

# Renewed Federal Government interest in cities

It is early days, but in contrast with the Howard era, it seems that the Rudd Federal Government is taking a renewed interest in Australian cities. A recent speech by Anthony Albanese, Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, included the following:

"...The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics has estimated that urban congestion alone will cost nearly \$20 billion by 2020 if we persist with current policies. What's more, at least 1 in 10 working parents are estimated to spend longer in their cars commuting to and from work, than at home with their children. ... This disengagement cannot continue if we are serious about securing our national prosperity. That's why I am pleased to announce the Government's next step towards making sure Australia's major cities remain places where people want to live, work, raise a family and do business. To this end, the Government will establish and resource a Major Cities Unit in my Department, renewing the Commonwealth's focus on cities and, more broadly, on urban development. By major cities, I mean more than our eight capital cities. For example, critical regional centres like Townsville, Newcastle, the Gold Coast and Geelong have grown enormously. As these centres expand, they face many of the same infrastructure and planning challenges our capital cities have encountered. Currently our cities deal with a myriad of federal government departments which affect their economic, social, and environmental outcomes. A more coordinated and integrated approach is needed. The Major Cities Unit will do just that."

## Optimistic responses

The response to this announcement has generally been optimistic. "... a new Major

Cities Unit shows the Rudd Government's commitment to fixing Australia's cities and regional centres", says Infrastructure Partnerships Australia – the nation's peak infrastructure body.

"For too long, Australia has been amongst the only developed nations without a national plan for growth in our cities." said IPA Chairman Mark Birrell. (From 1992-96 Birrell was Minister for Major Projects in the Victorian State Government).

The peak building and construction industry association, Master Builders Australia, has strongly endorsed the Government's decision to establish a Major Cities Unit. "A Major Cities Unit which will renew the Commonwealth's focus on cities and urban development is welcomed by the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)", says Di Jay, PIA CEO. "The Commonwealth now has the opportunity to foster integrated planning, housing, urban management and infrastructure investment systems to deliver sustainable communities across Australia"

## The proof of the pudding...

The renewed Federal Government interest in Australian cities is long over due, and very welcome. However, exactly what the Major Cities Unit will do is not yet clear. How will it deal with more than a decade of neglect? Will it just produce a series of major engineering projects? Will it facilitate the provision of public transport, and other community facilities, at a level that seriously addresses the challenge of climate change? Will it embrace urban design as a key focus for achieving sustainable cities? *Urban Design Forum* invites contributions setting out your ideas and expectations about the Major Cities Unit for inclusion in future editions.

# National Urban Design Forum 2008

Friday 24 – Sunday 26 October

Nathalia and Shepparton, Victoria

Nathalia, you ask, where is that? Well read on! In the tradition of very interesting boutique gatherings, this year's National Urban Design Forum will be held in Nathalia and Shepparton in rural Victoria. The theme will be "Design for Vitality in Rural Communities"

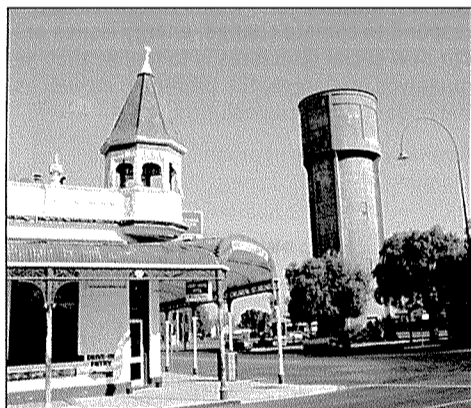
Recent NUDFs have been in state capital cities and major regional centres, but never in a rural town. Yet today, large shires, after having catered for their larger towns are now engaging firms to do planning and landscape designs for many of their smaller rural towns - with varying success. Part of the reason for this may be the lack of local knowledge, and the differences between larger urban and regional centres and smaller communities. Nathalia provides the quintessential environment in which to hold this discussion. (Locate it on a map or Google Earth!)

Some of the questions we will address include:

- how do you change the town centre streetscape (often only one or two blocks long) in a rural town and contribute to its economic strength, its amenity and its social cohesion?
- how can planners, landscape architects and artists acknowledge existing assets and create built form solutions that compliment these?
- what will be the effects to design (ESD for example) in rural communities in a future with greenhouse effect taking hold?
- what will be the effects of planning with the possibility of "peak oil" reducing travel to larger rural centres for materials and entertainment? (even before 'peak oil', current prices are affecting travel patterns to regional centres).

## Nathalia

Nathalia is a town of 1495 people. Once renowned as a centre for the river red gum timber industry, it has survived the decline of this industry. It is the town acknowledged with the lowest rainfall of any town in Victoria, yet it is surviving the drought and remains renowned as a major agricultural area. It was rocked with job losses and income when it lost its status as the shire seat at the time of



▲ Nathalia pub and water tower

Jeff Kennett's changes of council borders, yet has gone on to create a streetscape and amenity second to none for a town its size. It embarked in (2004) on an economic and social Strategy Plan, built a new library (2006), a new police station (2007), is currently building a new hospital (2008-2009), is the subject of a town Planning Strategy, and has commissioned (2007-2008) Romaldo Giurgola AO to produce a 'test' Master Plan, with Pamille Berg Consultants for a proposed Living Arts/Rural Arts Centre. It is a town which has creatively sought to acknowledge and build upon its assets.

The preliminary program includes: travel from Melbourne (including airport pickup for interstaters) to Nathalia on Friday morning; welcome to country, a day of presentations and discussions; and an evening bonfire barbecue, catered for with delicious local produce.

Saturday will include a full day of presentations and discussions, with a conference dinner at Brereton's Bakery (hosted by Tammy Muir, 'world champion yarn spinner').

On Sunday we will travel south to Shepparton for another day of presentations and discussions, returning to Melbourne and the airport (for interstaters).

So, if you would like to be involved with a presentation, or the chance to learn about urban design in regional and rural towns, put the dates in your diary now – and email your interest to [bruce@urbaninitiatives.com.au](mailto:bruce@urbaninitiatives.com.au)

# URBAN DESIGN FORUM

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▲ Jeff Carter Tableau 1957

## Street Life and the Strip

-the design dynamics of the Surfers Paradise Strip

Surfers Paradise has built a reputation in the national imagination as a uniquely enticing destination. A history of exotic neon signage, flamboyant architecture and risqué entertainment invites the visitor to an other-worldly urban landscape by an extraordinary strip of beach. Much of this appeal has also been built on a street tradition that is rapidly disappearing. In a climate of an awareness of the need to create distinctive urban spaces that defy the globalisation of urban design, and the prospect of further intensive development of the strip, 45 architects, landscape architects, planners, developers and Council staff recently came together to discuss the issues.

The seminar had as a visual resource, the current exhibition presented by Gold Coast City Art Gallery, *Streets of Gold – Photographs of Gold Coast Streets* by three major Australian photographers spanning three generations – Jeff Carter in 1957 and the early 60s, John Gollings in 1974 and Trent Parke in 2006 and 2008. Each came to the coast with a specific project in mind to capture the nature of the Gold Coast street, and their photographs tell us much about not only urban form but the way it shaped patterns of interaction and behaviour.

Before breaking into working groups, the audience heard from Local Councillor Susie Douglas, who placed the seminar in the context of current considerations on the City Heart project, and City Architect Philip Follent who identified the key features of the urban character and highlighted the potential of the major development site of the existing Transit Centre.

Melbourne Architect Tony Styant –Browne,

who instigated the 1974 study of Surfers Paradise with renowned urban photographer John Gollings, discussed how they looked at the then just published Venturi –Scott Brown *Learning from Las Vegas* and decided to apply the method to Surfers Paradise. Curator Virginia Rigney looked at the photographs and what they tell us about the street and the role of public art. Ned Wales of Bond University Mirvac School of Sustainable Development commented on signage policy in California and lessons for here and, finally, Neil Beattie, manager of one of the most eclectic bars in town – the Swingin Safari commented on the creation of a cultural pub where unexpected and entertaining things happen.

The exhibition was sponsored by Sunland Group, and the seminar was sponsored by Bond University and office of Gold Coast City Architect. For further information or to order a catalogue (\$15) email [rigney@gcac.com.au](mailto:rigney@gcac.com.au)



▲ John Gollings Drive thru 1974

## 2008 Australia Award for Urban Design

– call for nominations

Have you been involved in a recent project demonstrating excellence and innovation in all elements of urban design? Are you aware of any recent Australian urban design initiatives, projects or developments that deserve national recognition?

Nominations are now open for the 2008 Australia Award for Urban Design and it's your opportunity to highlight leading examples of urban design in Australia. The Australia Award for Urban Design was created by Paul Keating's Prime Minister's Urban Design Taskforce and was first awarded in 1996. The Award was established to recognise recent urban design projects of high quality in Australia and to encourage cities, towns and emerging settlements of all sizes to strive

similarly for improvement. It acknowledges the critical role of good urban design in the development of our cities and towns.

Third party nominations close 18 July 2008. Direct nominations close 25 July 2008. You can obtain a nomination form from [www.planning.org.au](http://www.planning.org.au) or contact the Planning Institute of Australia, National Office phone 02 6262 5933 or email [events@planning.org.au](mailto:events@planning.org.au) For sponsorship opportunities contact Larissa Hansen.

The Australia Award for Urban Design is hosted by the Planning Institute of Australia, with support from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, and Urban Design Forum.

# City of Salisbury Landscape Plan

Daniel Bennett

Our cities are rapidly facing the very real possibility of the dramatic effects of climate change. Prolonged periods of drought, lower rainfall patterns, increased evaporation rates, the effects of soil erosion, and variable water availability will radically alter our landscapes forever unless we deal with these challenges now, both in practice and in policy. The City of Salisbury recognises these challenges and engaged HASSELL to prepare a visionary document to deal with these and other issues facing the city's landscapes.

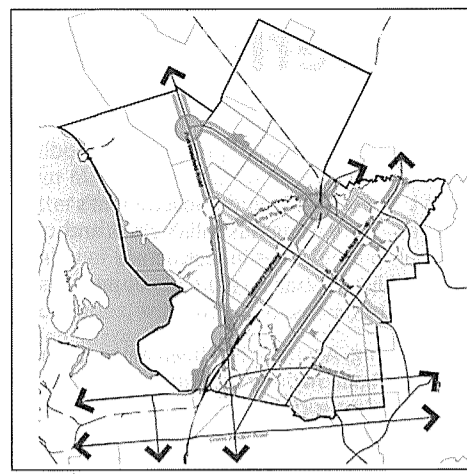
Salisbury is in a period of rapid economic growth and cultural change, and is fast becoming a vibrant hub. It is also home to a diverse and proud community. The City of Salisbury recognises the importance of the often distinctive landscapes and public open spaces and with HASSELL has developed a robust and visionary set of policies and guidelines for the future development of the city's landscapes. The document is known as the *City Landscape Plan*.

The *City Landscape Plan* covers all the city's external spaces, including streetscapes, plazas, meeting spaces, soft landscape areas, road corridors, reserves and open spaces, amenity landscapes, areas of cultural and environmental significance, industrial and residential developments. As a policy document the *City Landscape Plan* proposes a cohesive direction for existing and future development of the City of Salisbury's landscapes, providing a clear set of guidelines to strengthen the city's unique physical

characteristics, underpinned by the key principles of promoting biodiversity and sustainability, water sensitive urban design, crime prevention through environmental design, and context-based landscape design principles. To enable specific and site-based guidelines, the *City Landscape Plan* identifies four main landscape character zones. These have been developed according to extensive analysis of climatic and soil data, physiography, and pre-European plant communities. The four zones are: the Coastal Plain; the Lower Alluvial Plain; the Upper Alluvial Plain; and Riparian (or river and creek) Corridors.

Dividing the city into these different zones assists in identifying the specific requirements for plant selection, strengthening biodiversity, promoting sustainability and providing the strategic direction for the "look and feel" of the City for each zone. Planting design and selection are proposed to be based on sound design and environmental parameters, prevailing soil conditions and other climatic factors, and pre-European plant species associations. The process of using a comprehensive analytical approach aims to increase the establishment and success of the city's landscapes whilst also reducing recurrent maintenance and water use.

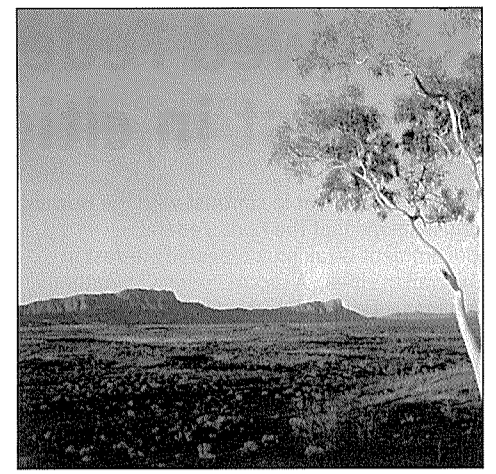
In higher profile areas, the landscape function is the core parameter that directs the selection of public domain elements which includes plant selection, paving materials, furniture selection and other features. Consideration of material selection is given to road hierarchies,



reserve function, areas of cultural and historical significance, focal points and gateways. The plan's guidelines for public domain elements will set down a consistent palette of treatments to create continuity and legibility throughout the city.

The *City Landscape Plan* is intended to be a dynamic and evolving document, continuously reviewed, improved and updated to keep abreast of innovations in urban design, landscape architecture and civil engineering design, planning, and asset management whilst also acknowledging the future environmental challenges of climate change.

The award winning City of Salisbury Landscape Plan is about creating Salisbury as a unique and sustainable City, through the creation of elements that identify the City, have visual appeal, amenity value and promotes community pride. It successfully and succinctly provides the framework for a consistent



approach to the development and upgrade of Council's natural assets (open space) into the future for both Council's residents and developers. The key aim of the document was to build upon current landscape strengths, identify short and long-term weaknesses with the existing landscape, and develop strategies for renewal of these existing landscapes and the enhancement of key high profile areas within the City.

It also provides a tool to develop a landscape that provides consistency, is practical and functional as well as being cohesive with the City's existing landscape elements, and to preserve bio-diversity by the use of predominately indigenous plantings that complement existing vegetation associations.

*Daniel Bennett is Principal of HASSELL in Adelaide and can be contacted at dbennett@hassell.com.au*

## The certainty of rapid major change

Juris Greste

Our cities and towns are facing three major areas of change. Firstly, climate change as a phenomenon is already abundantly clear, whether induced by human actions or as part of a natural cycle. Secondly, the sources and security of energy, absolutely vital to the way people live, are certainly likely to change. The changes will be triggered either by our endeavours to manage the drivers of climate change, our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; the depletion of supply of liquid hydrocarbon fuels and their consequent higher prices or both. Thirdly, an increasing number of the Australian population will be the older generation. We are likely to be living longer and there is already a clear trend that our households are predominantly of one and two rather than families of three or more (while ironically occupying much more domestic space per person!). All this awaits us in the next 10 to 20 years - a very short time in the life of cities.

Cities have had to deal with changing conditions in the past. However, few changes in history have had the rate they are advancing on us now. Yet, we have chosen to ignore these realities like symptoms of a nasty disease. We have entered a state of denial.

We are making furtive and superficial provisions for the changing future such as minor gestures towards public transport, planting some trees to offset carbon emissions and optionally installing a few water tanks. However, this is largely equivalent to taking the foot off the accelerator while our brakeless car hurtles towards the cliff.

### Optimists and Plan B

Let us be optimistic that the future will offer some redeeming options. But should even an optimist not have a Plan B? At the moment we are relying on faith alone that somehow everything will turn out right. However, retrofitting cities and towns is usually an immensely expensive and often impossible business. To say that we will fix it when the day comes is an option we will all regret. We need to revise our thinking about cities and towns now!

As we face the challenging future, the most fundamental of mindset shifts is to realise that cities and towns are not merely a stock of real estate, built property as a type of asset or capital, all held together with

engineering infrastructure and transport arteries. It is all those things, but primarily it is the stage setting of life for most of us. It is the background 'scenery' and props against and around which we participate in social and cultural interactions, live out our mortal existence, seek happiness and fulfilment.

We often complain about inconveniences, lack of amenities and opportunities, or blame the authorities for creating places and conditions that we would rather not have. The only way we will be able to collectively respond to climate change, energy issues or our new social structures is to realise that we ourselves are largely the problem - as well as the major part of the solution.

As a new measure of urban quality and planning objective, I suggest that every part of a city or town be evaluated thus: if your car fell out of action for a week or more or you were unable to drive for an extended period, could you meet most of the essentials of your daily, weekly or seasonal needs by walking, cycling or using public transport (which includes taxis)? This is not to imply that we should forgo all means of private transport. However,

the test would transform the paradigm of scale and thinking about cities and towns.

Our most eminent social researcher Hugh Mackay, writing in *Advance Australia Where?* says "If we ultimately had to choose between material prosperity and survival, which way do you think we would jump? If we know the answer, why not act now, so we never have to face that choice." That is exactly the type of choice that confronts our towns and cities right now. Unless we adopt a different mindset about them, we will not only be creating an uncomfortable future for ourselves, but also leaving a difficult legacy for our children and grandchildren. Is that really what we want?

If we are to effectively deal with climate change, energy security and cost as well as demographic adjustments, we need to rethink the way we make, use and live in cities and towns - and we need to do it now.

*Juris Greste OAM is an urban designer with an architectural background, over 50 years of professional experience as a consultant, and Secretary of the Australian Institute of Urban Studies Queensland.*

## Urban design in regional cities

Robert McLean

Urban design - its history, development over the centuries, its arrival in our epistemology, its intricacies, complexity, subtle beauty and sweeping importance for our communities was discussed at a recent workshop in Shepparton, Victoria. Three senior urban designers from the State Government's Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) discussed the importance of urban design to the broader well-being of our communities and the crucial role it played in helping to make them liveable.

Some of those at the day-long workshop were from Shepparton-based consulting firms, others were town planners from the Greater Shepparton City Council, one was from Goulburn in New South Wales, another from Ballarat and another represented the nearby Strathbogie Shire.

Peter Boyle, introduced the workshop noting that being a planner in a town or city was a little like working in a living laboratory. Another of the Department's designers, Lyn Harrop, talked about town centres and the analysis of activity to ensure design elements produced a better outcome. Amanda Millis, also a designer with DPCD, discussed design strategies that lead to and ensure a safer environment.

A bus tour of the city allowed participants to see first-hand many positive examples of design they had earlier discussed and, of course, a few less than ideal design solutions. Shepparton's new Aldi store in Wyndham St was looked at during the tour as it stands as a good example of urban design, with its large windows fronting the passing street allowing people to see both in and out.

### Importance of passion, enthusiasm

The Shepparton workshop was another example of something I always experience at such events. Most, if not all, of those at the workshop had nothing overtly personal to gain from helping their towns or cities become better places in which to live. So it is always with surprise and delight that I watch as they bring passion, dedication and enthusiasm to the idea of urban design. The excitement that urban design seems to engender among people with disparate interests in the betterment of our towns and cities was again evident at Shepparton.

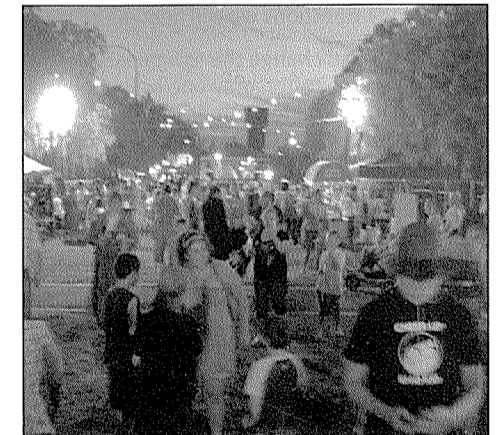
Many scribes unleash a host of adjectives as they describe the enthusiasms of crowds at sports events, but nothing I have ever seen compares with the considered zeal, albeit quieter, of those committed to making our

towns and cities beautiful and inspiring places. The urban designers I know seem to stand toe to toe with the mercenary forces of this world to show the broader community, when and where they can find a better way to live, a more expansive way to enjoy their towns and cities.

Shepparton residents are presently considering a strategy proposal for the city's CBD, assembled and proposed by consultants Planisphere. Had the broader population of the city listened to and understood the workshop, it would have been much better placed to judge, and decide on, the ideas put forward by the Melbourne firm.

In a broad sense Planisphere is eager to re-invigorate the CBD, claiming it back, in some sense, from the motor car to return it to the pedestrian and making it a living and inspiring place to be. However, some, traders in particular, are having trouble in seeing beyond the bottom line and only recently it was reported that many people, primarily traders, were opposed to those aspects of the strategy that seemed, at first glance, to make the CBD less attractive to shoppers.

Sweeping research has shown that when areas are made more attractive, interesting, and friendly to the lives of people, they



▲ New Years Eve in Nathalia (see NUDF o8 page 1)

become a place where people naturally seem to gather. Rod Duncan, who is overseeing the re-shaping of Bendigo's CBD, recently returned from a tour of many impressive towns and cities in northern Europe, where good public space equates with a healthy economy. It is that message that needs to be heard in Shepparton.

*Robert McLean is a journalist with a keen interest in urban design. He can be contacted at robed@mcmedia.com.au*

# Main Street versus Shopping Mall

Sylvia Georges

The recent 'shopping mall versus high street' debate organised by the PIA Victoria Urban Design Chapter attracted a range of professionals, many drawn to it in the hope of finding out the answer to the question of which is best. While the debate did not conclude with the magic answer, it made us realise that the problem may not lie in the form of shopping centres, but instead in how we plan and design them!

Shopping centres are classified by the *International Council of Shopping Centres* based on a number of criteria; including the size of the centre and catchment it serves - with centres varying from 'local' to 'regional' and 'super regional'. The term "Big Box" is defined as a large stand-alone store that specializes in a single line of products that sell in volume.

Shopping malls have been developed since the 1920s, corresponding to the rise of suburbia and therefore associated with suburban sprawl. With the rise of New Urbanism, many American cities are going back to traditional towns for inspiration in an attempt to remedy the most pressing problems associated with the suburban expansion.

The *Melbourne 2030* strategy is essentially based on the principles of New Urbanism advocating more compact and sustainable development focused around existing activity

centres and transport nodes. The Strategy identifies growth areas on the fringe of metropolitan Melbourne. Whittlesea, one of the nominated growth areas, has been witnessing significant growth. Three key shopping centres are being developed, all defined as 'regional' centres, as outlined in the table below.

The three 'regional' centres are within 3-5km distance from each other. While the words *sustainability* and *public transport* are used in their promotion, the large car parking figures give an indication of how sustainable they are, and how few people would use public transport.

Typically, two of the centres are internally oriented, while the University Hill Centre is within a new mixed use precinct, accessed via a mega intersection off Plenty Road - where the tram stops and bus services are located. The precinct is designed as an exclusive development, buffered from the surrounding area by generous landscaped strips and big box retail effectively separating it from the focus of activity and life - Plenty Road and surrounding area.

Epping Shopping Centre in High Street is an existing centre being refurbished as part of the Transit City program. With the millions of dollars injected into its refurbishment and expansion, one could expect to see some improvement in its relationship with the

street and the railway station across, but none of this seems to be happening. On the contrary, Epping Centre is expanding at a massive scale towards the north and west, while High Street is struggling and fighting to reinvent itself, with new street shops and cafes within walking distance north of the Centre.

## Resurgence of street malls

The resurgence of street malls and focus on street activity and life has seen many existing malls opening onto streets, in an attempt to create a pedestrian friendly and more inviting environment.

To claim that shopping centres have to be internally-oriented big boxes that detract from existing streets is non-sense, specially where sustainability is becoming the biggest challenge we face.

High Street Epping is crying out for activity and life, and what we are doing in response is to expand the centre with vast areas of open air car parking, instead of reinventing the centre to better integrate with the street.

Many argue that small scale and the rise of social exclusion at the fringe, rather than suburban development, is the issue - because these developments are not well integrated in their surroundings. Perhaps this is the case and the problem is not in the 'big box', rather, the manner in which it is laid out, designed and integrated into its context.

## Bigger picture missing

For me, what is missing from the current Growth Areas work is the bigger picture view, where instead of looking at each of these centres in isolation, we should be looking at the whole regional context to understand the impact of each centre on existing streets, precincts and neighbourhoods.

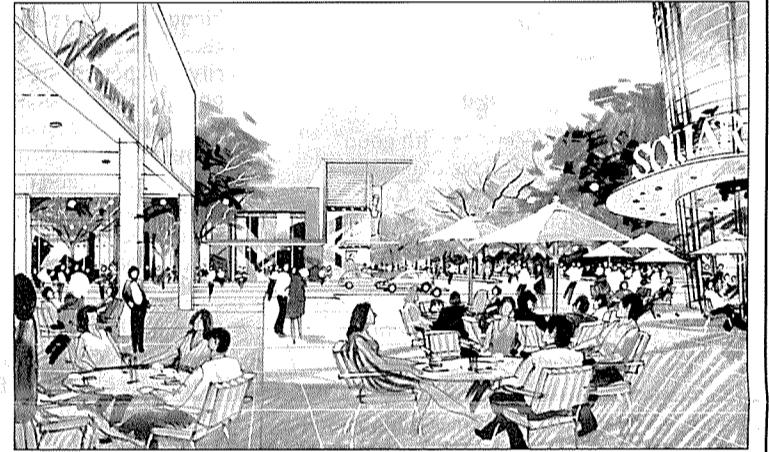
It is not sufficient to say that we have created the first five or six star energy rating suburb in Australia, or employed the best sustainable expert to define the blue print for new precinct master plans, when getting to these precincts is not possible or practical without a private car.

To conclude, it is not too harsh to say that we seem to be missing the key point in this discussion. It is not we either convert to shopping malls or main streets; rather, it is why any of either is well suited to a specific context and how it could be designed to be integrated with the surrounding environment, where both the centre and street complement and mutually support each other to create more sustainable and liveable precincts, neighbourhoods and districts.

*Sylvia Georges is Senior Urban Designer with Arup in Melbourne. She can be contact at [sylvia.georges@arup.com.au](mailto:sylvia.georges@arup.com.au)*

### University Hill or Brand Junction Centre

- A total of 104 hectares, located on the east side of Plenty Rd opposite to the RMIT Bundoora Campus.
- A Specialised Activity Centre in Melbourne 2030.
- Will generate over 3,500 new jobs
- Components: 10.5 hectare retail precinct, 20 hectares business Park, and a mix of medium density and detached housing.
- Basic community facilities and over 12 hectares open spaces foot and bike paths.
- A supermarket, a range of specialty stores and 1,000 free car parking spaces. See master plan below



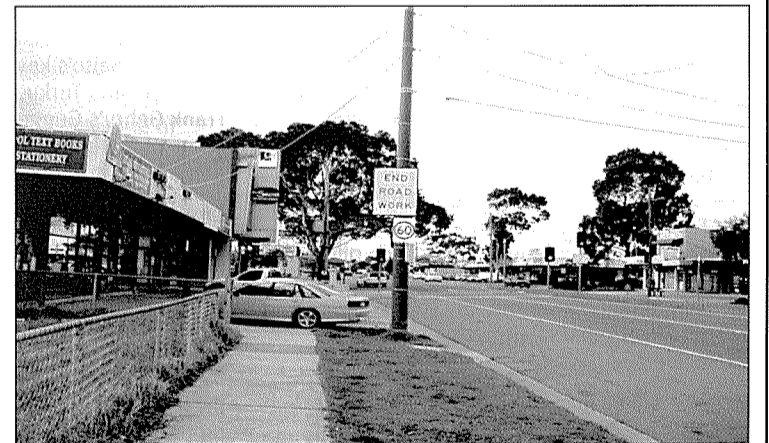
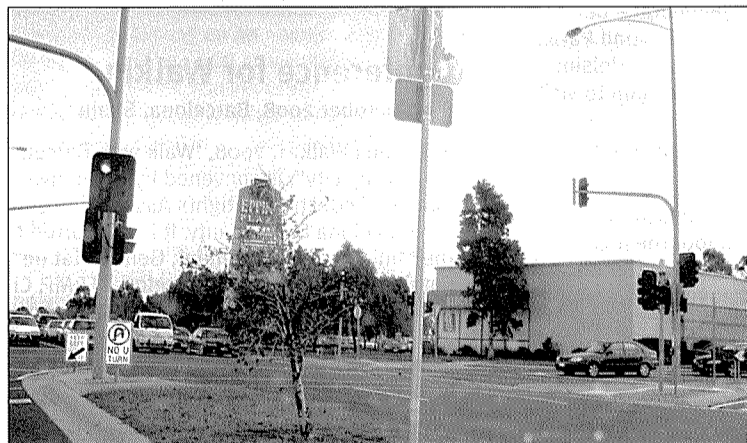
### Plenty Valley Westfield Shopping Centre

- A major regional activity centre.
- A mix of retail, office, leisure and residential uses, served by both road and public transport.
- Stage 2 will triple the size and planned with the South Morang railway station.
- A total of 48,900 square metres floor space, 22 specialty stores, and 2,230 car spaces.



### Epping Regional Shopping Centre

- Epping is a Transit City in M2030
- An additional 26,800 square metres of retail, and 950 extra car spaces, to be added to the existing centre.
- The highlight is Aurora, a new suburb in Epping North - 660 hectare development to be a model for environmentally sustainable design.



## 'Eco-Village' in Sydney's Green Square

The Town Centre public domain design, led by Sydney Landscape Architecture firm mcgregor+partners, for one of Australia's largest urban renewal projects was recently on public exhibition in Sydney. The Council of the City of Sydney and Landcom invited the public to inspect progress on the 10 year \$1.7 billion project that will eventually house 5,500 residents and 7,000 workers.

Managing Director of mcgregor+partners,

Adrian McGregor, said "Green Square responds to the need for modern cities to deliver environmental innovation to meet the challenges of urban growth". Lord Mayor, Clover Moore MP, said that public workshops last October expressed a desire for a "sustainable and green oasis, offering a versatile, sustainable urban landscape". A main component of the design is the green spine of Sheas Stream, which purifies

stormwater travelling across the site. Cr Moore stated "once cleaned, water in Sheas Stream and its associated wetlands is used as a water source for irrigation, street washing, and toilet and cooling systems in the community buildings".

The public domain is of comparable size to Martin Place in the Sydney CBD, but is divided into various areas including Civic Plaza (a place for public events and

activities), a more intimately scaled Neighbourhood Plaza with cafe and interactive water features and Sheas Park with a pond, sun filled lawn and boardwalks. The public domain design will support the new community and compliment the new community facilities, library, residential, commercial and retail uses. For more information contact Adrian McGregor at [adrian.mcgregor@mcgregorpartners.com.au](mailto:adrian.mcgregor@mcgregorpartners.com.au)

# Housing affordability through the roof

The decline of affordable housing is one of the biggest issues facing inner Melbourne. As of 2006, 97% of the houses and 77% of units sold in inner Melbourne were at the top end of the market. Port Phillip Mayor Cr Janet Cribbes said that seeing the housing affordability figures in black and white should put a rocket under all levels of government. "With the new Federal Government focus on homelessness and the rights of 'working families', there hasn't been a better time this century to start tackling housing un-affordability," she said. "Over the past decade, Federal Government investment in public and community housing fell to an all-time post-war low. The economy is still booming and frankly there are no excuses for inaction anymore."

## New Website

A website, brimming with statistics and indicators on housing affordability in inner Melbourne, was recently launched by the Minister for Local Government, Dick Wynne. The website, established as a joint initiative of the Cities of Melbourne, Yarra, Stonnington and Port Phillip provides useful and accessible data on affordable housing needs and targets at the regional and local government levels.

More than 350,000 people live in the four municipalities. The beauty of this website is that it offers consistent data covering the four different municipalities and inner

Melbourne as a whole over the period 1986-2006. The database is very easy to use, even for those of us not experienced in crunching stats. A series of drop down boxes means you can instantly search the database and come up with stats, tables or charts which address your specific criteria. What would have once taken months of work now takes seconds.

The website is designed to be used by any individual or organisation interested in being informed about housing affordability. The website was designed with a number of target users in mind – local government, State Government, housing associations, other housing organisations and agencies, peak bodies, researchers, residents, developers, students and consultants. It will provide useful information for anyone wanting to rent or buy a home in inner Melbourne.

A \$100,000 grant from the Victorian Department of Planning & Community Development's Local Area Planning Support Program funded the website. The lead consultant was Swinburne Institute for Social Research, with the Swinburne Information Technology Innovations Group being sub-contracted to create the website <http://www.imrhai.com.au> For further information contact Gary Spivak, Housing Development Officer, City of Port Phillip on 9209 6752 or [gspivak@portphillip.vic.gov.au](mailto:gspivak@portphillip.vic.gov.au)

# Conferences

## Delivering activity in activity centres

24-25 September, Bendigo

Strong multi-functional centres with good access to public transport have been identified as the pivotal ingredient for enhancing sustainability of urban areas, whilst economic prosperity increasingly correlates with quality, diversified activity hubs. However, effective delivery of enhanced urban centres using traditional processes can prove challenging.

A small specialist conference is being organised for October with a focus on the integrated delivery of initiatives to strengthen complex multi-purpose hubs, whether regional city centres or metropolitan activity centres. Participation is encouraged from practitioners and others considering 'joined-up' delivery techniques such as 'place management', town centre management and 'urban change facilitation' to enhance cross-disciplinary delivery that embraces public, private and community sector contributions.

The conference format is expected to involve discussion stimulated by presentations at practitioner sessions throughout Thursday 25 September, with the immediacy of a venue within an actively changing city centre. This will be preceded by a dinner on the evening of Wednesday 26 September for participants and stakeholder interests, punctuated by enlightening guest speakers.

## Award-winning Bendigo

The event will be conducted in the Victorian regional city of Bendigo, enabling first-hand familiarisation with the City of Greater Bendigo's award-winning initiatives in place-based planning and delivery, Australia's first Child Friendly City accreditation by UNESCO/UNICEF, and inspection of the pilot phase of an innovative 'shared space' approach to pedestrian-friendly streets in the city's retail core that is attracting interest nationwide and beyond.

The event will be hosted by the City of Greater Bendigo in conjunction with La Trobe University - Bendigo campus, Mainstreet Australia, the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development, and professional bodies including LG Pro's Strategic Place Management Special Interest Group.

Bendigo is a major service capital with a rich

blend of heritage and modern buildings clustered in its distinctive city centre. The city is experiencing strong economic and population growth and maturing as a cultural centre, with ready access by frequent new trains from Melbourne's Southern Cross station. Its inland climate is crisp and sunny in spring, providing an excellent base for short breaks exploring the cultural and natural features, wines and produce of the city and surrounding region.

Potential contributors to this professional development event can contact Rod Duncan at the City of Greater Bendigo ([r.duncan@bendigo.vic.gov.au](mailto:r.duncan@bendigo.vic.gov.au) or 03 5434 6432). Prospective participants should monitor either the UDF web site [www.udf.org.au](http://www.udf.org.au) or [www.bendigo.gov.vic.au](http://www.bendigo.gov.vic.au) for further details and registration procedures closer to the event.

## Study tour of Europe

5 - 26 October 2008

Dimitry Reed's seventh tour will focus on three famous architects: Corbusier, Aalto and Gehry. It will include time in Paris, Strasbourg, Interlaken, Lyon, Montpellier, Bilbao, Helsinki and Southern Finland. Two remarkable feats of engineering and architecture in southern France, Eiffel's 1885 Garabit Railway Viaduct and Norman Foster's 2004 famed Millau Viaduct are also on the agenda.

The tour concentrates predominantly on the works of Charles-Edouard Jeannerat – better known as Le Corbusier – in and beyond Paris, and Alvar Aalto's key works in Paris, Helsinki, Jyväskylä and Turku, with a digression to visit Frank Gehry's Guggenheim museum and some of the important projects generated by and after it in Bilbao.

Dimitry Reed AM is Adjunct Professor of Urban Design at RMIT, a Melbourne architect and a leading commentator and writer on architecture and the built environment. Tour Director is planning and transport advisor Jim Webber. Introductory material prepared by Dimitry Reed will be given to all tour participants, with background information on the buildings, spaces and places visited. Prior to departure, a meeting will be arranged in Melbourne to provide information for those participants who are able to attend.

For more information and booking contact Travelrite International Pty Ltd at [balwyn@travelrite.com.au](mailto:balwyn@travelrite.com.au)

This compendium of 28 chapters presents perspectives that are both local and international in scope and relevance - views from 18 countries in both the developed and developing world. As a cross-disciplinary survey, this volume covers diverse urban topics including: carbon emissions policy and practice; the role of embodied energy; urban thermal performance planning; building efficiency services; energy poverty alleviation efforts; renewable community support networks; aspects of household level bio-fuel markets; urban renewable energy legislation, programs and incentives; innovations in individual transport systems; global urban mobility trends; implications of intelligent energy networks and distributed energy supply and storage; and the case for new regional monetary systems and lifestyles. Obtain through [www.elsevierdirect.com/product.jsp?isbn=9780080453415](http://www.elsevierdirect.com/product.jsp?isbn=9780080453415)

# Sustainable design and transport

Leon Yates

Melbourne is growing rapidly. The vision is for Melbourne to become prosperous, better connected, more environmentally responsible, fairer, and to offer a better quality of life to all its citizens. It will need to accommodate this growth within its boundaries, without encroaching on green space.

A key challenge is making the urban environment, including neighbourhoods, fit for a sustainable metropolitan world city

Transport, urban design, planning and architecture are essential in meeting these tough objectives. Metropolitan Melbourne now has a rich and diverse architectural heritage, but too much of our great city has been carelessly planned and built, blighting neighbourhoods and the lives of its citizens. As the city's growth continues, we cannot afford to repeat these mistakes.

## The vision for Melbourne's urban renaissance

With creative, careful and integrated design and planning, Melbourne will be able to accommodate its growth, while improving the quality of life available to Melbournians and visitors alike. Without it, we will not successfully deal with areas of dereliction or social exclusion, nor meet the rising challenge of climate change.

Higher density development can restore vitality to neighbourhoods if it is linked to an efficient public transport system that is easy and a pleasure to use, and complemented by high quality architecture and public space that is well designed, well managed and genuinely accessible to all. Adding to and renewing Melbourne's urban fabric in this way, and bringing the skills of architects and designers to bear on the urgent need for lower carbon lifestyles, will help the city to maintain and share its prosperity.

The diversity of Melbourne's people is matched by the diversity of its built environment. The city includes within its boundary a world heritage site and radical contemporary architecture, industrial sites and skyscrapers, stately parks and gardens and wetlands, quiet suburban streets and bustling activity centres, laneways and Victorian avenues and boulevards, a world



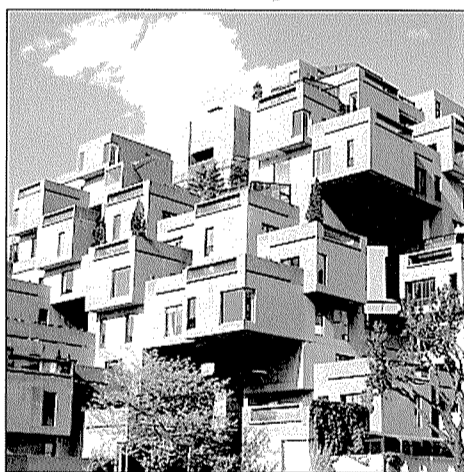
▲ Bikes and trams in Central Melbourne

famous tram network – all grouped around a river and dockland area associated with one of the world's largest bays. All of these elements contribute to Melbourne's unique character, complexity and charm, and all demand to be respected as the metropolitan area changes.

As an urban designer and strategic planner I want metropolitan Melbourne to be a place that works for all its people, for its economy and for the environment. I would like to see:

- beautiful and accessible buildings, with low environmental impacts and the ability to adapt to changing uses and a changing climate
- inspiring, well managed public spaces that everyone can use, from footpaths to parks
- neighbourhoods that blend old and new, respecting Melbourne's heritage, and creating places for a diverse population
- transport infrastructure that makes moving around metropolitan Melbourne easy, pleasurable and environmentally responsible
- road infrastructure that makes walking and cycling a desirable mode of travel, which aids in improving health through activity and roads at a scale which discourages car use for short journeys.

Leon Yates is Senior Urban Designer at the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development and can be contacted at [leon.yates@dpcd.vic.gov.au](mailto:leon.yates@dpcd.vic.gov.au)



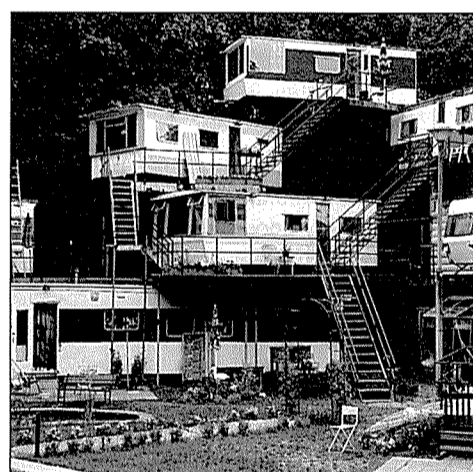
## Conference for Walking

8-10 October 2008, Barcelona, Spain

Barcelona Walk21, 2008, 'Walk with Barcelona – a moving city', is convened by Catalunya Camina, Pedestrian's Rights Association and the Barcelona Municipality. It is supported by the Ministry of Environment, Generalitat de Catalunya, Diputació de Barcelona, FEMP, City of Barcelona and a range of other sponsors and contributors across a diversity of sectors involved in the promotion of walking and liveable communities.

The conference seeks to provide guidance and inspiration to support the development of walkable environments and to establish walking as a dynamic part of modern living. There will be three main interrelated themes:

For further information see [www.barcelonawalk21.com](http://www.barcelonawalk21.com)



▲ Some people find higher densities frightening. But other people thrive on the benefits that urban life brings. What are the best models? Time for architects and urban designers to step up their skills and creativity! Montreal Habitat 1967 (above left) and Mobile Home mimic (above). [Photos courtesy of Frank Hanson and Lisa Parker of URBIS]

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# New book release Urban Energy Transition

Peter Droege, Editor