, the design partnership with CHROFI has produced a far more interesting process and hopefully a more accomplished outcome for the public.

“… we unpacked the potential of The Goods Line as a connector, not just from A to B but to a new network of public experiences around and through the buildings and the precinct.”

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SC: The initial design process was very collaborative, both with our architects – CHROFI and the participatory design process with our steering committee. Whilst ASPECT Studios has lead the project, the design partnership with CHROFI has produced a far more interesting process and hopefully a more accomplished outcome for the public.

“… we unpacked the potential of The Goods Line as a connector, not just from A to B but to a new network of public experiences around and through the buildings and the precinct.”

Sacha Coles

As a director at ASPECT Studios, Sacha Coles has worked on numerous landscape architecture and urban design projects in Sydney. Sophie Solomon spoke to Coles about one of his most significant projects – The Goods Line - to find out what strategies and considerations were taken in the design of this urban transformation.

Sacha Coles (SC): The initial brief for The Goods Line Project was to create a shared path for old affordable space in close proximity to the city fringe, but it has a vacancy of usable, open space. There are the universities (UTS / TAFE), the Powerhouse Museum and the ABC. From the outset there have been multiple agencies and influences responsible for setting agendas, briefs and aspirations for what the site could be. It is a whole of government project, there are many champions of this project and it has been a highly participatory process.
Life Without the Walk-up

A recent study by HASSELL considers the possibilities of urban renewal for higher density residential areas in Sydney, David Tickle presents the resulting proposal for new neighbourhoods.

All cities are grappling with a range of challenges surrounding housing, such as affordability and supply (often, but not always, related), delivering density without compromising quality, and social and ecological sustainability. HASSELL’s study recognised these shared challenges, but also sought to identify how each city is making progress on addressing them – and in turn, how each can learn from the successes of the others. A representative housing typology was selected for each city: the walk-up apartment in Sydney, the row house in London and the xincun (worker’s village) in Shanghai. The selected housing model needed to have the potential to undergo transformation for better social, economic, environmental and urban outcomes.

A true transformation of this housing typology means moving beyond the lot-by-lot approach that first created the walk-up typology: it requires renewal at the street, neighbourhood and suburb-wide scale. This approach to renewal (see diagram below) has the potential to deliver more of everything – double the dwellings, double the floor space, double the open space – as well as densification of urban areas beyond residential.

Within the Auburn town centre, a typical walk-up suburb, there are up to 70 of these walk-up apartment clusters, yielding the potential for 5000 new apartments (an increase of 2380) as well as the delivery of more than 70,000 square metres of green space – the equivalent of twice the amount of green space than the town centre’s Auburn Park. Applied at the same scale to just 10 other locations, 10% of Sydney’s projected housing needs could be met. This would provide a significant boost to housing being delivered in areas already identified in state and local government plans.

Across the three cities of Sydney, London and Shanghai, the HASSELL study demonstrates significant potential – up to 1,000,000 new homes, but importantly, up to 100 much improved neighbourhoods. Thinking at the scale of the neighbourhood, rather than the individual home, yields the greatest impact in creating more sustainable, better connected, higher quality housing.

Now decades old, many of Sydney’s walk-ups are reaching the end of their useful lives. Their radical transformation may not only be desirable, but – in helping to contain Sydney’s sprawling unaffordability – desperately needed.

David Tickle
Principal and Urban Design Sector Leader, HASSELL

IN FOCUS

Neighbourhood renewal of the walk-up

The study considered a grouping of three walk-up buildings – typically 36 apartments (12 per building) and approximately 570 square metres of open space.

The final environment provides a diverse range of private and shared spaces: a large courtyard; apartment balconies and rooftop gardens; and attached to the existing walk-up, stack-yards is a layered solution to the backyard that many Sydneysiders desire.

Vision for the walk-up renewal proposal. Courtesy of HASSELL.
Shaun Carter and David Pitchford discuss alliances and innovation in the battle to achieve exceptional urban development.

David Pitchford was appointed chief executive of UrbanGrowth NSW two years ago, following stints as chief executive of the City of Melbourne and head of the Major Projects Authority in the United Kingdom. His current projects include the transformation of The Bays Precinct west of the Pyrmont peninsula and the airspace over the railway corridor between Central and Eveleigh.

NSW Chapter President Shaun Carter caught up with Pitchford following the completion of the Sydneyiders Summit in May – the second of two summits preparing the groundwork for community involvement in the planning phase of the Bays Precinct project.

Shaun Carter (SC): I think I saw you on the 28th of 29 presentations at the Sydneyiders Summit. It looked a big effort.

David Pitchford (DP): Yes, it was a long four days – no question about that. It was a very successful outcome that raised very significantly the profile of UrbanGrowth NSW to the architecture profession.

SC: How would you describe the role of UrbanGrowth NSW to the architecture profession?

DP: The role of this agency is to go where no one has gone before and to actually achieve some outcomes that have been crying out for 30 to 40 years. It’s an agency that is both a delivery and a design agency. We have this very important, different city transformation life cycle model (see accompanying diagram) which you would have seen in the summits, which is not only a diagram, it’s a philosophy. It underpins our business plan. It underpins our work approach and it also will underpin everything we do in terms of the priorities for the projects.

Our work is not just about development, it’s about economic growth. Our overall thrust is to drive an internationally competitive Sydney in terms of its economy, its liveability and opportunities for all Australians. It goes way beyond just some development platform similar to Barangaroo for example, which is a fine project, much muddled, but ours is a much, much more extensive responsibility than just taking a piece of land and converting it into a project.

What we’re transforming is Sydney Harbour and the lives of Australians and that’s all about economics and job growth. We want to create new jobs, red jobs. We don’t want just to decent people from other parts of Sydney.

What I want to do is to create a mass of new exciting undertakings, particularly in information-based jobs that will attract people from all over the world, all over Australia, to come and do things that are certainly different for us, but also everything that goes with that. If you want to attract talent, you’ve got to provide a platform, you’ve got to provide places to live that they love and we’ve got the opportunity to do that here.

UrbanGrowth [NSW] is possibly the most important partnership platform that the Institute of Architects has ever been associated with, because we are looking to you to be allies in the war against mediocrity.

David Pitchford

“Our work is not just about development, it’s about economic growth. Our overall thrust is to drive an internationally competitive Sydney in terms of its economy, its liveability and opportunities for all Australians.”

David Pitchford

In relation to Central to Eveleigh, we’ll be looking for your members to help us innovate to the point where we do things much, much smarter, much more effectively and we address the density issue together. I see your membership and the design capability that it has as being a beacon for us. We’re not going to settle for the cheap and easy designs, the knock-offs as I call it. What we want to do is to reach those elements of your profession that want to join us to make certain that we build great things, particularly at The Bays Precinct, which is possibly the most high level and high potential urban renewal site in the world, given its proximity to the Sydney CBD.

SC: Such a rare opportunity too, 80 hectares of land at the Western edge of the city.

DP: It’s an absolute obligation on us to do that in the best possible way, not the easiest way. That’s why we started with [the lifecycle model]. We start by thinking first and working out what the aspirations, ideas and needs are. That’s the first stage. We look then to see how we are going to fund it and we are well advanced into some pretty innovative funding models.

In relation to the White Bay Power Station, we are very clear about the density issue together. I see your membership and the design capability that it has as being a beacon for us. We’re not going to settle for the cheap and easy designs, the knock-offs as I call it. What we want to do is to reach those elements of your profession that want to join us to make certain that we build great things, particularly at The Bays Precinct.

Only then do we go to the building phase, but when we get there, it’s not just about design, it’s about the design of what, where and why and how. Is it linked to infrastructure or what additional infrastructure does it need? For example, in The Bays Precinct, there is nowhere near the transport infrastructure that needs to be there.

We’ve got to address that really important question of mass transit and introduce a whole range of things that will be unpalatable to the government in terms of the level of investment, but without that, it will be a disaster.

We also have some fantastic opportunities there to be innovative. The White Bay Power Station is the last of its kind. We’ve got an obligation to use it, but it’s got to be used in a way that drives economic outcomes in my view. I feel strongly that we have an opportunity there to utilize a piece of history to develop what might be great for the future. I’m not wedded to it in terms of it must be preserved. It must be used. The difference is really important.

We will manage the development process, but we want to be an alliance, not just a commercial partnership. There’ll be lots of people within your profession that will just say ‘Well, this is just more government mumbo jumbo’. When you get us out in the market place to secure the people that we want to design and build this, you’ll see it differently. We are simply not going to settle for the same old models.

For a full transcript of this interview please visit architecturebulletin.com.au

IN FOCUS
Against Mediocrity

David Pitchford and Shaun Carter discuss alliances and innovation in the battle to achieve exceptional urban development.
Adaptation and Collaboration

The role of the architect is evolving in an interdisciplinary world; Tim Horton shares early thinking from the NSW Architects Registration Board that defines some of the trends of change.

It is a mantra to many of us, but it is worth restating: good design is as much about how something works as how it looks. Despite the efforts of researchers, advocates, designers and educators across the country, the myth still prevails that design is a matter of taste, superficial and subjective. To some, it is about the object - not the creative process of invention, mediates and gives shape to these competing objectives. The architectural process is as valuable as the product, but usually it is the product that gets the attention. Why is a regulator like the NSW Architects Registration Board (the Board) exploring this?

Australia has flirted with the idea of design thinking for a while, but for long a time we did not really have a hunger platform. We escaped the Global Financial Crisis and enjoyed decades of unbroken economic growth. In recent years though, Australians have come to realise we are facing some big challenges. New ideas are needed to respond effectively.

Big challenges demand new partners and new perspectives: smart businesses are inviting their workers to co-design strategy; citizens are co-producing policy; companies ask customers to help design new products. Architects co-produce too - synthesising the needs and skills of financiers and building owners, with engineers and planners, contractors and developers, trades and suppliers.

Tim Horton

“Big challenges demand new partners and new perspectives: smart businesses are inviting their workers to co-design strategy; citizens are co-producing policy; companies ask customers to help design new products. Architects co-produce too - synthesising the needs and skills of financiers and building owners, with engineers and planners, contractors and developers, trades and suppliers.”

“We are clear on what we do, but we want to understand if and how it might change as things around us change. The Board wants to understand the many external and related influences on the practice of architecture - the output and the experiences of those who commission or engage with the result. Penelope Siddle AM stated it well during Sydney Architecture Festival 2014, asking rhetorically, “When is building architecture? Why?””

The Board is still working on an answer to that one. To address it, we think we need to get a better visual on the strategic architecture that drives the profession. We want to understand the drivers of change and disruption for the sector. Why? The Board believes this is the first step in understanding whether a form of adaptation strategy for the sector is needed, or if we know that the trajectory of the sector is towards a more collaborative model of practice (for instance, where the architect brings expertise, but may not lead), are there implications for how we accredit university programs that are more interdisciplinary? How is this reflected in the (soon to be released) National Standard of Competency for Architects - literally the yardstick of competence for the profession? The Board’s interest in developing these integrative, collaboration skills is just one reason we are a part of the MADE (Multidisciplinary Australian Denmark Exchange) by the Opera House initiative - a 10 year project designed to promote the integrative skills needed for collaboration between architects, designers and engineers.

The domains, fields and themes in the diagrams illustrated here represent a kind of inventory of connected challenges facing policymakers, professionals, and the community at large. The exact nature of these challenges is still being determined and any coherent response is still some way off. In many cases, these challenges have no one owner but are shared by a number of players in the sector. So it is likely any solution will come from shared effort.

To see our way through this problem better, the Board has approached it as a designer would - sketching and diagramming to explore relationships, and outlining a thesis that can invite others to critique and contribute. The Board is interested in how these changing conditions impact on architecture. We have identified some domains in which change is happening rapidly, including fields in which we see this play out, and the areas in which we see this change exemplified.

Timothy Horton
Registrar, Architects Registration Board of NSW

\* Courtesy: Architects Registration Board of NSW

\(\text{An architecture driven by the user experience}\)

Adapted from a seminal diagram by Dan Saffer, this diagram visualises the relationships between various design disciplines - all categorised under the unifying field of user experience. This place architecture among the constellation of design fields connected with, for example, human factors and ergonomics through the affiliated design discipline of industrial design, or to communication design through digital signage and interactive installations. Here, architecture is seen in context with its affiliates. Not to make one superior or subservient, but to view it as part of an ongoing larger for design-based capability.
A New Profession

Is Australia holding onto a dated and unrewarding archetype of the role of an architect?

Gerard Reinmuth asserts that we should dispose of existing notions in favour of a much more strategic model of the profession.

Our profession remains trapped in the circumstances of its formation in the Anglo-conception of the architect and the emphasis on a multi-skilled professional that works from ideation to construction – a model which has persisted despite profound changes in how society forms itself both politically and spatially.

The way in which we continue to hold onto our model of a professional architect is perplexing given our exposure to numerous alternate models where the architect may be anything from an artist (Denmark) to a master builder (Switzerland) and just about everything in between. Yet even this breadth is still within the stasis in our conception of the architect has meant the rise of the neo-liberal paradigm of New Public Management (NPM) as the approach via which cities are now managed.

NPM repositions the city as the object of strategic thinking. While the shift to this paradigm has been rapid – there was little writing about new forms of city management until the late 1980’s – the reality is that other professions and pseudo-professions have been agile in filling the vacuum created by the absence of architects who understand the terms of engagement now in play. Citizens are now citizen-consumers who prefer markets that offer choices and services, such that this consumer paradigm has replaced the less tangible politics of the public realm. Spatial outcomes are clear manifestation of power discourses where the right to speak for the city is constantly won and lost in a complex political field. These developments were masked or misunderstood by a profession busy trying to guard its constantly threatened castle walls (project management, increase in consultants) without realising that developments were missed or misunderstood by architects participating in key strategic roles in government and deliberating constraints in place for those who dare try. Those who persist in this content need an endurance runner’s persistence and a saint’s quantum of patience.

All this contrasts with NORD’s example that reflects perfectly my own experience of life as an architect in Denmark. On the surface, it could be understood as a similar context to Australia: a western democracy and a first world economy, living conditions and education system. The key difference is that Denmark has a client base, particularly in government, populated by a far greater level of respect for strategic thinking and the conditions that must exist in order for proper strategic work to be done. In particular, there is an acceptance that strategic thinking requires a level of intellectual investment and research and development that involves testing multiple possibilities, working simultaneously at multiple scales and funding (what becomes) redundant projects in the interests of exploring an idea from all angles. This explorative posture values research ability over previous experience, open-mindedness over the heavy hand of existing protocols and a confidence in youth without a discord for the gravitas that comes with experience. The country’s relatively small political class, particularly at city level where pensioners, teenagers and everyone in between stave out from billboards at election time – somehow finds its equal in practice structures.

Our skillset can be.

The failure of the profession to fully capitalise on the opportunities of this new era of city management is only one part of the story – in our Australian context we also suffer from the political and economic context in which we find ourselves. The recent Droga residency by NORD architects for example, provided a startling reminder of the chasm between a non-resources economy and politic that still understands strategic practice through spatial thinking as its core skillset – from which buildings may or may not eventuate. Rather than bemoan the erosion of territory, we should establish a new one for which our skillset gives an unassailable advantage. Through collaboration between both outsiders (the profession) and insiders (those architects in a position to influence government from within), we should slowly work to better understand the paradigm changes in public management and city making and demonstrate exactly how potent our skillset can be.

Back to our local context then - albeit briefly and in conclusion. In an environment where neither the profession nor our political representatives appear to have a common language through which strategic work can be effortlessly commissioned and undertaken (as in the case of these projects, but as sub-consultants or contributors to a strategic design process headed by an architect). The architect is understood to be the professional with the ability to work through the uncertainty created by research questions and to provoke, coordinate, and synthesise an incredibly diverse set of inputs into a clear strategic vision which in turn informs a spatial proposition.

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Gerard Reinmuth

Director, TERROIR

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The stasis in our conception of the architect has meant the rise of the neo-liberal paradigm of New Public Management (NPM) as the approach via which cities are now managed. NPM repositions the city as the object of strategic thinking. While the shift to this paradigm has been rapid – there was little writing about new forms of city management until the late 1980’s – the reality is that other professions and pseudo-professions have been agile in filling the vacuum created by the absence of architects who understand the terms of engagement now in play. Citizens are now citizen-consumers who prefer markets that offer choices and services, such that this consumer paradigm has replaced the less tangible politics of the public realm. Spatial outcomes are clear manifestation of power discourses where the right to speak for the city is constantly won and lost in a complex political field. These developments were masked or misunderstood by a profession busy trying to guard its constantly threatened castle walls (project management, increase in consultants) without realising that developments were missed or misunderstood by architects participating in key strategic roles in government and deliberating constraints in place for those who dare try. Those who persist in this content need an endurance runner’s persistence and a saint’s quantum of patience.

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Unconscious Bias

Gender stereotyping and bias are often acted upon unwittingly. Deanne Tyrrell takes a look at how architecture stacks up, what is holding the profession back and how we can change that.

The statistics for female architects in leadership roles is staggeringly low—11% of directors and 14% of partners1. These statistics are one of the issues the Gender Equity Taskforce (GETF) is hoping to improve and part of the solution is to address unconscious gender bias within the profession.

Unconscious biases are attitudes that lie beneath the surface of our thinking. They are formed slowly over time through exposure to stereotypes in our upbringing, education, media and culture, and both men and women have them. They are subtle and often at odds with our social identity. They are problematic because they inform our behaviour. Even if we consider our self to be an open-minded, forward-thinking professional, our unconscious biases can thwart our attempts to address the gender issue.

The good news is that we can shed light on unconscious bias in a number of ways. The Harvard Implicit Associations Test (IAT) is a freely available online test you can do in the privacy of your own home2. The IAT measures our automatic associations between concepts in memory. Two concepts such as “male” and “female” are displayed on a computer screen and participants match an attribute such as “logical” or “emotional” with one of the genders. The faster the response time, the stronger the association between the gender and the attribute. Your test score indicates the strength of your bias and you can test yourself for gender, career, race and numerous other biases.

Another way to understand biases is through empirical studies. Consider these findings from York University3. Researchers found that both male and female senior academics in biology, chemistry and physics at six American universities were more likely to hire a male candidate (John) for a laboratory manager position over a female candidate (Jennifer). The applications were exactly the same with only the names changed. John was offered approximately 4,000 more remuneration than Jennifer and was more likely to be offered mentoring. These findings shocked the academics and the science world, caused a media furor, a public outcry, and propelled into motion, further research, interventions and a commitment to change4. Good science gets results.

We can also educate our self and staff through workshops. Bias training often starts with a visual perception problem that illustrates how two objects that are the same can look different. The Müller-Lyer optical illusion that illustrates two equal-length lines with arrowheads pointing in different directions is a common example. The exercise illustrates how our mind makes up in perception and it’s only a few steps to see how two job applicants who are the same can also appear different—based on our personal preferences.

In 2014, a short gender bias workshop for medicine, science and engineering departments showed significant improvement in attitudes toward women’s career advancement and faculty behaviour5. When 25% or more of the faculty attended, there was a significant increase in workplace actions that promoted gender equality. In 2011, Australian Treasury staff underwent gender bias training after finding distracting bias in a report on the recruitment and retention of women employees; the following year female staff employment rose from 24% to 33%6. Gender bias training can be delivered on site and online and could even be included as part the architectural continuing professional development program.

The unconscious nature of gender bias means it is not going to change itself. The issue needs to be brought into awareness and challenged in both men and women. Women in medicine, the STEM disciplines and philosophy have moved forward in gender equity by collaborating with other disciplines, particularly with psychology departments. Their carefully designed studies, research can highlight areas of behaviour that have remained hidden. Statistically significant results command attention. Well-tested training options are available. It is hard to argue with the rigour of science and this may be an approach that could be part of the solution to gender equity in architecture.

Deanne Rose Tyrrell
Qualified architect and Psychology student,
Charles Sturt University

FOOTNOTES

i-australia/

2. See implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/choose-social-attitudes, Gender Census IAT or Gender Science IAT


6. Hartigan, G. Beauty bias against women exposed by defiant logic, Sydney Morning Herald, 3 December 2014

An Eye for Development

New York’s SuperPier challenges the status quo for urban development; Clare Sowden takes a look at how an architect-turned-developer has set this project apart.

Architects have long played a role in shaping cities beyond formal architectural practice. Those who train as architects are able to use design thinking skills and apply them to other business arenas. Leading innovative business models established by architects are founded in an understanding of the material, spatial, human and economic forces at play on a site.

Recently the New York based real estate development firm Young Woo and Associates has been at the forefront of the intersection of architecture and real estate. A Korean migrant, Young Woo trained in architecture at Pratt Institute; New York and then went on to establish a real estate firm in 1979. Young’s ideas have brought an entrepreneurial and design-centric flare to the business of real estate in New York City (NYC). His influence can be seen in SuperPier.

SuperPier, located in the meatpacking district of Manhattan. Here, Youngwoo and Associates (YWA) is proposing one of the most unique approaches to redevelopment that New York has seen in recent times. The site is an industrial relic that was once used as a shipping and passenger terminal; YWA has a lease on the site for 49 years and has plans to transform the pier using the existing structure. The ambitious project involves connecting to the Highline by taking the streets into the building and thus extending the Hudson River Park.

The proposal for Pier 59 is the development of 12 acres of space, based on a program of retail, office, park and entertainment uses. Landmark tenants include the Tribeca Film Festival, Google, a beach club by hotelier Andor Balazs of The Standard and a restaurant by Anthony

“Young! Woo and his firm have been disruptive in their approach to real estate development. They have brought to market many unique projects that are human-centric and entrepreneurial in their response to the business of real estate and understanding of the demands of the market.”

Clare Sowden

Director and Development Director, PricewaterhouseCoopers

projects including the Sky Garages (an apartment project that enabled cars to be elevated from the street to the apartment lounge room), the DiKalb Markets in Brooklyn and SuperPier in Chelsea.

Woo and his firm have been disruptive in their approach to real estate development. They have brought to market many unique projects that are human-centric and entrepreneurial in their response to the business of real estate and understanding of the demands of the market. Of particular note is the redevelopment of Pier 59, Bound. The project is as aspirational in its program as it is in scale. The retail tenant mix of SuperPier aims to attract and incubate a set of retailers that is unprecedented in NYC. The retail spaces will be housed within shipping containers, and offer a high degree of flexibility for spaces to be fitted out and dropped onto the site. Some commentators have heralded that the tenant program is the most unique mix of uses that has been speculative developed in NYC since the Rockefeller Center was developed in 1939.
This year the Vivid program incorporated a number of events relating to architecture and urban design. Sophie Solomon and Nicola Balch report on three highlights from the festival.

**SPECULATE - SUPER HIGH DENSITY**

This year at Vivid 2015, Sydney saw its very first live urban design performance; a facilitated hypothetical workshop that explored the processes behind master planning a major city project. The brief tasked a team of nine urban heavyweights to amplify their respective roles of developer, urban designer, academic, heritage advisor, environmentalist, landscape architect and architect to produce an engaging approach to urban design which played off the theatrics of the field and highlighted the role of negotiating competing interests can come together.

The selected site occupied the industrial area north of Clyde station stretched across 240,000sqm of development lots and was bisected by Parramatta Road. This translates into 480,000sqm gross floor area and approximately 4,500 apartments when adopting the business as usual approach. In less than two hours the teams had to formulate a design proposal which was modeled live, including on the spot feasibility testing, assessing the viability of the evolving outcomes along the way. To achieve this effectively the event was spread, theatre-in-the-round style around a central ALS (Active Learning Space) composed of three hubs. Each hub was equipped with a computer and interactive projector that displayed the participants sketches in action on overhead screens for the audience. The set up made these proposals work almost as three distinctive and competing teams, adding to the theatrics of the event and enhancing the debate. Each of the schemes was then pulled together and summarised by the event’s provocateur Roderick Simpson, who moved around the participants consolidating their responses, both for the understanding of the audience and to direct the outcomes of these live negotiations for the modelling team and distillers.

The overarching intent of the event was for the participants to develop an urban transition zone, which moved away from the business as usual approach to urban design. The basis of this was twofold, firstly because a business as usual approach was not viable for the site, based on density requirements versus provision of required open space, but also due to its tendency to produce bland and characterless places. This meant that participants could break, invent and throw out rules so long as it worked toward the production of a high quality urban environment. In full the participants were given a live testing ground where what could be was given precedence over what should be, allowing them room to speculate, rebut and develop different design methods hypothesising what they could offer the city. The event was essentially an opportunity to think differently and demonstrate the value of this by moving away from standardised responses to speculative integrated design strategies and what they can offer our urban environment. In this area each outcome is rigorously considered and undergoes ongoing development as they are measured and tested by peers, software and the audience.

The value in the event was not to reach a final outcome for the site but to demonstrate how transparent negotiation between varied approaches, disciplines, priorities and attitudes can elucidate the design process and offer innovative responses to shaping our environment. Provocateur Roderick Simpson summed it all up by stating; “There are some real inefficiencies in doing things the normal way”. The afternoon was a charrette on steroids where participants, peers, software and the audience. Tucked within the walls of the stand-alone hub was equipped with a computer and interactive projector that displayed the participants sketches in action on overhead screens for the audience. The set up made these proposals work almost as three distinctive and competing teams, adding to the theatrics of the event and enhancing the debate. Each of the schemes was then pulled together and summarised by the event’s provocateur Roderick Simpson, who moved around the participants consolidating their responses, both for the understanding of the audience and to direct the outcomes of these live negotiations for the modelling team and distillers.

The overarching intent of the event was for the participants to develop an urban transition zone, which moved away from the business as usual approach to urban design. The basis of this was twofold, firstly because a business as usual approach was not viable for the site, based on density requirements versus provision of required open space, but also due to its tendency to produce bland and characterless places. This meant that participants could break, invent and throw out rules so long as it worked toward the production of a high quality urban environment. In full the participants were given a live testing ground where what could be was given precedence over what should be, allowing them room to speculate, rebut and develop different design methods hypothesising what they could offer the city. The event was essentially an opportunity to think differently and demonstrate the value of this by moving away from standardised responses to speculative integrated design strategies and what they can offer our urban environment. In this area each outcome is rigorously considered and undergoes ongoing development as they are measured and tested by peers, software and the audience.

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Nicola Balch Urban Designer, McGregor Coxall
to rethink their physical engagement with the everyday obstacles of urban spaces. And woven amongst these were the roaming Seen and Heard crew, a team of volunteers and media specialists armed with clipboards, video cameras, microphones and the soul aim of collecting and cataloging children’s thoughts, dreams and perceptions of the city. At centerpiece of this consolatory process sat a ply mock up of a traditional gable roof home entitled Little House: Big Ideas. Greeting you on entry, this pilot project with HASSELL is a pitched “reverse information cubby house” offering a space for kids to grouptink how we can build better cities in the future though drawings, discussion and flash card activities. The intent of these diverse means used as a platform to begin to ask questions that children should be both seen and heard in the city and through engagement can help strategize their future.

Archikidz is a global program, yet this devotion to the topic of citizenship is most specific to the Sydney chapter. When I sat down with Director Vanessa Trowell she made it clear a key critical factor of the event was that the findings and data collated from the event would hopefully be able to pave some sort of insight into how children understand and see cities and give direction for tangible future projects. Archikidz fits within a broader global urban movement which aims to integrate children with the future planning and development of our built environment. It is somewhat ironic that a playground has been given that its very invention during the industrial revolution was an act to directly remove them from it. Archikidz has subverted this traditional role from one which simply removes children from the city to one which uses this safe space to explore a variety of modes through which children can be strategically involved in planning for changes in the built environment. All up, the long weekend saw over 6,000 participants and collected 40 interviews, 20 video sessions and 200 big idea worksheets. Given the holistic depth and breadth of the installation in approaching its aim, it can be safe to say that the future of Archikidz looks to be an exciting one.

Nicole Ralph
Urban Designer, McGregor Coxall

Making Demands; How Do We Adjust Our Cities to Work for Us?

Presented as part of the Sydney Vivid Festival of ideas, the Making Demands seminar and workshop saw a moderated panel discuss how we can make our cities work better for us. The event was hosted by the Gold Club, a guild of prominent women in Australian design, in conjunction with Parlour, representing women and equity in architecture and landscape architecture. The four panellists were: Dr Fiona Foley, indigenous artist and activist; Shelley Penn, architect and strategic advisor; Clare Cowdren, development director at PricewaterhouseCoopers and Barbara Schaffer, principal landscape architect for the Government Architect’s Office.

The aim of the event was to awaken the expectations of multi-disciplinary design, and motivate pragmatic and inspired responses within our city. The panel explored these concerns across the realms of public art, urban renewal, architectural leadership and cultural value. The different perspectives of each panellist highlighted the diverse role that women are playing in the design professions and the unique set of skills they bring to each project.

Making Demands was fittingly held in the new OBJECT: Australian Design Centre on William Street, in its recent reincarnation from the Object Gallery in Surry Hills. Currently situated in a shop front to the street and small plaza, OBJECT is positioned amongst office buildings, car showrooms, art galleries, gourmet chocolate shops and furniture retailers. It is a constantly changing retail landscape, yet one that seems like it is finally contributing to the public life of the street. Due mostly to the City of Sydney’s Creative Cities Policy this diversity of creative retailers and galleries now occupying the street is enbling the precinct and encouraging change. This type of urban renewal on the fringes of the city represents strategic design on the micro level, with good policy driving change by enabling diversity and equality into the periphery, therefore allowing for better connections and growth to occur. Formerly an inhospitable, car-choked thoroughfare with little pedestrian appeal, William Street is slowly transforming into the pedestrian boulevard that was envisioned nearly 20 years ago as the Cross City Tunnel was being planned.

This innovative reworking of the city at the grass roots level is also reflected in the interior design of the new OBJECT. Cleverly designed by Those Architects, the space encompasses a gallery and informal presentation/semiarn space, with an open connection to the street. The seating area or band seamlessly connects the two separate gallery spaces that are located at different levels as they correspond to the slope of the street. Sitting across the band, the seminar participants became actively engaged in the conversation between the moderator and the panellists.

The common theme of the discussion was the role of communication and the understanding it brings for change to occur. Drawing on her years of experience across different scales of architecture in both private and public practice, Shelley Penn made a case for how important and influential architects can be by the understanding and adapting language for specific situations. Penn stated, “Different voices are needed for different contexts and different relationships.” This idea acknowledges the importance of community consultation in strategic design for city making - consultation that can only be achieved by adopting methods of communication that effectively engage the public.

Sophie Salomon
Principal, sal studio

Penn stated, “Different voices are needed for different contexts and different relationships.” This idea acknowledges the importance of community consultation in strategic design for city making - consultation that can only be achieved by adopting methods of communication that effectively engage the public.
A new commercial icon in Melbourne’s CBD, fitted out with window coverings by Helioscreen, called for a number of key requirements. Mermet’s E-Screen with Koolblack technology, which increases the energy efficiency of dark solar shade fabrics to levels comparable with light colours, provided the solution.

The new 26-level office building located at 567 Collins Street, Melbourne is seen as a cutting edge icon of the city, offering state-of-the-art commercial office space as well as retail and recreational spaces.

As Helioscreen business manager (VIC & TAS) Elizabeth Damcevski confirms, the window coverings project at number 567 entailed a very specific brief, involving 13 levels of the building being fitted with dark coloured blinds. “Both sides of the fabric had to be a dark colour, with a high visibility and high co2 efficiency factors. Mermet’s E-Screen with Koolblack ticked all those boxes.”

Damcevski says the project used Helioscreen internal roller blinds, entailing a combination of chain operated and motorised blinds, for which the fabric used was E-Screen with Koolblack Technology. 5% openness, colour 3535 Charcoal/Charcoal.

“Helioscreen originally came across the Koolblack technology at the BMAA Superexpo in 2013, where it caused quite a stir,” Damcevski says. “When the project at 567 Collins Street came up, we got in touch with Mermet, who provided us with samples. It quickly became apparent that the fabric met the architects’ key requirements. They wanted a dark fabric colour for aesthetic and glare reduction reasons, which also allowed occupants to see out of the building. An added benefit is that, because the fabric is so efficient, it keeps the building cool and therefore reduces energy costs.”

“Mermet’s Jennifer Elmer provided technical stats for the project and compared the fabric characteristics against competitors’ fabrics, in which Koolblack had higher efficiency factors,” Damcevski confirms. “Mermet’s specification data and samples cuttings enabled us to specify the project, with Helioscreen producing the prototype blinds. Specification was completed in June of 2013.”

A key challenge in the project was the high number of performance requirements required. Damcevski adds. These included a dark fabric requirement, a max of 5% openness factor, less than 6% Visible Light Transmittance (Ty), 30% Solar Reflectance (Rl).

“We had to be able to meet as many of these as possible,” she says, adding that key to the project’s success was the resolution of the opposing needs of a sustainable building that also required dark fabrics.

“Regular dark shade materials consume energy and raise the solar heat gain in space, thus resulting in a waste of energy and creating an unpleasant environment. As such, this restricts the use of dark shade fabrics in sustainable building design where heat reflection specifications are presented in a shading solution.”

“The new Koolblack technology resolves this issue by making use of new heat reflecting characteristics. Koolblack technology adds to the energy efficiency of solar shade materials to equivalent levels with light colours, which lower about 25% of solar heat gain coefficients (SHGC), which means improved heat control and increased energy savings.”

Mermet’s Jennifer Elmer comments: “While E-Screen with Koolblack Technology was not even available in Australia at the time of the specification in 2013, its benefits were so apparent when it launched at the Supershow that Helioscreen was quickly committed to utilising it.”

Wilson Fabrics has launched a PVC free screen fabric offering energy saving properties without compromising on style.

The result of around five years’ development, the fabric, trademarked Cool Blind, is in now stock, confirms Wilson marketing manager Jennifer Donnelly.

“Cool Blind is a unique Australian made PVC Free screen fabric designed to meet the energy saving requirements of modern, environmentally responsible building design, while still remaining stylish for any home or office.”

Cool Blind is available in seven colours, from ebony through to white.

Its construction creates a surface temperature that remains on average 26 per cent cooler than PVC screen in direct sunlight; reducing heat transfer into rooms.

The fabric is:

- Australian made.
- Maintains privacy while letting visible light through.
- Treated with StainProtect fabric treatment, making it easy to clean.
- Offers the same visual benefits as a PVC screen with reduced radiant heat transfer from the sunlight into the room.
- Reduced need for cooling, reducing the cost of air conditioning.
- Excellent glare control, especially in darker colours.
- Available in a range of colours including a crisp white.
- FR Tested to AS1570 Part 2 & Part 3.
- Ideal for domestic and commercial use.

“Offering a PVC free alternative to the screen fabrics currently on the market was important to us as PVC fabrics can emit phthalates while hanging in the home, which have been classified as a probable human carcinogen according to EcoSpecifier,” said Donnelly. “The manufacturing process for PVC fabrics is also “dirtty” as toxic and carcinogenic components are required for manufacture. PVC is also difficult to recycle and incineration causes issues as PVC releases organohalogen compounds during combustion, which are classified as carcinogenic compounds.”

Donnelly confirmed the company had taken an unusual approach to marketing the benefits of the fabric.

“We have displays for each of our showrooms that replicate the test for Cool Blind devised and conducted by RMIT so that customers can see first-hand the temperature difference between our Cool Blind Fabric and standard PVC screens.”

“The display consists of a cube that contains a 250W heat source, with Cool Blind fabric and a standard PVC fabric placed side by side for comparison. Not only can you physically feel the difference with your bare hand, but we also have IR temperature readers included in the display, which clearly illustrates the surface temperature difference of the two fabrics, on average our Cool Blind fabric is around 26% cooler.”

As the display is not portable, Wilson Fabrics has also produced a video exploring the features and benefits of Cool Blind Fabric, which can be viewed via YouTube or the Cool Blind website; www.coolblind.com.au

“This video can be easily shown on customers’ iPads or computers both in the customer’s home and also in a retail setting,” said Donnelly. “Customers are welcome to kid their websites to this video to explain the range and we can also offer a version on CD or memory stick.”

“When tested as per test set up by RMIT Window Size 100cm x 50cm (39.4in x 19.7in), Sample size 50cm x 50cm (19.7in x 19.7in). Light Source 2 x 500W, Distance from Light Source to Fabrics: 100cm (39.4in), Testing Side: Room Side

www.wilsonfabrics.com.au
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