

MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE 2000

An Overview of Planning Opportunities by Francis Tibbalds

Copies of *Marvellous Melbourne 2000* slipped quietly into the State Government Bookshop on Collins Street last Friday. This document prepared by Francis Tibbalds is a collection of his own ideas coupled with a mosaic of ideas from people interviewed by him during his short stay earlier this year.

Below are a few random extracts from his document, which speak for themselves:

"It is important to recognise that there are now several 'Melbournes'. There is a commercial Melbourne - looking like a mini Houston - of new high-rise buildings, that is seen from the air or from outside the central area. By marked contrast there is a historic, rich, mature Melbourne - looking more like Paris or other European cities - which is associated with the bustling streets within the original "Robert Hoddle Grid" and is characterised by richly decorated Victorian and Edwardian buildings and generous, sunny, tree-lined pavements. There is the physical Melbourne of buildings, streets, boulevards, water, parks and generally equable, sunny climate, contrasting with the social Melbourne of cosmopolitan population, sport, good eating and a relaxed, friendly quality of life."

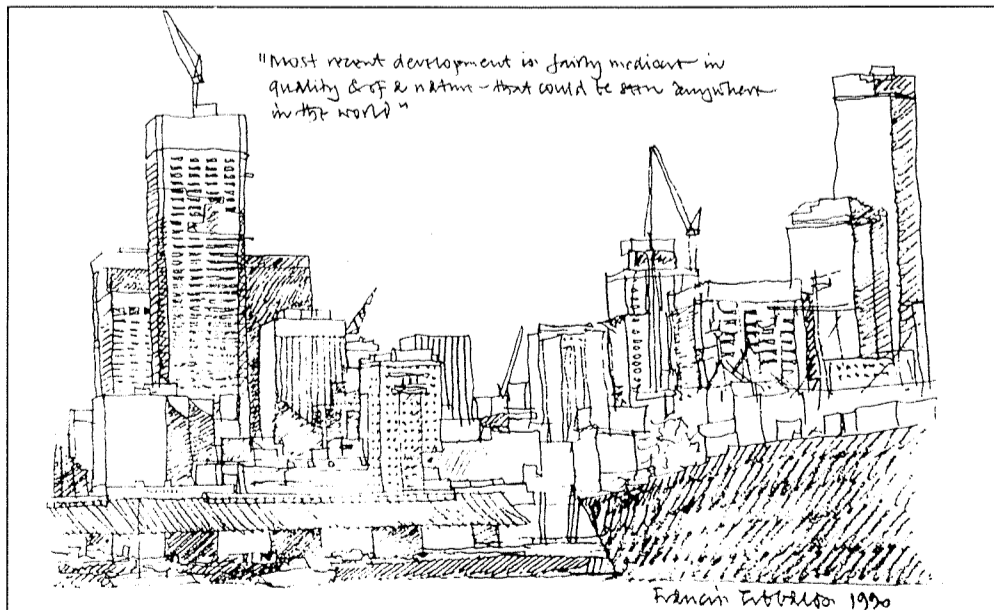
The city centre streets feel and are, far safer than those in Japan, the United States or Europe, including late at night and at weekends."

"Melbourne is a well-loved, conservative, modest, 'establishment' city - good for wine, sport and culture and less brash than Sydney."

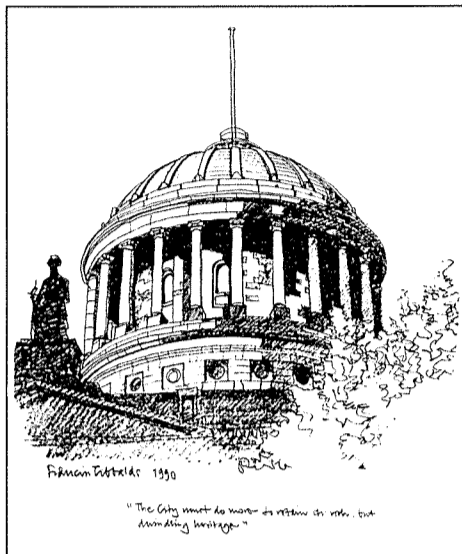
STRENGTHS

"The central area has a rich legacy of buildings from the Victorian era. Recent building has been less distinguished."

"Melbourne has held strong, simple height limits in the blocks between Russell and Elizabeth Streets. This single, clear objective has helped to conserve the historical core of the city."



▲ "One of the world's finest Victorian Cities in giving way to a mediocre US style downtown, 'Marvellous Melbourne' is being destroyed by ubiquitous mediocre tower blocks scattered indiscriminately over the CBD."



▲ "The city must do more to retain its rich, but dwindling heritage, in terms of buildings, landscape and its historic trams."

"Melbourne enjoys an equable climate: it is a sunny city for most of the day. This is an outstanding, positive characteristic which gives the City a considerable advantage over Sydney".

"The City is clean and environmentally aware".

WEAKNESSES

"Melbourne is perceived as less good than Sydney as a city to visit. It is doubtful whether many people have a clear perception of the central city as a whole, when the tendency is to visit such attractions as the Zoo or MCG by car."

"Melbourne is destroying what it has got (eg a real asset like Collins Street is being eroded) and then trying to replace it with something that it doesn't need (eg inventing a new artificial landmark)".

"Central Melbourne has a very small residential population, compared with other cities. Thirty years of suburbanisation have been to the detriment of the central city".

"Few shops open in the CBD at weekends, even on a Saturday morning. Victoria Market is being adversely affected by thriving suburban shopping centres".

"The topography of the city is perceived to be rather flat and dull, particularly compared with Sydney".

"The City lacks an obvious 'main street,' unlike such cities as New York, London and Paris".

"There is a lack of parks and open space to the west and south-west of the city centre".

OPPORTUNITIES

"As the city faces the approach of the year 2000 and beyond, there are abundant opportunities which may or may not be worth grasping. These include the development or redevelopment of several 'opportunity sites', improving the Riverside, visually linking the city centre to the bay, extending the parks, capitalising on the benefits that should flow from possible participation in the Olympic Games 1996, development of the International Airport, improving pedestrian facilities, raising the City's international profile, attracting back small businesses and activities into the central area and many more".

"Compared with many other cities, particularly in Europe, for its size, only a very meagre amount of pedestrianisation has been implemented in Melbourne CBD. The potential exists for much more - judiciously selected - including the extension of the north south lanes, alleys and arcades".

"Swanston Street has all the ingredients to be a more attractive street - the Arts Centre, two stations, the Town Hall, the Library, the RMIT and so on. The opportunity should be taken to make the street less 'seedy' on an incremental basis. Through traffic in Swanston Street could be eliminated and the opportunity exists to try this on an experimental basis".

"Buildings are a resource. They should never be demolished without sound reason. Once they are gone, they are gone forever."

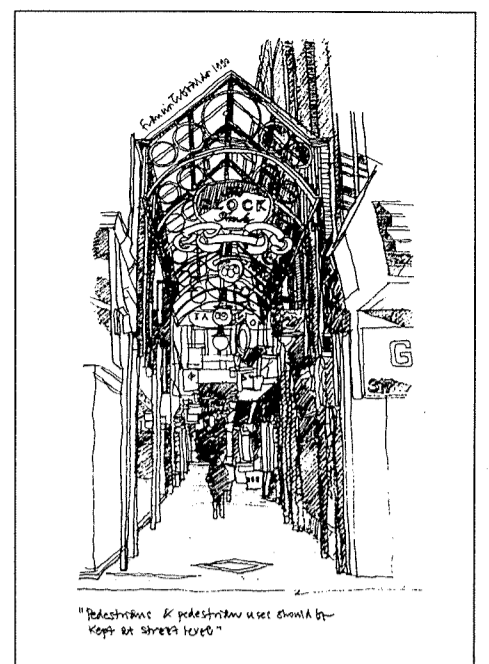
"The development of Docklands and the South Bank provides the opportunity to complete the ring of parks and open space around the central area".

"Melbourne satisfies all the objective criteria to be ranked amongst the world's top thirty cities. The achievement of this is threatened by subjective negative perceptions."

IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL QUALITY

"The development which has taken place in recent years in central Melbourne is simply not good enough. 'Marvellous Melbourne 2000' will be judged by the quality of the built environment and what people actually see and experience around them. Much stronger urban design controls need to be drafted and rigorously applied. These should address, as a minimum, the following ten matters:

1. That buildings are less important than places.
2. That the City's planners should learn from what worked well in the past for Melbourne and seek to encourage new urban forms and buildings which have those traditional qualities of richness, individuality and intricacy.
3. Mixed uses must be insisted upon, especially in the street level of buildings. Zoned separation of uses kills urban areas.
4. Design must be on a "human scale." Height limits must be set for different parts of the city.



▲ "It is very important to keep people and activities at street level. Bridges, decks and subways are universally unpopular and are now being pulled down in many cities - ironically just as Melbourne constructs its first bridge over Lonsdale Street."

5. Development must encourage freedom to walk about. New buildings must not be slab-like and impenetrable. They must encourage and incorporate a fine grain of pedestrian movement in and around them.

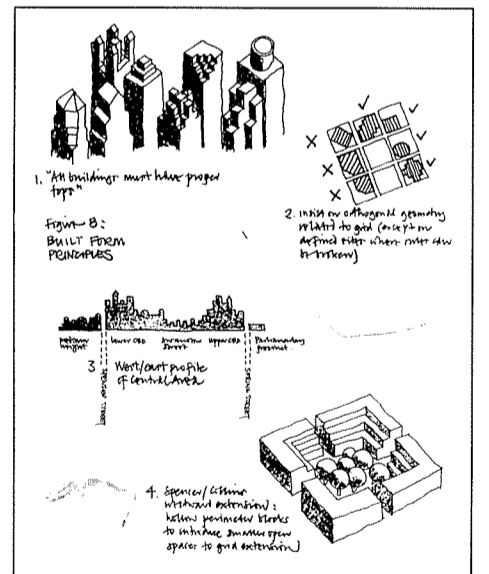
6. The central area must be as accessible as possible to everyone, regardless of age, background or ability.

7. All new development must be 'legible' - it must be obvious what the building is and how to enter it.

8. New development needs to be "robust", well built and enduring - the Historic buildings of the future. Materials need to be selected for their permanence, durability, mellowing and enduring qualities, as well as for ease of maintenance.

9. Change on too large a scale at the same time should not be permitted. To the extent that development can be achieved incrementally - healing or mending the edges as it goes - the more acceptable it is likely to be found.

10. Development must be more friendly and sensitive, with less dependence of the anonymous graph paper designs of past decades.



Francis Tibbalds left Melbourne enthused with the place and prepared to say more about its positive rather than its negative aspects. He did however, pick up on some negative aspects and this no doubt is the reason for the low profile release of his report. One can only assume that Melbourne is still unable, despite its enormous merits, to face simple criticism.

Francis Tibbalds is a director of Tibbalds Colbourne Karski Williams Limited, London.

Sustainable Cities

Confidence has been a distinguishing characteristic of great cultures. So too it is an integral part of our technological cultural development. Yet over-confidence can easily be the precursor to a fall. Our cities display the benefits of our confident development and the dis-benefits when confidence fails. History and the landscape are strewn with the evidence.

Our culture has a crisis of confidence. We have come to suspect that our development path, here in Australia and globally, is neither economically nor ecologically sustainable.

Recent Government initiatives at state and national levels establish economic and sustainable development as guiding principles informing all aspects of long term strategy. Who would object? Yet we have given little consideration to what this means for our way of life and what in turn it means for the cities that support our lifestyles.

The bounding conditions of the problem are clear. We must develop and physically support life styles that impose lower burdens on the environment and which reduce our dependence on imports while still creating and distributing employment and wealth internally.

Sustainable cities of the future will not generally be new cities located in some new places. They will be evolved and altered forms of present cities, and inevitably so. The task is to set in train a program of urban conversion through which modified urban structure, converted buildings and new buildings contribute individually and in combination to sustainable city systems.

Movement of people and goods is the activity of modern cities that most directly degrades the environment. The sustainable city will be a city operating with a low level of fuel driven movement. As a result it will be locally comprehensive in its facilities, except in those limited areas where very efficient public transport systems exist. This leads to a conceptual bifurcation between locally self reliant and comprehensive urban systems, and the densification strategy that might be appropriate around existing public transport systems. The longer term future seems to lie with the former.

For the individual building, energy consumption for heating, cooling and hot water is the major cause of environmental degradation. Much can be done by retrofitting solar collectors, new fenestration and insulation to improve this situation, though it will transform visual appearances, and rightly so.

Particularly in suburban areas, food production, urban forestry, energy harvesting, water collection, waste disposal and many kinds of re-use and re-cycling can be greatly increased with the overall environmental impact being correspondingly reduced.

To achieve all these ecological benefits within the constraints of economic sustainability requires that much of the change be done with local skills and materials. This provides opportunities for many small local enterprises. Otherwise, Australia could and should develop its built environment for its own cultural and climatic conditions using the materials, design and construction skills that it can generate.

INTEGRAL URBAN HOUSE



The basis for redressing the balance of payments deficit is to have Australia become more productive. The transformation of the built environment to a sustainable form presents opportunities for the development of skill and technologies that can at least reduce imports and potentially increase exports.

The process of transforming our cities to become sustainable and substantially self reliant can greatly reduce the exposure of Australia to the vagaries of international economics while at the same time

positioning Australia to meet ecological requirements and then commercially to serve global needs.

This development strategy for sustainable city systems offers the prospect of returning confidence in Australia while focussing on the ecological and economic realities of the next century.

Allan Rodger
Department of Architecture,
University of Melbourne

□ COMMING EVENTS □

URBAN DESIGN SYMPOSIUM

As part of the continuing education program conducted by the School of Town Planning, an Urban Design Symposium is being organised with the theme: "URBAN DESIGN & LOCAL PLANNING - An Interdisciplinary Approach". This symposium is scheduled for 6-7 December 1990. It aims to address the interdisciplinary nature of urban design and to provide opportunity for local government leaders, planners, engineers and architects facing increasing challenges related to urban design issues, to develop their skills and share their problems and ideas in this field. Various contributions from academic departments, state and local government and a developer will cover a wide range of topics in their presentations, which will be followed by workshops concentrating on a number of topical issues.

Contact:
Dr Tamas Lukovich
Course Director, School of Town Planning
The University of New South Wales.

ON-SITE AND THE PROMISE OF THE CITY

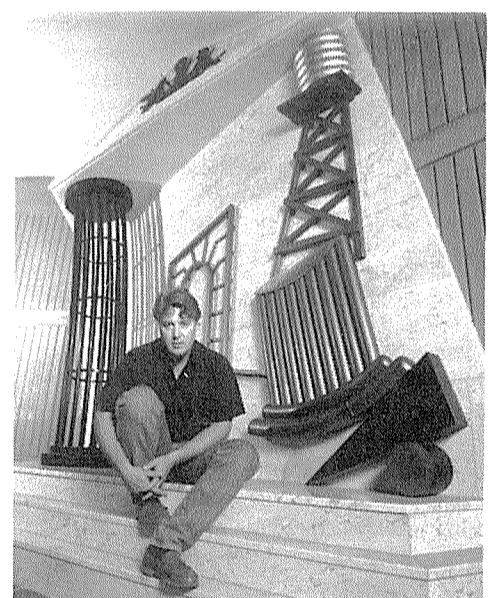
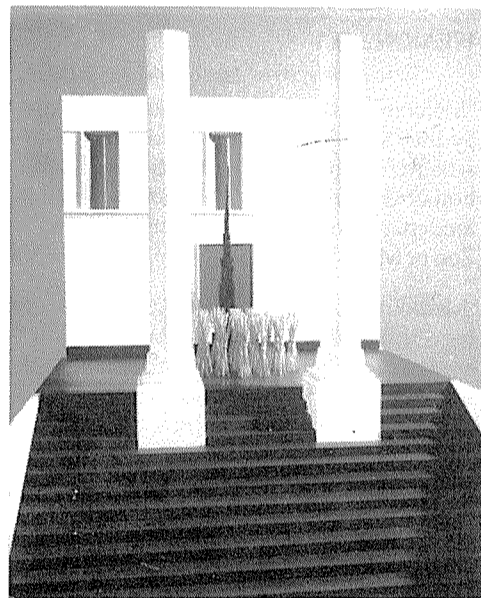
It is possible that in the 16th Century, when the citizens of Rome saw St Peter's Cathedral for the first time, some were shocked and alienated. Surely the building of St Peter's blocked out someone's light. The rhetoric surrounding the building of a city entices us to take sides. Not all buildings are seen as being as worthy as St. Peter's.

But there are other pathways leading to and from the city. For example, it could be said that the city begins with the subterranean and the intricate patterns of sub-structures which support the fabric of city construction above the level of the ground. Such a view of a city invites an interpretation more inclined towards diverse levels of consciousness, experience, structure and resonance.

The ON-SITE sculpture program is intended to explore, challenge, enhance and transform our interpretation of the city. It involved invitations to 24 artists to create sculptures for 8 selected sites. The journey begins at the Treasury Plaza on the eastern edge of the city grid, along Collins and Swanston Streets, to Flinders Street Station, and then leads down to the new Yarra River pedestrian bridge which links the southern edge of the city grid to the south bank of the river. In one sense, ON-SITE is site specific work, involving the creation of art for selected public spaces. In more general terms, through linking the sites as a narrative walkway, it hopes to unlock the desire to look upon the city in different ways.

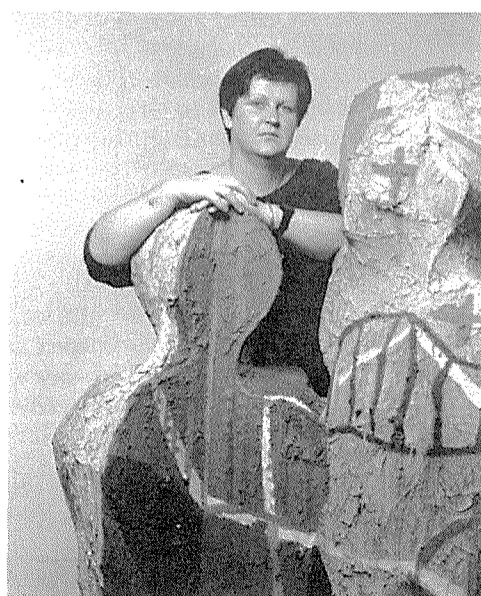
From a final selection of 8 sculptures featured in the ON-SITE program, 7 will appear on-site for a period of 45 days, from September 13 to October 28. The eighth sculpture will appear during a future festival.

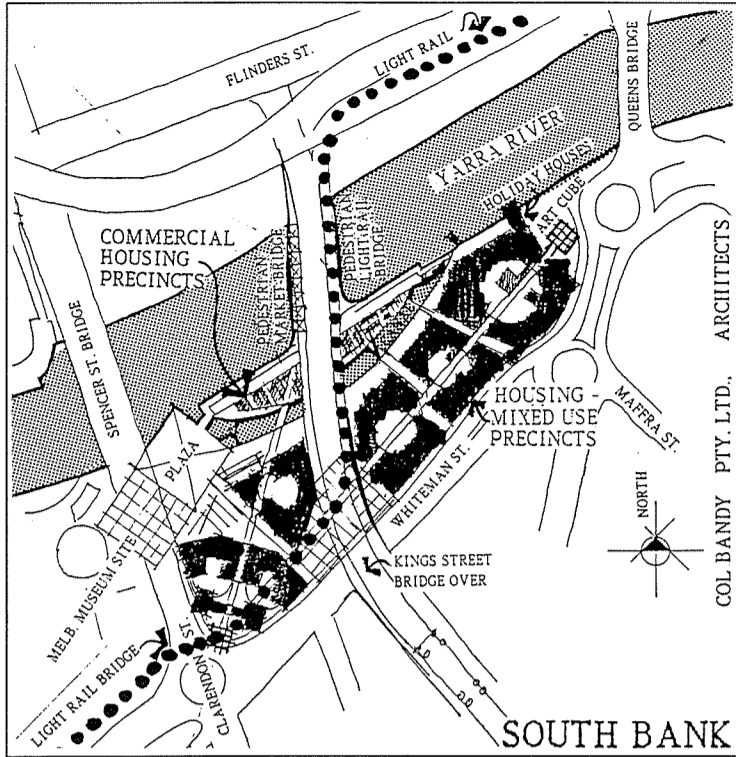
Contact:
Cultural Development Branch
Melbourne City Council
Telephone: (03) 658 9957.



METROPOLIS '90:
Third International Congress of the World
Association of the Major Metropolises,
Melbourne 15-19 October 1990

Metropolis '90 is now just a few weeks away. More than 400 delegates have registered, so far, for what will be the biggest urban affairs event of the decade in Australia. The Congress will provide a forum for politicians, administrators, business leaders and academics concerned with urban affairs from around the world. A rich variety of topics has been included in the program aiming at the widest possible exchange of knowledge and experience. Although an international conference addressing global issues, the Australian experience will be addressed through one of its main themes "Australian Metropolitan Development". Metropolis '90 is an unparalleled professional opportunity. For more information on how to take part, call Mary Lewin on (03) 628 5346.





**SOUTH BANK COMPETITION
JOINT WINNING ENTRY
FROM COL BANDY.**

CONTEXT

As one by one the major sites along the banks of the Yarra are developed we are losing the opportunity to find a real solution to the problem of reintroducing an established city to the river. As the last of the major sites facing the CBD it is fundamental that this issue be addressed by this development. Here we seize the opportunity to create a focal point for all the activities of the river, as well as an interface between the essentially commercial city centre and the mixed use zones of South Melbourne.

MELBOURNE

European cities developed around waterways due to their importance as commercial links and the rivers remain today the focus of those cities. Melbourne's major development has been based on road and rail transport and we have therefore turned our backs on the river. The city has lost its original focus. The 'Give the Yarra a Go' campaign has massively upgraded this asset but it is not enough to simply landscape the river bank.

TOWARD A COHERENT URBAN DESIGN FOR CANBERRA

by Brian Binning.

An article in the June issue questioned the future for urban design in Canberra. I am happy to reassure readers that the National Capital aspects are both alive and flourishing.

Currently in preparation is a new design vision for the central area. The task has required a fresh look at the influence of Lord Holford, and his modification of Griffin's plan. This influence produced outcomes which are essentially anti-urban and where cars and informal landscaping have now invaded areas which beg for urban solutions. The present work sets out to restore vitality to Canberra's urban setting and to overcome the problems of Holford's layout by bringing buildings into close contact with the lake foreshores (right).

As part of this work the National Capital Planning Authority is proceeding to brief the finalists in the urban design competition for Anzac Parade. We are also seeking to appoint a senior urban designer to work as part of a team on the Central National Area Study. If you are interested in this position contact me on (06) 271 2841.

Relating the built form of the Southbank to the CBD is again trying to jump the river without paying due attention to its existence.

For this reason we have extended the site to incorporate the edge of the river and extended the river to incorporate the site.

The real challenge is to make the river the emotional heart of the city.

THE AESTHETIC

Ironically, as the South Bank of the river is redeveloped piece by piece in order to make it a usable space for the public, the original importance and character of the river slips further and further from our consciousness. This proposal in some ways involves a step backwards as well as a step forward in that we are attempting to recreate the original wharf/waterside character of the river, by referring to the maritime/warehouse aesthetic throughout the site and by re-establishing some of the original wharf buildings and recycling their original use on the canal island.

The evolving character of the site should be one that fuses the original industrial wharf river interface with the residential

character of South Melbourne and St. Kilda - creating a new residential character that is closely related to the city but familiar to its city perimeter location.

THE BRIDGE

Kings Bridge is not a bridge to cross a river but a bridge to cross a city - its origins are more with Frankston than they are with the South Bank.

This proposal boldly divides Kings Bridge into two functions:

1. The extension of King Street to Kingsway south of the site.
2. A pedestrian and public transport plaza linking both sides of the river - the Ponte Vecchio of Melbourne.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

It is fundamental that the normal support services of a small community be established on the site. The creche, corner milkbar, barber, supermarket enrich the lives of those who live there and those who visit.

16 June, 1990

Paul Murrain,
Urban Design Forum

Paul,

In principle I agree with everything you have said in your scathing attack on the Yarrabank Medium Density Housing Competition about many of the submissions but I don't believe our submission fits that description and I would like the opportunity of debating the value of our ideas for the site with you.

I am very disappointed in the lack of attention to any positive comment about ideas that have been generated by the Competition.

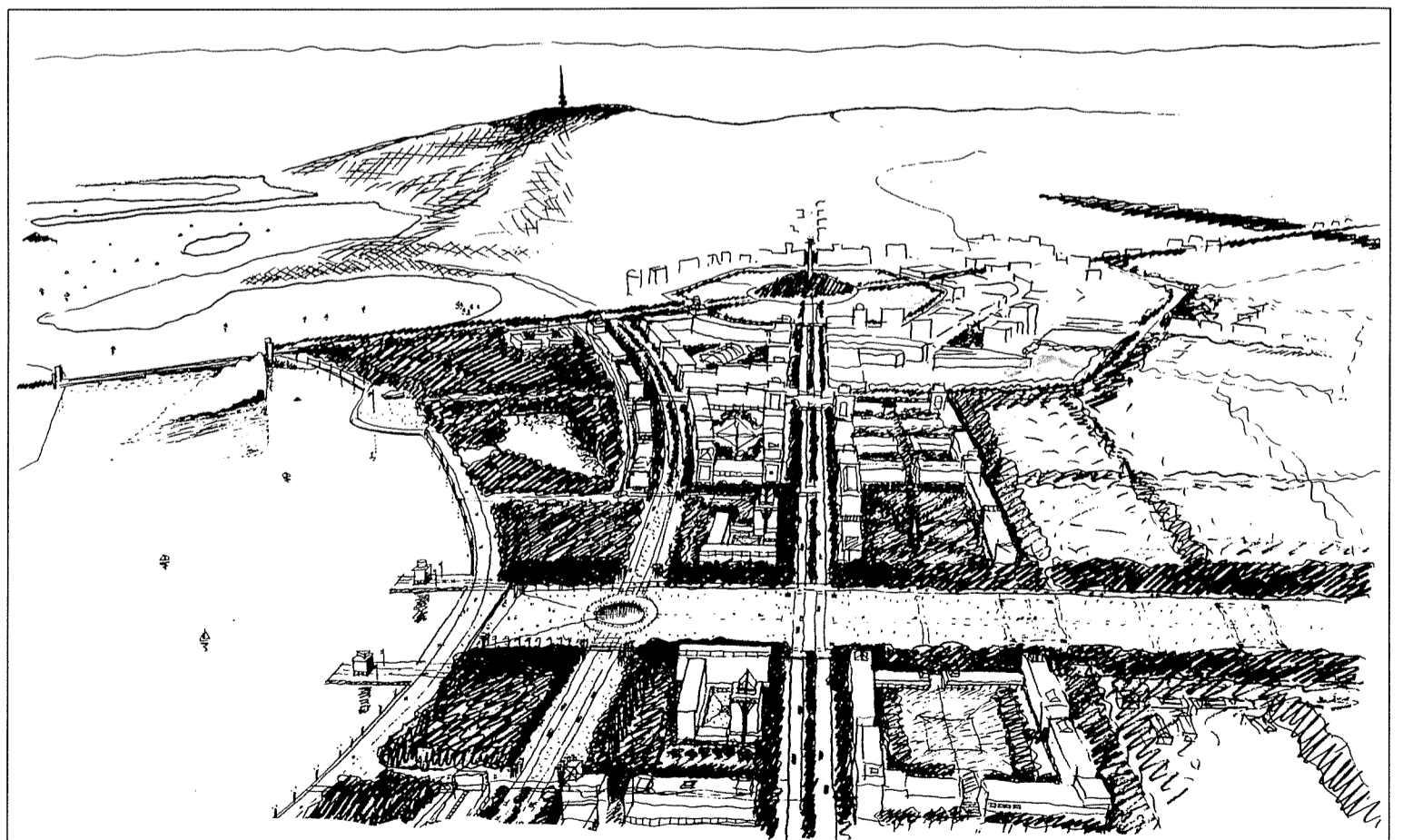
We put in a bloody lot of time and I believe our ideas are worthy of consideration by the community.

If you truly believe what we have produced is only worthy of a polite acknowledgement then I would value the feedback as to where we went wrong - I will buy you lunch if you can spare the time. I spoke to Rob Adams socially on Friday night and he had suggested we get together to talk about our ideas with reference to the next issue of Urban Design Forum.

After reading your article (attack) this morning (Saturday) I would very much like to talk to you about the Competition. I shall speak to Rob also but would value your feedback.

COL BANDY

GOOD LUCK
MELBOURNE
FOR 18TH
SEPTEMBER
FROM THE
EDITORS OF
URBAN DESIGN
Forum



THE ONLY THING PERMEABLE IN WANEROO WAS THE SAND

by Nic Beames and Tom Hibbs

The recent Waneroo Residential Design Workshop offered a rare opportunity for bringing together the many parties involved in the design and production of residential developments in Perth. The level and energy of debate provoked during the workshop reverberated through the offices of all involved parties for weeks after, and helped broaden attitudes toward urban design in a rapidly growing Perth.

Paul Murrain and Wendy Morris led the day's activities exposing us to a range of ideas and a contentious model for creating new communities. The Department of Planning and Urban Development must be thanked for supporting such a stimulating and worthwhile event.

A convoy of 110 people all bowled out to the wilds of Joondalup, a new Regional centre some 30 km North of Perth's CBD. It was on that spot that Sister Morris enjoined us to sing: "Praise Be The Grid" and we listened intently to the Gospel according to St Paul before putting on stout walking shoes and traipsing about a piece of local subdivisible land (banksia shit as it's affectionately termed by our less sensitive landscape designers)

Whilst the Murrain/Morris continuum is by now familiar to many UDF readers the ideas presented at the workshop were new to most of the assembled. Paul outlined the complex notions of permeability, variety and legibility advocating a grid-based interactionist environment over the cul de sac-based road hierarchy which in recent years has predominated in Perth. Paul spoke eloquently on the relationship between society's values and the physical form of our cities, and expressed concern for the increasingly isolated environments

world-wide, often masquerading as the result of responsible traffic management. Fremantle was cited as a local example of a successful interactionist environment.

The chosen site offered opportunities and posed difficulties. Incorporating a proposed rail transit station and bounded on two sides by freeways with proximity to both employment and that great Perth Institution - the beach. This is a potential key location in a rapidly expanding city. Far from the urban grain of Fremantle and amid a sea of cul de sacs this was a poetic location for the design of a suburb employing the challenges laid down by Morris and Murrain.

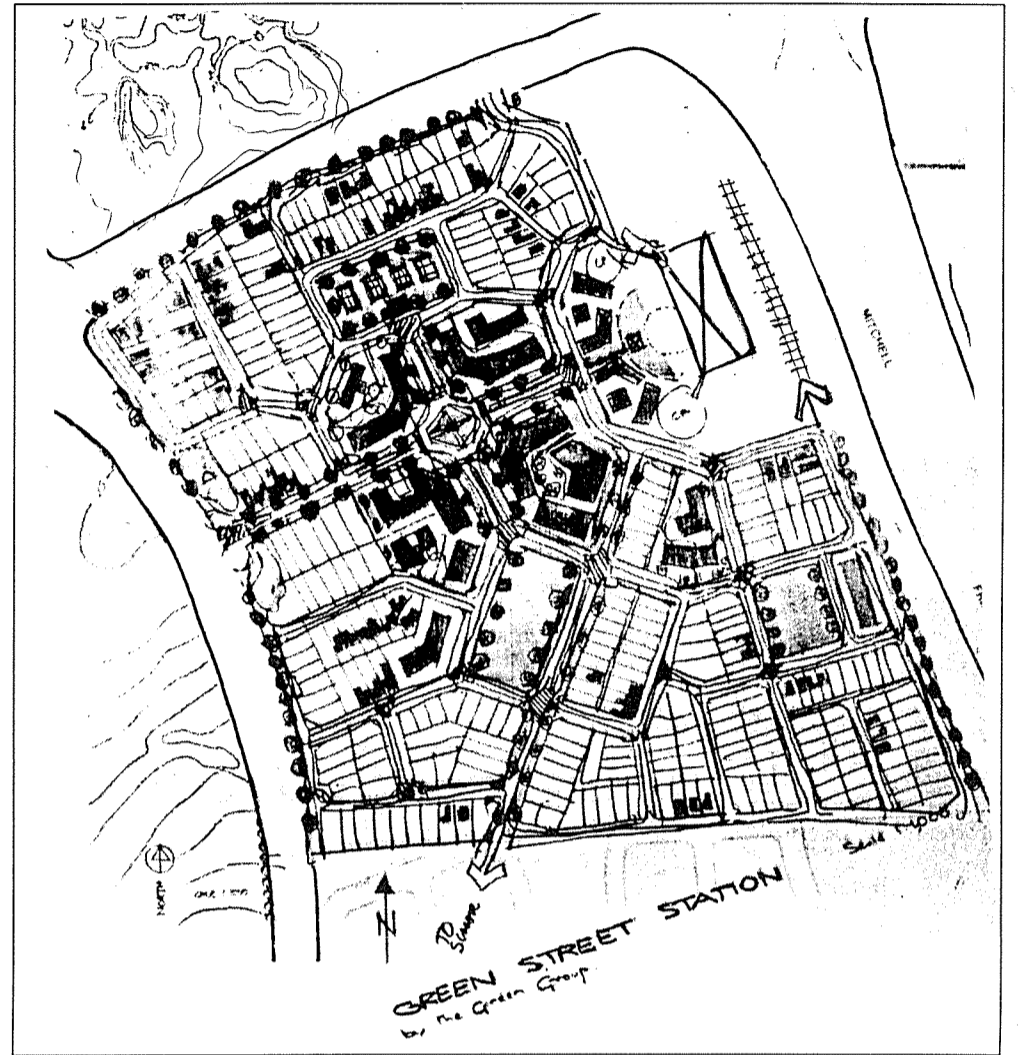
That challenge was taken up by ten teams each represented by developers, planners, architects, engineers, landscape architects and community activists. The essential, if at times frustrating, feature of the team structure highlighted opportunities for bringing together those involved in the land development process.

After the teams overcame internal differences, productive design efforts emerged during the final moments, creating credible pieces of town. The day was a marathon effort, and many stayed late, emphasising the need for a forum of urban design in Perth. Paul and Wendy concluded by reviewing each of the ten groups' work in open debate, and demonstrated the variety of alternatives for one site with a given strategy. The concepts presented showed varying allegiances to the Murrain/Morris model, ranging from small perimeter block grid layouts through to "grid de sac" hybrids.

One of the most valuable features of the

process was the open disagreement within disciplines as to what was economic / feasible / buildable / socially valuable / beautiful etc, reinforcing the notion that cities don't just happen, rather they are an accretion of opinion - and they become as good as we think them.

Paul and Wendy converted some, left a few disturbed and confused and confirmed that the future in urban planning lies in questioning our existing ways of design, just as those before us questioned those before them.



SNIPPETS

CITY IMAGE CONFERENCE - AFTERMATH

The euphoria of the big event has almost subsided. The high profile of urban design in Brisbane is beginning to get a little soft around the edges. To be fair, however, it is still a little early to expect significant outcomes. The promised urban design unit within the Queensland Government has not yet emerged but the locals still hold out hope. Brisbane City Council has given some air to its new sign control policy. The public reactions, especially from some commercial quarters was quite immediate and at times potentially fiery. The council appears to have ducked for a bit of cover.

However, one positive consequence of the conference is that Brisbane Urban Design Forum has been launched. Modest as the beginning might be, some fifteen committed urban designers and interested persons (unfortunately all male) came together to keep the flag flying and not let urban design slip off the agenda (again). Drawing inspiration from the south of the continent, the Brisbane Urban Design Forum intends to remain informal (but dedicated). Nevertheless, there are many a story of humble beginnings.....

CITY TO BLITZ ADS

Following a recent trip to Queensland I was forced to reflect that advertising signage seemed to be out of control. It is therefore timely that we hear that the Brisbane City Council is planning an unprecedented blitz on outdoor advertising which will include censoring the content of signs and tough penalties for hundreds of illegal signs.

There is no doubt however that their introduction in Brisbane is timely, so all strength to their arm!! The council is expected to approve the changes next month and enforce them by the end of the year.

DESIGN ACADEMY WILL SHARPEN OUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

Australia's development entered a new phase earlier this year, when Senator John Button launched The Australian Academy of Design on March 22 at the Sydney Convention Centre, Darling Harbour. This industry-driven national body will champion an integrated, design-led approach to developing products, services and environments.

In the midst of the federal election wind-up, bi-partisan support for this initiative indicates a new commitment among business and political leaders to strengthen Australia's place in the world.

Information about Membership

The Australian Academy of Design will serve as a strategic focus to champion the application of design in Australia's economic and environmental future. It will strive to realise Australia's potential in this key aspect of global competitiveness and quality of life in the 1990's and beyond.

The Academy will shortly be incorporated in the ACT as a company limited by guarantee. Its activities will be guided and carried out by members from all fields of design and business endeavour. Members will be men and women who have clearly demonstrated achievements in design or its application to the benefit of the community. Membership is by invitation. The annual subscription is \$150. For further information contact: Professor David Yencken AO Academic, University of Melbourne.

NEW CHAIRS

Sorry but applications have just closed! However it is of interest to see that two new university chairs have been established which have the potential to make a contribution to better urban design education.

URBAN STUDIES - QUT

At Queensland University of Technology, the Brisbane City Council is funding a position of Professor of Urban Studies. Although the primary focus is urban government, given the council's interest in good urban design, we assume that UD will be somewhere on the agenda.

U&R PLANNING - UNE

The establishment of a Chair of Urban and Regional Planning is the culmination of a ten year period of growth in the teaching of planning at the University of New England, Armidale Campus. In that period, the School of Planning has grown to be the largest in Australia in terms of student numbers. There at present, 410 students are enrolled in urban and regional planning of whom two thirds are studying externally and there are graduates of the school working in all states of Australia and overseas.

The advert said that interest and experience in issues of environmental and urban design would be an advantage. It will be interesting to see what contribution UNE will make to urban design education.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ARE YOU THERE

The "Greatest treasurer in the world" has said that he thinks our cities are ugly, but the recent budget does not highlight just how the Federal Government might take

some responsibility for making this happen. The Australia Council and townscape grants are a welcome help, but is a very long way from the pioneering (dare we mention it?) period of the early 1970's where the Federal Government at least had a vision of urban Australia.

JUST MORE SUBURBIA?

The Victorian Department of Planning and Urban Growth is about to appoint a new director of Urban Growth, to deal with the electorally sensitive growing edges of the metropolis. It will be interesting to see whether the brief will include a new deal for suburban design or just more of the same hung on a sewerage network.

Acknowledgements

Urban Design Forum is published by the UDF Group for information and interest. The views in UDF are those of its authors and do not necessarily represent the views of organisations with which they are associated.

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Editors: Rob Adams, Bill Chandler, Wendy Morris.

Contributions for UDF 13 are required by no later than 31st October 1990. Send to Bill Chandler, 79 Power Street, Hawthorn 3122. ph. (03) 819 1144.