

Queensland

This issue of UDF, focused on Queensland, has been prepared in Brisbane.

In assembling this issue, a valuable form of stocktake was done - to account for the "state of play" in urban design and related endeavours.

Queensland has been somewhat of a paradox. We have the first formal Urban Design Masters degree course in Australia. However few of the graduates have been employed mainly for their urban design knowledge and skills. Brisbane hosted a successful international scale City Image Conference, yet for many other initiatives we have looked South. We are often unable to round up enough resources to bring visiting "gurus" North of the border. NSW had a Mainstreet program before us. The level of understanding of what urban design is or might be seems higher in the Southern capitals. And yet, when we stand back and survey our achievements, it is almost as if by stealth we have kept our pace.

The QUT Urban Design Masters course started in 1987. Fifteen Postgraduate degrees have been awarded. There are three PhD's in the making. The QUT architecture course is showing an increasing commitment to urban architecture. Some of our urban regeneration schemes are as ambitious as anywhere. The

mainstreets projects we have undertaken have sometimes exceeded expectations. Livability issues, urban design and urban quality concerns have now been placed on the State Government agenda through the SEQ2001 project.

Perhaps the more concentrated view has been difficult because of the vast territory of Queensland, much of the effort and activity has been widely dispersed. We, as the rest of the country, are only just developing an urban culture. We still have to compete with the bush myth. We are only just beginning to realise that cities are good for us. We, more than in other parts of the nation, are still showing a reluctance to curb uncontrolled urban spread. Yet SEQ2001 is as good an initiative to manage urban growth as anywhere.

A Dilemma

Our traditional aesthetic sensibility and understanding of liveability (see photo opposite) does not easily translate into future visions. There is much to be done. But as this issue will show, it cannot be said that we are not doing it. How well we have done it, only time will tell.

URBAN DESIGN AND EMPLOYMENT CENTRES

Juris Greste

The Department of Business, Industry and Regional Development (DBIRD) is to be commended for actions it has taken in an attempt to promote better urban places. One important event to this end was a two day workshop wholly facilitated by DBIRD on April 30/May 1. Its theme was the Design of Integrated Employment Centres.

It seems clear that fundamental changes in the source of employment growth are taking place. The very way we work and the nature of our society is experiencing a metamorphosis. Thus a rethink on planning for business and industry is becoming inevitable. The workshop set out to examine how we might reform the process of designing and planning urban forms to better reflect not only changes to the nature and location of business and employment but address community concerns for the environment and the quality of urban living.

Creative interaction

Participants in the workshop included representatives of the Queensland development industry, State and Local government, planners, architects and designers. Targeting participants in this way ensures greater success for a creative interaction.

The workshop was facilitated by the now well tried and tested successful double act of Wendy Morris and Paul Murrain. The specific objective at the end of the second day was to design a socially, economically and environmentally sensitive Integrated Employment Centre for a year 2001 population of up to 50,000 in a real (but unidentified) area in South East Queensland.

Day 1 provided information, ideas, alternative approaches challenging established attitudes and values. Day 2 saw four groups bursting with creative

energy to produce a regional structure plan as well as a more detailed urban layout for a new town.

Wendy and Paul reminded us of the major influences and problems of today's urban form. Public and private realms are increasingly separated. Our built environment is becoming increasingly undemocratic. Land use continues being segregated, public transport continues being neglected. A return to a mixed use form was advocated.

Not surprisingly, there was considerable consensus on existing older established good mixed use/transit centres in and around Brisbane - West End, Paddington, Stones Corner, Southport. The examples of good mixed-use towns and centres are in our midst. We need to value them and learn from them.

The second day's result was designs for four well connected "new towns" that looked remarkably like old towns. For a regional population of 50,000 the estimated number of jobs varied from 28,000 to 36,000.

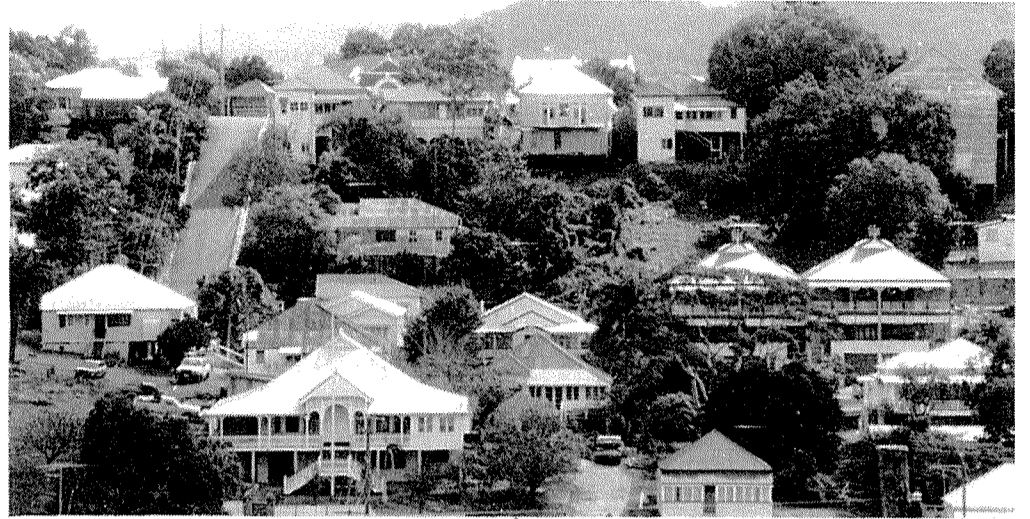
Was the exercise a success? A number of participants publicly confessed to having learned more in two days than in years at planning school. Others acknowledged a highly stimulating process of value and attitude challenge and re-orientation. It certainly proves once again the benefit of learning by doing. However, one thing is certain. We can all do better if there is a collective will to do so. But the proof of the pudding is still in the eating.

Let us hope the achievements of the venture encourages DBIRD to build on this success in achieving more equitable, environmentally and socially sound and sustainable urban places which also have integrated employment centres.

Stop press Stop press Stop press

UDF GETS QUARANTINED!

As previously announced, the **Second UDF National Conference** will be held in Sydney on 8-9th October, 1993. In what promises to be another occasion not be missed, this event will be held at the Historic North Head Quarantine Station. Early bookings are absolutely necessary. More details on page 4.



▲ A traditional Queensland town (city)

RESISTING THE ANAESTHETIC Danny O'Hare

The perennial question of urban aesthetics reared its ugly/beautiful head again at a seminar staged by the Queensland Aesthetics Forum on 18 July.

A panel, comprising both devout aesthetes and agnostics, spoke on and around the topic of "how aesthetics should impact on a Brisbane design strategy". The panel included corporate image designer, Michael Bryce; QUT's Associate Professor in Planning, Phil Heywood; Queensland College of Art academic, Charles Zuber; urban designer at the Dept. of Everything (Housing, Local Government and Planning), John Byrne; and co-ordinator of the Urban Design Masters Program at QUT, Danny O'Hare. The masculine gender bias in the panel composition did not go unnoticed by those attending.

Michael Bryce lamented the low level of public debate on urban aesthetics in Brisbane, citing the lively and continuous debate in Sydney as a model to emulate. Speakers from the audience suggested that "Brisbane people don't protest about anything" - which possibly shows the effectiveness of enforced social change in Brisbane since the street marches of the Bjelke Petersen era! (or more likely, it shows how quickly we forgot the recent past).

Michael's suggestions for inculcating a "design culture" in Brisbane were warmly received. The example of design education in primary schools in the Italian town of Regio was enthusiastically discussed as a possible model.

Aesthetic Complexity

Charles Zuber highlighted the contradictions and complexity involved in reaching agreed environmental values in a pluralistic world. He queried the seeking of past aesthetic values as a major source of standards for the future. From the audience came the suggestion that a contemporary value system might be based on shared concern for the natural environment.

John Byrne distanced himself from a concern with beauty and taste, and argued from the perspective of quality of life.

The audience discussion following the presentations was lively and diverse, ranging from the integration espoused by Byrne and O'Hare, to views portraying a dichotomy between aesthetic and affordability.

PONTE VICTORIA

The Brisbane City Council is conducting a design ideas competition, following considerable media coverage sparked by architect John Simpson's published thoughts about the potential of Brisbane's Victoria Bridge. John saw the bridge as needing to be more hospitable and amendable for pedestrians who cross between the city centre and the fast developing South Bank district.

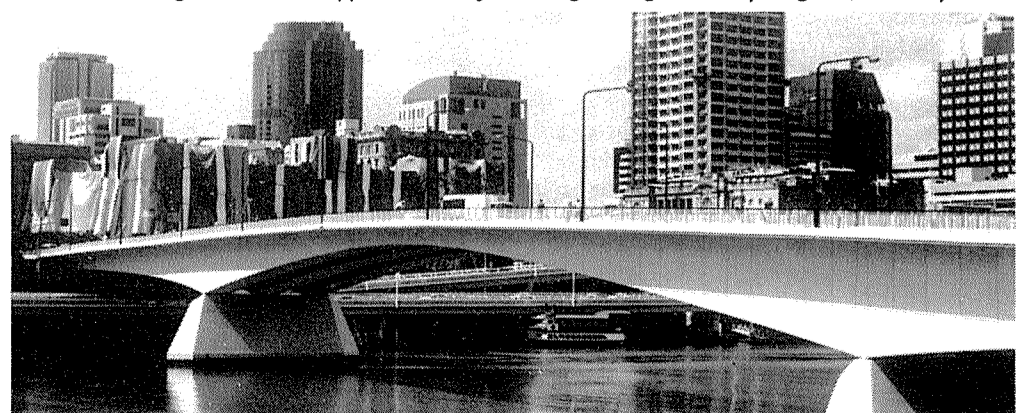
The essence of the competition brief is to promote concepts for all-weather access and amenity for pedestrians, whilst taking account of traffic requirements, including safe bicycle movement. Proposals to

provide a continuous connection between the end of Queen Street Mall and the end of the bridge are also invited.

In promotion of the competition, numerous ideas - from the predictable to the absurd, have appeared in the media. Shops and restaurants on a widened pedestrian concourse is a popular image. One of the most outrageous is a horse (bronco) of enormous size with its front feet astride the access on one side and rear feet on the other. Perhaps a troop of urban designers could emerge out of a trapdoor in 'neddy' at night and transform the city.

The competition closed on 20 August. Results in a future edition of UDF.

▼ Victoria Bridge with the 'wrapped' Treasury Building having termites fumigated, on the left.



THE DILEMMA OF Design Guidelines

Gordon Holden

The lead-in topic of the recent "Winter School" of the RAI Queensland Chapter was "The Dilemma of Design Guidelines". Several local authorities in the State have or are preparing design guidelines, mostly for residential development. Architects are anticipating increased restrictions on design freedom, without, in their view, guidelines providing worthwhile contributions to the quality of the built environment. The profession is concerned with the emphasis on aesthetics, largely expressed through guidelines which attempt to perpetuate a nostalgic style of architecture.

Six speakers tackled the dilemma as they saw it. Architects Graham Bligh and Michael Rayner agreed on the need for guidelines but disagreed on the methods. Graham saw guidelines as necessary to limit the potential excesses of the development industry, whilst providing a direction for a basic preferred form for the city. He cautions against their capacity to limit creativity, a necessary ingredient for a vital city. Caution also for them to be taken too literally by poor designers, and enforced too literally by poor administrators.

"Performance" vs "Prescription"

Michael was strongly of the view that "performance" guidelines are untenable. Michael's advocacy is for prescriptive design controls which are prepared by experts out of detailed research and extensive consultation.

As an architect who frequently struggles with, as he sees it, unnecessarily constraining requirements, of design guidelines, Rex Addison was less convinced about their ultimate worth than his practice colleagues who have helped to prepare them. He felt that less, rather than more restraints, would allow the community to find its own level. Whilst this would probably result in an overall poorer outcome, at least the best designs

would be genuine, rather than contrived. State planner Warren Rowe and Brisbane City planner James Coutts both said that design guidelines in one form or another have been around for centuries and are here to stay. Warren spoke about the expansion of scope which has come about in recent times to include greater emphasis on the aesthetics of the city. Coming as a result of more "sophisticated community expectations" to conserve the heritage and direct the character of cities.

From the workshop one can conclude that the built environment issue of greatest concern to communities, as expressed through local authority design guidelines, is one of associational harmony, or coherence, rather than a sense of the visual beauty of individual buildings. However, often the harmonious character, is by way of control over the parts of buildings. In many cases guidelines for the parts are or era of predominance in the local area. According to Keith Cottier from Sydney, "Federation Moderne" style is the go at the moment. Cottier attacks local authorities for their lack of imagination, "in seeking to control the worst development, they are inhibiting the best and are fostering a phoney nostalgic mediocrity."

Guidelines in use appear to fall into two broad categories: those which can be considered as manifestos or ideology which, with or without a rationale, seek a particular design outcome; and, those which are essentially principles which derive from research and debate, and seek to encourage new designs within certain frameworks to maintain coherence. Most concern within the architectural profession is with the use in the public domain of the first category.

The Queensland Chapter of the RAI is developing a guide document for guidelines to present to local authorities. Other Chapters were canvassed and it was found that the "dilemma" is widespread. There is general support for the need for a RAI National Policy on design guidelines.

MAINSTREET IN IPSWICH

While a few mainstreets might, for whatever reason, be marking time, that is certainly not the case in Ipswich - a major urban centre West of Brisbane.

Ipswich is almost a textbook example. In recent years a major new shopping complex, slightly off centre of town, short circuited much of the activity away from a large section of Brisbane Street, the original main street of Ipswich. Council read the symptoms in time and realised that "the flow of blood had to be restored". Some two years later the top of Brisbane Street has changed beyond recognition. The Local Authority has been quick and successful. \$20,000 was obtained from the Mainstreet Program, over two years. This was matched \$ for \$ by Council. Federal Government contributed a seven figure sum under One Nation. This has enabled physical work to get underway quickly.

Council has been unstinting in its support. Red tape has been removed wherever possible. Council officers and staff have been enthusiastically supportive, including the waiving of various fees and application procedures to maintain momentum. QUT Urban Design Masters students injected some early ideas. Council subsequently, together with local practitioners, produced a concept plan well before funding could be identified. As a result, street drainage has been reconstructed, paths widened and repaved, crossings installed, trees and

lighting in place, other furnishings nearly complete. John Adams of Ipswich Council sees this as the Renaissance of Ipswich. There is an almost unprecedented level of development activity in and around the city. A direct casual link may be arguable. However the first signs of decline have been turned into early evidence of success. The private sector has responded appropriately. Older buildings in Brisbane Street have been renovated, repainted and resigned. Investment is returning. Business is coming back in an air of confidence.

The Mainstreet program administered by the Small Business Corporation has been an important support. However much of the success of this scheme has come through self-help initiatives.

Juris Greste



BUNDABERG'S MAIN STREET: NEW HEART FOR AN OLD SOUL

The renovation of old main streets in regional towns is gaining momentum in Queensland. Current efforts are on a par, if not leading, urban design practice in Australia.

The redevelopment of Bundaberg's Central Business District is perhaps the largest and potentially most influential of the "new hearts from old souls" approaches being enacted in Queensland.

A national competition in 1991 resulted in a winning masterplan by Terrain, Environscapes and Pritchard. The completed streetscape was opened to a festive crowd of 18,000 people in late 1992.

The redevelopment plan involved the retrofit of three 200 metre main street blocks in the first stage, and side streets linking eventually to the river in following stages. Sidestreets are currently being refurbished.

Bundaberg's facelift includes the creation of street-corner plazas with water fountains, and mid-block shared spaces which are either slow vehicular ways or pedestrian squares. Cars and shop front parking have been maintained but restructured without loss of space or access. About 50% more useable public space has been created.

The project received an award of excellence from the Queensland Institute of Engineers in 1993. The 3.8 million dollar project was constructed in less than 12 months from the close of the competition. All underground services have been refitted. The street furniture includes specially designed tree grilles, drink fountains and bollards. Braille paving has been utilised at pedestrian crossings.

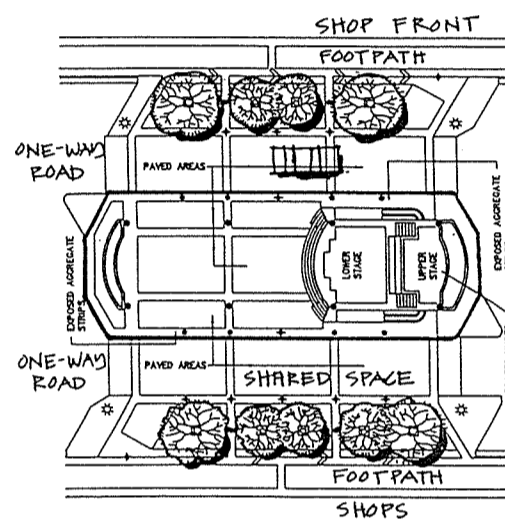
NEW MODELS & PRECEDENTS FOR URBAN DESIGN

The Bundaberg project is significant for Queensland on a number of levels. On a professional level, it heralds the recognition of Landscape Architects as effective head consultants for major urban design projects. Nearly every other large streetscape redevelopment to date has been led by Engineers or Architects (e.g. Queen Street Mall, Southport Mall, Cavil Avenue Mall, Surfers Paradise).

Secondly, the project is important as a "new" example for its regional neighbours. Experiments with paving patterns, decorative furniture and shared pedestrian/vehicular areas are being keenly watched by engineers, politicians and decision makers.

The Bundaberg project challenges the engineered notion of a street where the predominant focus is cars and infrastructure. The main street as the free meeting place for people is back in vogue.

John Mongard



▲ Bundaberg's Street Pavillion as shared space

WEST END

The work done by present 6th year architecture students at QUT augurs well for our urban future. The usual heroic stand-alone gestures have been replaced by a major urban redevelopment scheme for Brisbane.

The objective: to achieve a Sustainable Urban Community. Equal emphasis was given to each of the three aspects of the objective.

The group of over 30 students self-selected themselves into 4 groups. Each group produced a group concept and strategy. Individual proposals covering a number of sites were then produced. Collectively the project produced numerous highly commendable and exemplary approaches.

Housing stock at West End undergoing rejuvenation ▶

West End - Concepts for a Sustainable Community ▼



TWO REGENERATION PROJECTS FROM BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL

Warren Lee

Stones Corner Library Forecourt

Stones Corner Library forecourt is an oasis of mature trees in a busy traditional; shopping centre. Despite the proximity of the Norman Creek open space corridor, the forecourt is conveniently located within the shopping centre. Its neglected conditions has limited its usefulness for shoppers and workers.

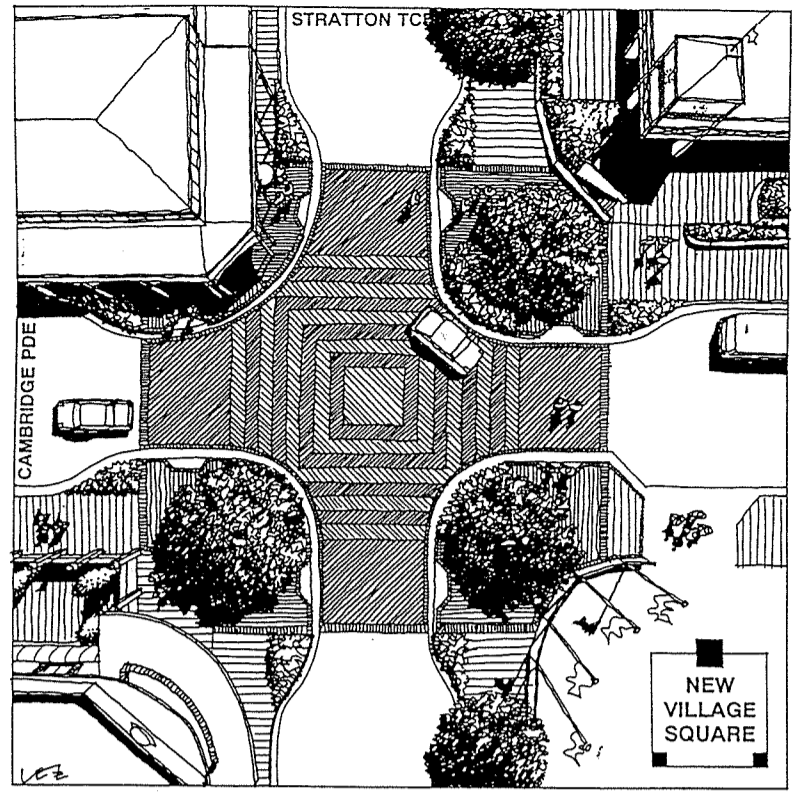
During World War 2 the site was a United States Coloured Officers Mess. Library use commenced in the early 1950's. In recent times the space was welcomingly shaded but seedy. Uninviting park benches and access ramps were strewn through the site, together with the evidence of nocturnal festivities.

Refurbishment of the space has retained the green canopy and inserted a seating cluster beneath it. Access has been

upgraded, lighting improved and planted areas revitalised. Replacement toilets are in progress.

A walk-through sculpture by Dennis Magee provides the focal point. Its low circular plinth is a hinge between the geometry of the building line and the skewed entry axis. The sculpture comprises five bronze, root-like appendages which are apparently bursting out of the paving. Wartime history has provided further design clues - use of the "bomb shelter" as an entry portal and an "aircraft hangar" for a verandah awning. Replacement toilets will be reinstated to their original pissoir-style plan alignment.

The space now fulfils its civic potential and is populated by lunch-munchers, book-readers and people-watchers.



Cambridge Parade Manly

Cambridge Parade is a traditional main street, dating from last century. Community interest in the centre is based on its attractions as a village centre, an alternative to the drive-in, air-conditioned shopping mall. Most businesses have a strong street presence and it is not uncommon for neighbourly contacts to be renewed in the public space of the street. Views of the boat harbour and snorts of sea breeze compensate for the lack of Musak.

A community desire to "do something" to build upon these attraction resulted in a "Self Help Improvement Project" being instigated jointly by the community and the City Council. Over a two year period there emerged a wide range of opinions, design concepts and conflicts of interest from local business people and residents.

A key design strategy was to celebrate the

central intersection as a "Village Square". Kerb alignments were tightened to provide more space for pedestrians and gardens, as well as to discourage speeding vehicles. Street trees, co-ordinated street furniture, outdoor dining areas, coloured and patterned paving were assembled to evoke the image of a formal square, without nostalgic indulgences. A consistent design flavour was extended throughout the centre. Attention was paid to improved safety of pedestrian movement both within the centre and to the foreshore.

Natural and historical attributes, a main street and co-ordinated civic works have produced a specific local atmosphere. This emphasises at least one good reason for residing in an established Brisbane suburb, rather than amongst the placelessness of the sprawling fringe.

HARDSHIP POSTINGS:

Surfers Paradise and Noosa Heads

Danny O'Hare

Surfers Paradise and Noosa Heads are amongst the best know coastal tourism resorts in Australia. Despite their proximity to each other, the two places differ enormously in landscape, physical form, atmosphere, character, stages in the tourism development cycle, political context and in many other ways. Noosa elected deliberately to follow a different tourism development path from that taken by Surfers. Numerous small coastal settlements now facing tourism pressure are also calling for a "not the Gold Coast" approach to tourism. However, the urban design issues and characteristics of Surfers Paradise are rarely spelt out.

Comparisons

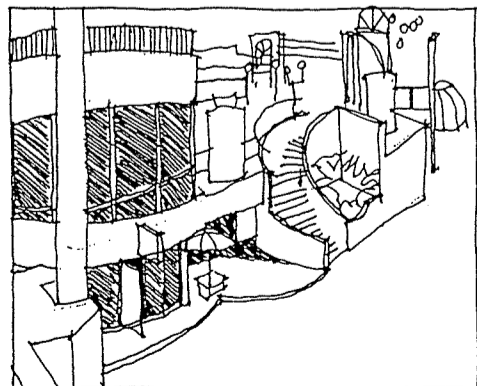
Noosa has now reached a stage of development at which it is appropriate to compare the process and results with the Surfers approach and product. As well, Surfers appears to have reached a critical stage of maturity requiring intervention to retain vitality and avert decline. As a contribution to the coastal tourism debate,

a comparative study of these two cultures was undertaken by Master of Urban Design students of QUT. Local designers, a GCCC planner, and a former Noosa Shire councillor assisted in the studio.

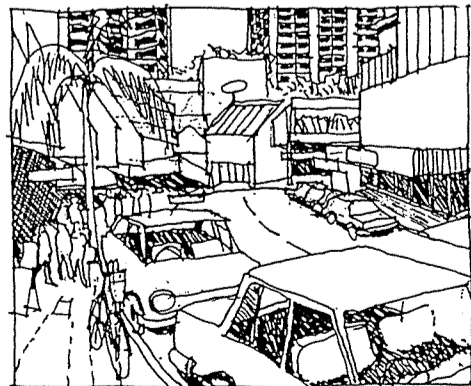
An important part of the assignment was to delimit the approach, the study areas, and the criteria for analysis. Locally tailored criteria spanned resort life cycles, sense of place, settlement structure, and selected "Responsive Environments" qualities) permeability, legibility and robustness. The actual topography of each place has shaped the patterns of urban settlement. Surfers is flat, the beach is long and the "sense of place" is created by locating buildings along the coast.

Noosa's topography of hills, coves and peninsula provides an end of the lone position which has contained potential development. Hence the buildings are of smaller scale responding to a natural, beautiful context.

Not surprisingly, contrasts between the two places were found. Some illustrations from the study are provided here, courtesy of Adrian Papi and Peter Richards.



▲ The plurality of formal expression is often differentiated whimsically without reference to use or the kind of contribution that the form can make to the public realm.



▲ The diversity of different elements, forms, shapes and colours produces a level of stimulus which is disturbing and confusing for the user who is looking for visual clues.

Urban Design in Brisbane City Council

The urban design team is part of the Local Area Planning Section of Town Planning Branch. This Section is headed by James Coutts. Such a location emphasises the link between the urban design function and the needs of local areas. A sense of place, local identity and belonging is intrinsic to Council's role in the building

of communities. This social view of the built environment provides a counterpoint to deterministic engineering logic.

The influence of urban design can therefore be found within planning strategy and policy as well as in the form and co-ordination of civic works and development projects.

THAT DBIRD AGAIN

The Queensland Department of Business, Industry and Regional Development (DBIRD) is assuming an increasingly important role affecting the form and quality of the built environment.

Following the success of the Integrated Employment Centres Workshop (see story on page 1) it is the intention of DBIRD together with Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning (DHLGP) to move towards preparation of guideline documents describing and developing further the concept of Integrated Employment Centres. In the meantime DBIRD has produced jointly with DHCG&P a discussion paper on home based businesses. While this document is not presently linked to implications on urban form, home based business is growing and will pay an increasing role in our patterns of living and working, given the rapid growth in small businesses and part-time employment (in QLD 56% of employment is in small business, 22% is home based).

Within DBIRD a Planning and Information Services Branch has been formed. Briefly its commission is

- to encourage the adequate provision of appropriately serviced land for business and industry
- to promote the creation of a planning environment conducive to investment
- to provide advice on locations that are

efficient for business, cost effective to service, environmentally sustainable and acceptable to the community - to identify and help address planning issues affecting employment, business and industry, and - to provide advice on land use planning for business and industry. As land for business and industry takes up about 1/3 of our cities, clearly DBIRD's work is likely to have an important influence on urban form. Derek Kemp is the head of the new PAIS unit on (07) 234 0484.

Mainstreet

A "mainstreet" program has been in existence in Queensland for some time. It was delivered and co-ordinated initially by the Queensland Small Businesses Corporation. Varying levels of progress has been made in Maryborough, Redcliffe, Coolangatta, Goondiwindi and Ipswich. However as of 1 July 1993, DBIRD has taken responsibility of the program. Together with its other demonstrated interest and involvement in urban design and related issues, it is to be hoped that the mainstreet concept will gather new energy and impetus.

In the meantime the program is being re-assessed. The methods of delivery are being fine tuned. It is anticipated that the new program guidelines will be available shortly.

Juris Greste

UDF GETS QUARANTINED!



SECOND UDF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Friday 8 & Saturday 9
October 1993
Sydney

Come and relax and be stimulated - all at the same time. Sydney UDFers are hosting the **Second National UDF Conference**, to be located at the Historic North Head Quarantine Station.

The theme will be 'Urban Design as Image' when participants from around the country will gather to ponder CAD - Suburbs - Edges - People - Links - Projects.

Discussion leader will include : Peter Droegge (Tokyo), Ken Maher (Sydney), Barry Maitland (Newcastle), Rob Adams (Melbourne), James Welrick (Sydney), Bill Chandler (Melbourne), Lionel Glendering (Adelaide), Harry Bechervaise (Adelaide). But the real stars will be the participants themselves.

A highlight will be the Great Debate, which will follow the Harbour Cruise and BBQ on the Friday evening. The cost of the Conference will be a modest \$150, which includes 'Designer Food' and one night's accommodation at the Quarantine Station.

The first UDF Conference at Broken Hill is still being talked about. But you really had to be there! So, this time don't miss out. Book immediately with Maureen McKinnon phone (02) 267 5300 or fax (02) 267 5301. Places are limited. Booking closes on 24th September.

NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

A MEGA MARCH COMING UP IN 1994!!

March 6-10 HOBART
"A Sense of Place .. A Place for People"

A joint national conference involving the major design professions to discuss the problems and issues of designing, maintaining and conserving the human habitat in a sensible manner.

CONTACT: Penny Archer
Conference Design Pty Ltd
Ph. (002) 31 3223 Fax. (002) 31 3224

March 14-17 BRISBANE
"Metropolis Now ... Getting it Right"

An international conference to explore the issues surrounding the future of the metropolis. Topics addressed by speakers from USA, UK, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada, Australia:

Metropolis of the Future, The Expanding Metropolis, The Mega Metropolis, The Unique Metropolis, Leisure at the Metropolis, The Metropolis and its Region
CONTACT: Vivienne Mackenzie,
INTERMEDIA Ph. (07) 369 0477 Fax (07) 369 1512

March 18 BRISBANE
"City Image '94"

A low cost one day conference on the theme "How can a city achieve the qualities it wants?" This program aims to provide straight forward advice on how to proceed in improving the quality of the city. It is a sequel to the very successful "City Image" international conference held in Brisbane in 1990.

CONTACT: Rebecca Allen
c/o INTERMEDIA
Ph. (07) 369 0477 Fax (07) 369 1512

MAKING PATHWAYS

the bollards project at Barwon Heads

Rod Charles

Current thinking on city design and urban space in terms of "urban villages" redirects attention very much away from moving about in private motor vehicles to other modes of transport. Travel by bicycle or on foot puts us more in touch with routes we are taking, not just the places we are going to.

Pathways within our "urban villages" will be particularly significant spaces, existing to meet some fundamental and deep-seated needs which are critically necessary for our welfare as individuals, and as a society. We will meet other people in all their broad and deep diversity on these pathways; they will become crossroads for the meeting of different (otherwise highly privatised) people.

A consideration of pathways, the way we create them and the needs they may meet then becomes a significant responsibility. Urban designers and educationalists each have a stake in this issue.

At Barwon Heads, on Victoria's south coast, children and the community have been working together with artist Jan Mitchell to mark a pathway from their school to a large public park nearby under the auspices of the Australia Council Artists in Schools Program. This has been in response to a concern for the safety of children coming to and from school but it mirrors the much wider concerns of alienation in the society.

Barwon Heads is a holiday village not far from Geelong, a major industrial and educational centre. The population swells in the holiday season - mainly with families who have been coming here for generations. For the most part, during the year the roads have not been busy, but at holiday time most visitors like to walk about so the place is generally pedestrianised, and bicycle riding is popular.

Users of community space are always

conscious of how effective or ineffective that space is to live in. Mostly they are accepting of the status quo, more interested in getting on with their own private lives. But sometimes, especially communally, they are moved to take action to change what is if the risks to their lives are high. At Barwon Heads the parents applied for a "safe pathways" grant.

The pathway could, it was thought, be marked by ceramic tiles set in the pavement. But the road was very busy and the flat tiles undramatic so the group turned to vertical icons, the idea of totem poles was suggested and this led to comparisons with the local traditional waterside bollards, some of which had been recently placed at the entrance of the seaside camping ground and in front of the local pub. The black cap on the white bollard could easily be changed into a bicycle safety helmet and a personality theme of the bollards began to emerge.

Collaborative

Peter Scarrott the School Principal became the lead figure in organisation and the manager of people and materials. His task at one level was to translate ideas to manageable tasks for the children and the school. He argued continuously that all images appearing on the path be the images created by the children themselves, so the path would belong to the children - a goal set by the program. One bollard was stolen on the first night but since then all the other have stood without any hint of vandalism. People who live in the streets claim the bollards cheer them up.

The project is testament to collaborative interaction and provides a strong model for how ownership of pathways can be developed using community arts to establish some direction for life in urban villages of the future.

columnspace
Writings on Urban Art

▼ Happy "owners" of the Bollards Project



Liveability & SEQ2001

Two years ago the Queensland Government established the Regional Planning Advisory Group (RPAG) to explore the implications of projected high population growth in the South East Queensland region. SEQ2001 was a project commissioned by RPAG to develop a greater understanding of the region, how it functions, the problems which ought to be avoided and the desirable future to be secured. This work is now all but complete. The various reports and studies are now awaiting final public comment. One of the 17 documents was on the subject of Livability.

The collective concept of livability may be relatively contemporary but the issues and qualities that make up livability are not. Now that the quality of urban living is being diminished and eroded we are getting concerned. This is rightly so. Precise descriptions of what livability is or might be are not unanimous. However, very broadly it must be agreed that it has a lot to do with levels of adequacy, appropriateness and desirability of a place to live - i.e. human needs, values, aspirations. Thus one might reasonably expect that in setting directions for a region's growth management, livability considerations might be prominent. One could expect them to inform and guide most of the other studies. Regrettably that was not the case.

The group of issues and criteria which make up livability is clearly an amorphous, fuzzy and difficult area. Transport can be dealt with by traffic counts and costs for roads. Livability cannot. There is a persistent tendency to keep it in the too hard basket or dispose of it if an opportunity occurs. And yet is not the question of appropriateness, suitability and desirability of a place for living central to

all our endeavours of planning and designing? Should it not be the primary objective and concern? Is it perhaps that our present planning culture has difficulty in finding a place for soft and elusive human (social) issues? Does contemporary planning education deal adequately with social issues? Does it prepare its practitioners appropriately to cope with livability matters? What value do the managers of projects like SEQ2001 (planners, politicians, bureaucrats) place on the human concerns which cannot be described on maps or quantified?

It is clear from the livability paper itself that there is much that planning and other professional endeavours have not achieved. We have not made our urban areas highly livable. Does this imply that perhaps some skills, knowledge and competence is missing?

Are the skills available?

The paper proposes numerous policies. However one policy which is conspicuously absent is how we are going to equip and prepare practitioners and administrators - those who influence the forms and directions of our urban environments - to make places more livable? It is difficult enough to define what it is. It is even harder to achieve it. Are there enough people who are capable of adequately responding to the various policies proposed?

There is a happy turn to this story. Griffith University is hosting (September 9) a one day seminar entitled "Livability: Urban and Regional Quality of Life Indicators". Let us hope that this does something towards putting "Livability" on the very top of the agenda where it belongs.

Juris Greste

THE STRAND COMPETITION:

TOWNSVILLE

Following a National Design Competition promoted by Townsville City Council, a team led by Gillespies successfully won first prize in competition with 78 other entries.

The plan incorporates a remodelled sea wall (which currently exists as a storm protection to the frontage properties) realigned to a curvilinear "wave wall". This strong form weaves along the length of The Strand creating a sinuous spine, enclosing in its curves a series of "incidents" by way of new parkland, beach front and community facilities.

Each element is envisaged as being able to be achieved as a "stand alone" project, which can be implemented as and when funds are available, and without reducing the safety aspects of the protective barrier.

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