

Making Melbourne 2000

For The Year

By Rob Adams



1. The simple urban patterns of built form, street grid, gardens and rivers give Melbourne a distinct identity.

In the face of all trends there is a feeling of hope and optimism that currently pervades Melbourne. For all that was wrong in the 1980's, it appears that a very strong framework has been set for the development of Melbourne through to the year 2000. The 1980's-boom while squandered by many not least the so called "wealth generators" of big business were used by some as a platform for enhancing the character of central Melbourne.

State and local authorities have worked in close co-operation since the early 1980's for the achievement of a unified vision for the City. This approach is continuing. While much rhetoric exists about the lack of this vision a simple survey of what has happened in Melbourne over the last decade indicates a very strong vision.

The development of the 1980's was used to successfully achieve many aims that make Melbourne a better City today.

Built Form

Development controls ensured that the essential character of Melbourne was preserved through the building boom of the 80's. Buildings were required to build up to street frontages and in many instances were respectful to their neighbours and the existing streetscapes.

Some developments went to extreme lengths to preserve the heritage and character of Melbourne. Buildings like the T&G and Peat Marwick have successfully integrated heritage streetscape concerns, while 333 Collins Street has tried to reinterpret Melbourne streetscapes into a modern idiom. No.1 Collins Street, Telecom and Rialto all similarly attempt to integrate themselves successfully into the City and complement rather than compete with the characteristics of Melbourne.

These are modern developments yet are respectful to the existing streetscape. They draw on both the dynamics of the old and new.

Civic Projects

Combined with the commercial development of the 1980's a number of major civic projects have occurred which have been used as key generators for reinforcing Melbourne's character. Major projects currently being proposed will enhance this theme.

Swanston Street Walk with its restrained design and civic characteristics has drawn together the civic, entertainment and retail aspects of the City and provides a platform for inner city housing. It is in many ways symbolic of the new approach to the city, supporting public transport and obtaining greater equity between the many users of the City.

Southgate has successfully recaptured the river for Melbourne and works well with the upgrading of the banks of the river undertaken over the last eight years. The Tennis Centre and the MCG add to the civic sporting infrastructure of the City and while sometimes criticised from a financial point of view, do much to enhance Melbourne's role as the sporting capital of Australia. Their economic importance to Melbourne and Victoria needs to be seen beyond the simple financial costs of their construction. When will the economic rationalists see the bigger picture!

The same is true of the proposed casino and museum, both of which if used correctly will add new dimensions to Melbourne while supporting the intrinsic character of the City. Concerns still exist as to whether the casino has been conceived to be the biggest and best as

FROM THE EDITORS.....

Urban Design Forum having come of age in its last edition, has decided to do a tour of the major cities over the next five issues so as to enable local urban designers the opportunity to communicate their issues. The first in the series deals with Melbourne.

opposed to just being right for Melbourne. This debate needs to be conducted.

Streetscape Improvements

Alongside the bigger glamorous civic projects are the most subtle ones of reinforcing the City's character. Paving policies which have seen 40% of the CAD paved in bluestone flags; a suite of street furniture combining street lights, rubbish bins, seats, drinking fountains, kiosks and information booths all work together to give a unified character for the many and diverse activities within the central City.

Budlighting of strategic areas such as the Spring Street precinct, the recapture some road space through the extension of the Eight Hour Reserve and Russell Street, the construction of medians in Lansdowne and Russell Street and the widening of footpaths adjacent to the Princess Theatre are all important incremental steps towards a higher quality City.

The city and state has also encouraged a strong arts program ranging from temporary art exhibitions, to the more whimsical painting of tram poles thought too grand civic statements.

Housing

The advent of the over supply in the commercial market has lead to realistic property prices and opportunities for inner city residential development. For the first time in a decade Melbourne has turned around the downward trend in central city housing. Where 7,000 residents existed in the 1960's, the end of the 1980's saw a mere 2,000. This has been increased to a current population of 2,500 with nearly 200 units currently under construction in a number of schemes and a

similar number on the drawing board.

The potential for many of the secondary and tertiary commercial buildings to be converted into residential accommodation has only just been realised by the commercial sector and is set to become the next mini boom within central Melbourne. Positive interest has also been shown in new purpose built apartment buildings.

The importance of inner city housing is understood by all. The climate now exists and mechanisms have been put in place in the form of incentives offered by the Melbourne City Council and the State Government as part of the Postcode 3000 program (see story back page). This is a one off opportunity to extend inner city housing over the next five years and should not be lost. Affordable housing within the central City is the best way of securing a vital and safe City for the future. The signs are there that this is happening.

While many of the above are new and exciting projects, there has been a consistent policy over the last decade of building upon Melbourne's traditional characteristics of heritage and gardens.

Heritage

The Queen Victoria Market has been upgraded and extended incorporating modern and old structures. The Exhibition Buildings, Town Hall, Law Courts and many other of the major civic buildings have undergone refurbishment and upgrading. The ANZ Building has combined with a new office building to enable the refurbishment of the Gothic Banking Hall, in a way similar to the

(continued page 3)

CEAD National Seminar

There was a tangible air of excitement amongst the 35 people who were invited to participate in the first national meeting of CEAD (Community, Environment, Art and Design) practitioners and organisers.

The participants all share a passion for improving the quality of the design of the built and natural environments. They are working to achieve places which are socially, culturally and environmentally sensitive and sustainable.

The seminar was initiated and supported by the CEAD Committee of the Australia Council, the Federal arts funding and advisory body, and was organised by PLACE Inc. at the Gasworks Theatre in Melbourne on the 26th and 27th of February.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss common interests and compare experiences, to consolidate work already achieved, to consider future directions in the field and to establish a national network.

The participants came from a wide range of backgrounds including, urban design, architecture and landscape architecture, visual arts and crafts, community development, cultural planning, environment organisations and federal, state and local government. However they resisted defining themselves in that way because part of the *raison d'être* of their work is interdisciplinary collaboration and the blurring of the distinctions between these traditional territories.

Max Bourke, the General manager of the Australia Council opened the proceedings by introducing Tricia Caswell, chair of the

CEAD Committee and Executive Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation. In her speech Tricia made a cogent argument for the importance of linking environmental and economic concerns in the areas of design in industry and the built environment.

This was followed by five short papers from practitioners in each of the fields of community cultural development, the environment, arts practice, urban, architectural and landscape design and local government. In every case the connections into the other areas was clear.

For the rest of the two days, discussions ranged over very broad territory and key issues were identified as of crucial importance for the future development of environmental design in Australia.

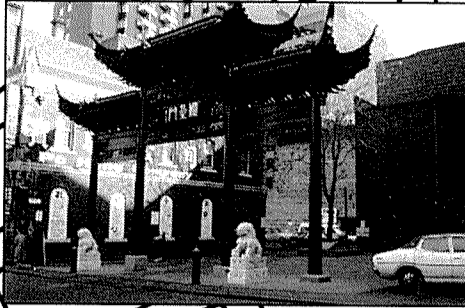
A series of recommendations were made to be passed to the main decision making bodies, especially the critical need for CEAD advocacy, promotion, networking and policy development at a national, state and local level. The delegates felt strongly that CEAD practice needs continuing support, analysis, evaluation, critique, and that opportunities should be created for this to occur.

The participants agreed to press for follow up meetings in all states and territories to continue the momentum and to involve the larger group of interested people who were not able to be supported to attend the first meeting. The papers from the national meeting will be used as the starting point and the issue of national network explored further.

For further information contact:
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CEAD Program
Community Cultural Development Unit
Australia Council
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14. Achieving traffic rationalisations with added amenity street medians and tree planting has been one of Melbourne's strong suits.



21. The creation of small urban spaces to supplement new activity areas.



17. - 19. Recycling and repairing the works hand in glove with the new to viable on going uses for important buildings and precincts.



(from page 1)
Rialto and No. 1 Collins Street of the previous decade. There is still enough of Melbourne heritage left to allow the city to build on this existing 19th century quality, further loss however would see Melbourne relegated to the simplistic blandness of many other cities such as Los Angeles and Dallas.

Gardens

Melbourne is famous for its parks and gardens and the city has had a consistent program of master plans and upgradings for all its parks and gardens.

Royal Park is in the process of being transformed into a traditional landscape with eucalypts and native grasses, while many of the other parks have undergone improvements and upgrading with new paths, improved furniture and a generally higher standard of maintenance. An increase of parkland has been achieved through projects such as the Wellington Parade South Park which supports housing in the Jolimont Railyards and the development of a number of small pocket parks and urban spaces. This is combined with consistent tree planting programs carried out by the City which further enhance the garden atmosphere of the City.

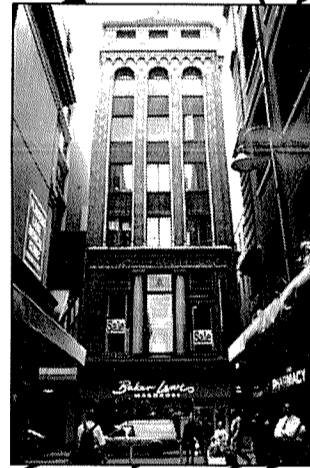
Much of what is happening in Melbourne is exciting for the future. There is still however a strong need for governments to understand the importance of subsidising the cultural infrastructure of the City. Examples such as the Princess Theatre, where the expenditure of approximately \$20 million on the refurbishment of the historic theatre facility generated in two years well in excess of \$200 million into Melbourne and Victoria, is a clear indication of how these facilities can work to enhance not only the life and activity of the City but also its financial viability.

Bottom line economics is too narrow an agenda for cities. Investments have to be made in theatre, culture, the arts, sport, markets and housing if a city is to generally flourish and become the vibrant place that we all desire. There is no doubt that when Melbourne goes into the later part of the 20th century, it is well placed to reinforce its already strong characteristics. The developments along the river, the commencement of development on the Jolimont Railyards site and the long term agenda for the Docklands area all provide great hope for the City. The State Government in allocating funding to extension of the public transport route and the greater emphasis on tourism have also highlighted some of the mistakes of the past decade.

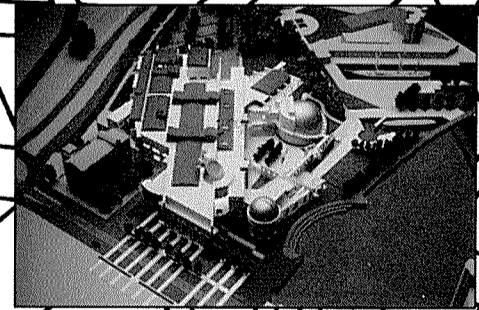
The last decade of the 20th century in Melbourne needs to build on the foundations of the 80's while avoiding the crass bravado of that era.



22. Docklands, the new front door for Melbourne needs to be developed gradually and sensitively into the 21st century. It is a long term project.



16. Inner city housing long forgotten by Australian cities now forms the best prospects for development over the next 3 to 5 years and will provide the city with renewed vitality and passive security.



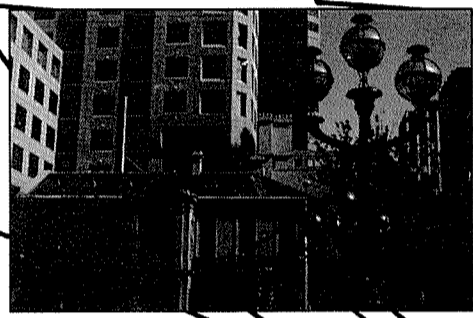
9. New Civic developments like the Museum and Casino provide catalysts for Southbank towards Docklands.



20. Master Planning of the city's gardens by the council has positioned Melbourne to retain its reputation as the garden city well into the 21st century.

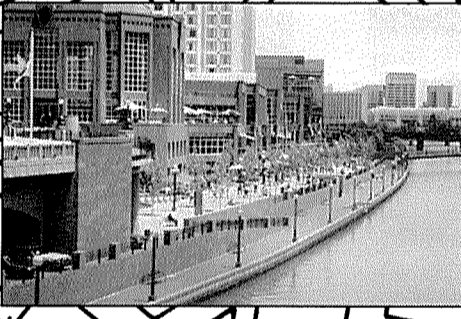


4. Telecom, where early brief setting by the authorities has assisted in providing a modern development that procures heritage streetscape elements.

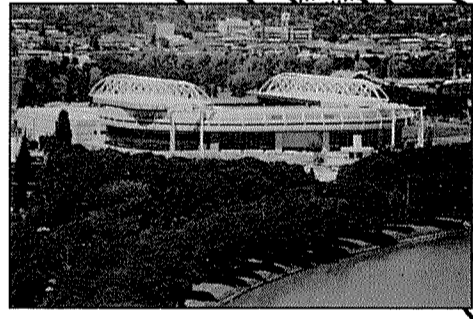


10. - 13. The smaller elements of street furniture and paving add a unifying yet colourful framework for the central city. They also provide visitor information and promotional opportunities through the information booths, banner program and floral strategy.

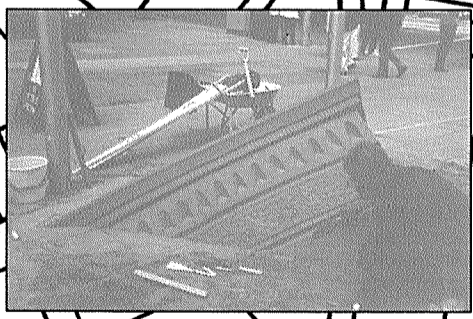
2. - 3. The combination of old and new in a respectful streetscape in the 6 & 7 redevelopment and No.1 Collins Street.



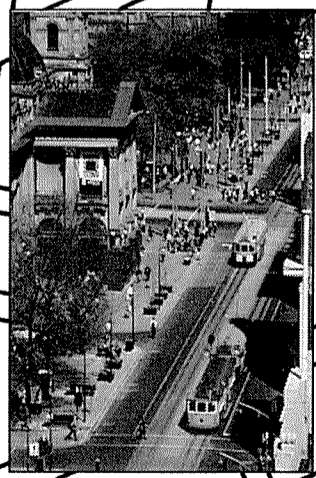
6. Southgate helps regain the river for Melbourne and provides a catalyst for several new medium density residential developments near by.



7. - 8. The Tennis Centre and MCG help reinforce Melbourne's image as the sporting capital of the Asia Pacific.



15. The cultural capital has used civic art as a cornerstone of its new urban design strategy.



5. Swanston Walk's restrained civic design that unifies civic, entertainment, housing and retail uses and sets the image for future activities and development.

Green Street V. Urban Villages

Last night I read Newman, Kenworthy and Robinson's latest book titled *Winning Back the Cities* published by the Australian Consumers Association (Choice) and Pluto Press Australia. The book is set out in a highly readable magazine format and should be compulsory daily reading for everyone involved in planning and living in our cities. *Winning Back the Cities* outlines the unsustainability of car-dominated suburbia in terms of resource use, infrastructure cost, pollution and decreasing livability and offers the bright welcome vision of economically and ecologically sustainable urban development based on Urban Villages, light rail and traffic calming.

Urban Villages are residential developments comprising 3-6 floor unit complexes (100 dwellings per hectare) sensitively sited within a heavily landscaped and traffic calmed environment serviced by bikeways and rail networks and within easy reach of services and employment. The book is superbly illustrated with photos of Urban Villages from Europe and North America and outlines how such developments have been profitably financed through value capital and joint ventures.

A few years ago, in a paper titled *Urban Villages: Theory v. Reality* (Queensland Planner - Dec. '90), I questioned the economic feasibility of Urban Villages in the Australian market place and rebutted Newman and Kenworthy's criticism of Australia's current Urban consolidation practices. In their publication *Towards a More Sustainable Canberra* (1990) they labelled Green Street as simply "fiddling at the edges and failing to address urban densities" and discarded dual occupancy

due to its reputation of community objection.

I objected strongly to exponents of higher urban densities criticising a strategy which increases residential densities from 9 to 15 dwellings per hectare; especially when green Street satifies current market demand and provides opportunities for greater variety and affordability and better design. Despite their unwarranted criticism and lack of implementation feasibility analysis, I did support their vision for more compact and more livable cities.

Two years later, I now believe their criticism of suburbia "a la Green Street" is both warranted and justified. Australia has the lowest urban densities in the world and is thus the second largest user of petrol per capita (a good indication of private vehicle usage). Green Street development will only serve to expand our car dominated and resource hungry, single storey suburban form. It will fail to give us the quality public spaces and passenger transport which instill a sense of civic pride, social justice and environmental responsibility.

I congratulate the federal and state governments for putting Better Cities on the political agenda and embarking on a community education program emphasising the economic and environmental problems associated with low density residential sprawl. However, I suggest there is much more needed if we are to reverse the Australian tradition of home buyers securing maximum amounts of house and land irrespective of the distance to work, community services and public transport. A shrewd market preference when you consider that personal cars are essential and government's emphasis on freeway construction has endured fast, cheap, convenient car travel to cheaper out-lying suburbs and little expansion of our rail and tram networks.

Freeway grid lock may well reverse this tradition in the years to come, but why don't we learn from the mistakes of others. Los Angeles is doubling its planned rail system from 240kms to 500kms. "In the late 70's there were only 11 light rail and tram systems in 8 North American cities, now there are 20 systems in 17 cities...." states Newman et al. "A light rail system, making use of an existing road system, remains highly competitive in terms of value for money relative to the transport capacity provided." claims Newman.

If someone wants a house on a suburban lot then there are literally millions to choose from. We don't need any more. We must make a quantum leap and replace freeways and suburbia with rail and nearby medium density development. Effective community education and a user/polluter pays infrastructure cost recovery system will hasten support for more compact cities. Based on this support, our local authorities will be able to draw red lines around their existing town and city boundaries and prohibit any further residential sprawl.

All living organisms are capable of waging war on disease. The Gaya Theory proposes that Mother Earth or Gaya is a living organism which is capable of ridding herself of the cancer of urbanisation. Lets lessen the pressure she is under or we could find ourselves under ten feet of volcanic lava or sea water or both.

Tony Foley

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Grad Dip Urban Reg & Planning
Mem Royal Aust Planning Institute



The City of Melbourne and the State Government of Victoria launched the Postcode 3000 Program in December last year. The program involves a wide range of initiatives designed to facilitate and support residential development in and around Melbourne's Central Activities District. The program will extend through to the end of 1995.

The primary objective of the program is to facilitate substantial residential development in the central city and to therefore enable investment in residential development to more directly contribute to central city revitalisation.

The Postcode 3000 Program will:

- save the development industry time and money;
- help residential projects succeed in the market place;
- substantially shorten the time taken to get development approvals;
- provide specialist advice on both the conversion of existing buildings to residential use and on new residential and mixed use developments;

- encourage building recycling; and
- promote the city as a place to live.

The program is underpinned by the belief that increased residential development in the Central Activities District is long overdue and that the benefits of a far larger central city population are just what Melbourne needs to round off its title as the world's most livable city.

The program helps achieve all this by specifically supporting residential developments through:

- financial incentives;
- technical support;
- street level support; and
- promotion.

Some central city developments which are currently being undertaken as part of the program include:

- 181 Franklin Street, new development producing 59 units;
- 1 Exhibition Street, building recycling producing 24 units;
- 258 Flinders Lane, building recycling producing 27 units;
- 55 Batman Street, building recycling producing 18 units;
- 84 Flinders Street, new development producing 75 units.

For more information on the Postcode 3000 Program and its many different facets contact:

John Knaggs
City of Melbourne
Urban Design & Architecture Division
Phone: 658 8697.

conferences

7th international Malls Conference

The Regent, Melbourne 21-24 Sept. 1993
Contact: **The Meeting Planners**
108 Church Street Hawthorn, Victoria
3122, Australia, ph.(03) 819 3700 fax. (03) 819 5978

competition

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For information contact: **MFP Australia Corporation** ph. Adelaide (08) 303 2113 or fax. (08) 3032120

OOPS!

The article about the Australia Council's Community, Environment, Art and design (CEAD) program in the last issue of *Urban Design Forum*, should have mentioned that the program is a joint initiative of the Community Cultural Development Board and the Visual Arts/Crafts Board.

Polis

THE NATIONAL URBAN REVIEW

Polis is a new National Urban Review to be published in May '93

It is an interdisciplinary journal focusing on National Urban issues affecting the development of our major cities. The disciplines of architecture, planning, design, politics, economics, geography and environmental science will be included to ensure a comprehensive debate and discussion is published.

Each issue will be thematically based to allow for an examination of the issues from an integrated perspective. The journal is designed to promote debate vision and innovation.

Issue No 1 will examine Housing and Re-invention of the Australian Suburb, Issue No 2 will look at civic space and the politics of urban design.

The journal will survey the critical shifts in policy and project development at a Federal, State and Local Government level. The journal will also focus on private practitioners and the development industry.

Polis is calling for articles and projects either academic, theoretical or practical which are innovative and critically address the future of our urban environments.

Articles up to 3000 words will be accepted. Authors should provide a hard copy and floppy disk, as well as a brief biography. All art work is to be finished art.

The editors, Linda Gregorion and Dale Jones-Evans can be contacted at the Polis office on Ph (03) 651 5953 or A.H. on (03) 509 2680, Fax (03) 651 6266 or send material to:

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