

Australia Award for Urban Design 2009

This year saw a record number of entries for the Australia Award for Urban Design, as well as a richness of creative projects from around the nation.

Entries ranged from master plans for new neighbourhoods and town centres, to sustainable villages and high density housing projects, to urban squares, malls and foreshore parks. Of note was the fact that one of the entries put out a challenge to major development processes and the sometimes reluctance of the planning and design professions to adequately listen to the communities they serve. This is a timely reminder to practitioners that good urban design should include open and honest community engagement.

Apart from award winners, the Jury wishes to recognise the commitment of the developers and designers of Rouse Hill Town Centre, in Sydney's northwest. Since the project's inception, they have sustained their efforts to deliver an integrated, vibrant and sustainable mixed use suburban town centre that has challenged the paradigm of the big box surrounded by car parking. As a result Rouse Hill Town Centre is now used as a model for progressive town centre development throughout the country.

This year the Jury has given the Australia Award for Urban Design to two projects.

1. Transforming Australian Cities

Cities around the world are in the process of redefining their form to deal with issues of climate change and sustainability, and to make them more liveable. Reinforcing public transport networks is a key part of this challenge.

This significant piece of research was commissioned by the Victorian Government and undertaken by a team led by the City of Melbourne and supported by a range of specialists. While based on Melbourne case studies, the project provides a growth model for the future form of many cities - growth that can be incremented yet transformational.

Using spatial information systems the study presents a well researched argument for strategic residential and employment intensification along our public transport corridors. The study helps visualise these higher density corridors using high quality artist impressions, and shows that the required population growth in our cities can be achieved without changing the essential form and character of our existing attractive neighbourhoods.

Although these trends are emerging in many cities, this excellent study provides high quality evidence and graphic tools that will help promote this urban form model to all levels of government, to developers and

to the wider community. The Judges see enormous potential for this work to include the development of an interactive DVD that can be used as an educational and promotional tool throughout the country.

2. Paddington Reservoir Gardens

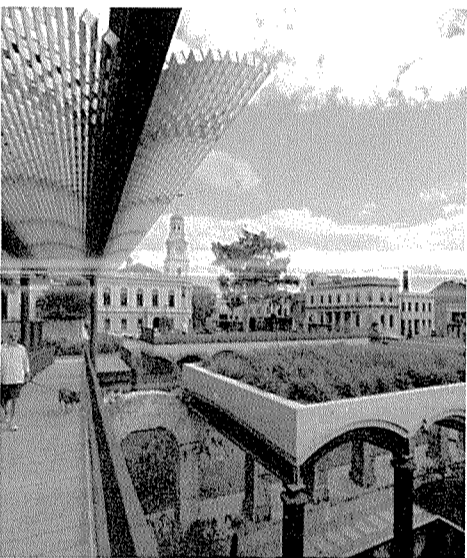
The Paddington water storage reservoir was constructed on a prominent site in the historic heart of Oxford Street from 1866 to 1878. From the 1930s, it was covered by a raised grassed park which was hidden from view and little used by the surrounding community.

Over the past two years, Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects with JMD Design and the City of Sydney, a collaborative design team of architects, landscape architects, engineers, planners and access consultants has created a unique, surprising, functional and totally engaging public park that has captured the imagination of all those fortunate enough to pass or live nearby.

Instead of capping the site and building a new park above, as originally expected, the design team incorporated many of the reinforced ruins of the heritage listed structure and created sunken and elevated gardens using a carefully selected and limited range of contemporary materials with exceptional detailing.

The contemporary architectural walkways and roof structures, combined with delightful chambers, pools and outdoor rooms, are brilliantly conceived and executed, and the extensive interpretative elements shed light on this part of Sydney's early heritage.

The success of this small but beautiful project is demonstrated by the interest and excitement expressed on the faces of those visiting the park - the ultimate reward for any project developer and their urban design team.



▲ Paddington Reservoir Gardens

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▲ Award winner: the unique and creative Paddington Reservoir Gardens



▲ Award winner: transforming Australian Cities

Commendation

The Jury also gave a Commendation to *Sustainable Sydney 2030 - the Vision*. The Vision provides an urban design framework for major projects in the city centre and in the villages of Sydney. While comprehensive in its scope, it is a focused and well-structured document that includes 10 strategic directions and 10 urban design ideas supported by over 180 actions. The Vision is exciting and innovative, and incorporated widespread

engagement with the community. It successfully resolved complex, strategic planning issues into detailed and well illustrated urban design solutions.

The challenge now is to devise a realistic implementation strategy that will bring to fruition the skilled and creative contributions made by a large and diverse urban design team which included landscape architects, planners, architects and transport planners.

'I've never thought of a milk bottle in this way before.'

An interesting combination of art, gardening and recycling has been backed by the community in Mandurah - a regional city of nearly 70,000 residents to the south of Perth.

With soiled hands and broad smiles, two hundred proud new-age gardeners planted seedlings in recycled plastic milk bottles before applying a bright paint job. Alongside them, many other community members were getting involved in a range of innovative activities as part of *Stretch* - Mandurah's 2009 annual arts and culture festival. Organised by the City of Mandurah, *Stretch* received strong support from the community.

Having received a new lease on life, the milk bottles were suspended by string from a specially made structure to form a Hanging Community Garden - the likes of which the town had never seen. Two hundred plants, resplendent in their glorified bottles, hung for all to see before becoming part of the local senior citizens' centre's fundraising efforts.

This new take on community activation was the joint brainchild of Creating Communities Australia - a Perth based social planning consultancy and the City of Mandurah. The aim was to develop an activity that would not only engage and inspire the local community, but also activate an otherwise forgotten public space.

The unusual environmental art activity put a new spin on recycling and grabbed the attention of community members of all ages. It caught on as one of the major attractions of *Stretch* and a constant stream of new gardeners could be seen flowing through the activity - all leaving with a smile and new

found sense of community. Through their contribution, participants became a part of something bigger than just the activity as active community members.

Kids have community pride

Community pride was particularly evident in the youngest people taking part. Kids of all ages pawed over the available plants before choosing just the right one to tend to. They then took to getting their hands dirty, decorating their 'pot' and finally, hanging it amongst the other colourful contributions to the garden.

Participants also contributed to creating a sense of place in a previously unused area - behind the senior citizens centre. Featuring a beautiful shady sheoak tree, the space overlooks a quiet part of the Mandurah foreshore - an ideal spot for people to come together in the future, as they had at *Stretch*. Creating the hanging garden in this space highlighted its potential, and it is now earmarked as the location for a more permanent community garden.

This proposed garden may follow a more formal design, but the seeds of pride and creative recycling that have been planted among the community members are the result of an unconventional use of the humble plastic milk bottle.

Erin Borrett is a Community Development Coordinator for Western Australian based community development consultancy Creating Communities Australia. She can be contacted at erin@creatingcommunities.com.au.



▲ Greening Mandurah with milk bottles

Next UDF to focus on Queensland

As usual, there is a lot happening in Queensland but, being a modest lot, they have been a bit slow to tell us about it! So the December edition of *Urban Design Forum* will have a strong Queensland flavour, including articles from the recent Gold Coast conference, a report on the new *Board of Urban Places* - a non-statutory, expert panel to advise on urban planning in Queensland, chaired by State

Government architect Philip Follent, what's new with Queensland Urban Design Alliance, Brisbane City Council, and hopefully something from the regions as well.

For more information about Queensland articles for the next edition contact Mike McKeown at mmcko8@gmail.com and take a look at www.udal.org.au

The Coburg Initiative

The award winning Coburg Initiative has adopted an innovative approach to the implementation of the Victorian Government's *Melbourne2030* strategy.

Moreland City Council has entered into a Strategic Partnering Agreement with the Equiset Grollo Group to implement Council's Central Coburg 2020 Structure Plan. Equiset were selected as the development partner following a comprehensive Expression of Interest process. The call for interest attracted submissions from two major development consortia. Both consortia were tested through intensive two-day workshops with teams of Council staff. The award citation stated that The Coburg Initiative "responds in a creative and successful way to delivering the vision



▲ Coburg station today

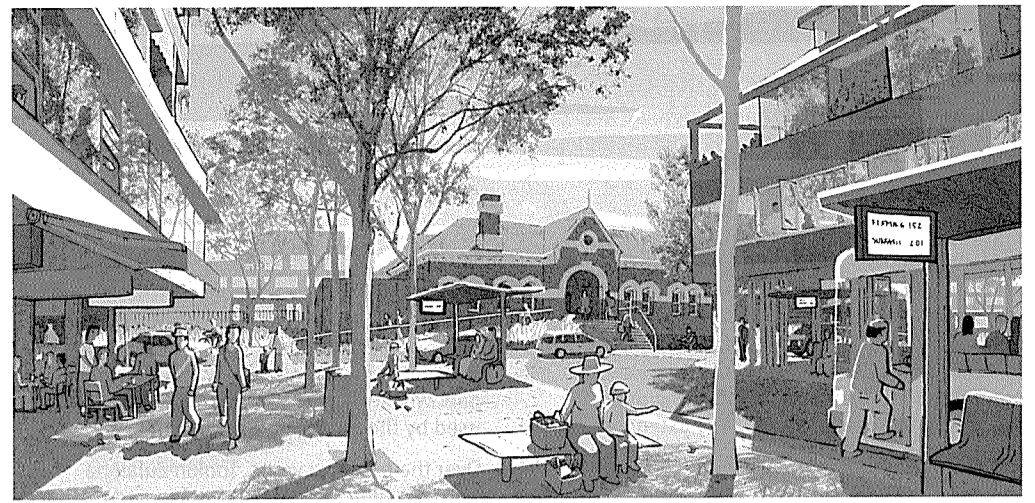
and aspirations of *Melbourne2030* involving the community, government and the private sector."

Coburg is located eight kilometres to the north of central Melbourne, and is the geographic and administrative centre of the City of Moreland. In addition to the Moreland Civic Centre, Coburg features a train station, city oval, library, leisure centre, and primary school. The former Pentridge Prison that is being re-developed as a residential, commercial and tourism precinct sits at the edge of the activity centre.

Coburg is typical of suburban retail centres in having lost its residential population and some of its finer-grained street network to car parks and supermarkets during the 1960s and 1970s. The Coburg structure plan sets out a vision to bring a significant residential population back to the centre, in parallel with a revitalisation of commercial/retail activity and community facilities, and improvements to the public realm, open space and the integration of public transport services.

Council purchases strategic development site

The impetus for The Coburg Initiative was generated by Council's adoption of the Coburg structure plan in 2006, and subsequent purchase of a 1.7 hectare strategic development site currently occupied by a major supermarket and car parking. This



▲ Coburg station as the focus of a high quality public space

purchase consolidated Council's position as the dominant land owner within the core of the Coburg activity centre.

The Coburg Initiative Strategic Partnering Agreement creates an alliance between Council and an experienced development consortium to bring a high level of rigour to developing and testing options for the implementation of the structure plan, and to commence the process of construction. The partnership brings to the project the breadth of skills of the Equiset Urban Renewal Partnership, a consortium of major local, national and international consultants in the fields of design, engineering, planning, consultation and business strategy.

Council and Equiset are now undertaking a comprehensive design process that will develop the objectives and urban design framework contained in the Coburg structure plan into a more detailed, costed master plan. Subsequently a Development Management Agreement (DMA) between the partners will establish a governance framework and set out the commercial principles for implementation of the master plan. The DMA will also include contractual and commercial details for two catalyst construction projects.

For further information see www.moreland.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 9240 1111

A short walk away from life's everyday needs

Danielle Pelleri

The use of cars as an alternative to walking to daily destinations adds 1.9 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere and robs local business of 92 billion dollars every year. In Sydney, forty-five percent of trips less than two kilometres are made by car.

Such confronting statistics raise questions about the future health and sustainability implications of our transit mode choices. Planners, urban designers and landscape architects, face a great challenge in supporting this 'healthier' form of transport and decreasing our love affair with automobiles.

Walking is the most sustainable form of transport. It is directly associated with numerous health, social, environmental and



▲ "Pedestrian Priority" (Photo: Dennis Furlan)

economic benefits. Nonetheless, there are considerable barriers hindering walkability in suburbs, ranging from psychological (perceived safety concerns, lack of time), to natural (weather, topography), to built form (presence of footpaths, distance).

A study at the University of Western Sydney has challenged the relationship between built form and functional walking practice, questioning whether the design of suburbs has any affect on walking habits; and if so, how do professionals retrofit 'unwalkable' suburbs?

Post-1970 metropolitan suburbs were centred on culs-de-sac, creating a greater reliance on private vehicles. Light-years away from Clarence Perry's design of a 'Typical Neighbourhood Unit' (1920s), much of current-day suburbia continues to fail to meet Perry's benchmark of walkability: that is living in an environment which encourages residents to walk to local shops and provides open spaces and schools within a maximum 10-minute walk.

In Sydney, neighbourhoods such as Bella Vista and Crestwood are prime examples of car-oriented spaces, exhibiting segregated land uses, minimal footpath provision, and curvilinear street layouts.

Conversely, Rouse Hill, located eight kilometres from Bella Vista, is regarded as an example of sustainable suburban design. It integrates mixed land uses and housing options, pedestrian priority and a hybrid street layout conforming to 400m/800m walkable catchments. Such design features provide the new community with walkable urban design features from the outset, encouraging residents to engage in functional walking.



▲ Attractive living and walkable spaces, Rouse Hill

Desire to increase own pedestrian activity

In a survey of walking practice across three suburbs with contrasting urban design strategies in Sydney's north-west (Rouse Hill, Epping and Bella Vista), informants expressed a strong desire to increase their own pedestrian activity but felt there were a number of barriers preventing them from doing so. Lifestyle changes, including time constraints due to increased working hours, shopping centres becoming larger and further apart, grocery chains providing low-priced products, and increased concern for safety all impact walkability.

At a Local Government level, difficulties in establishing walking school buses, as well as funding limitations, have hindered any desire to actively retrofit 'unhealthy' environments. On an encouraging note, in recent year developers have shifted their priorities to ensure that healthier environments are produced, incorporating theories such as New Urbanism to provide practical urban design solutions.



▲ The most sustainable mode of transport, Epping

The study recommends retrofitting 'unwalkable' suburbs and encouraging walkability through increasing densities and introducing mixed-use zoning around daily activity hubs; giving new life to neglected and dated corner shops; enhancing the pedestrian environment, through traffic calming devices, CPTED strategies; and promoting walking school buses.

Integrating such urban design strategies into suburban design will go a long way to facilitate greater walking habits in suburbs. Sadly for many residents, choosing the car as a cheap, convenient, and time efficient mode of transport for local trips remains the reality.

Danielle Pelleri is Research Assistant at the School of Social Sciences, University of Western Sydney, and can be contacted at D.Pelleri@uws.edu.au or phone (02) 4736 0353.

Urban design – resilience and survival

Robert McLean.

Urban designers, architects and others who understand how people live and operate in communities will be among the first we turn to when seeking answers to challenges brought on us by climate change and the present financial crisis. As the financial and climatic wheel turns, we will be forced to again live in and understand tight communities and it will be the aforementioned professionals who will help us plot a course toward that new survivalist agenda.

Climate change will take us into a low energy future, forcing upon us new ways of living that demand innovation from urban designers - and a willingness by the broader population to embrace a revolutionary way of living. No longer will we be able travel by private vehicle long distances to work; no longer will we all be able to live in spacious communities with just one house and one family to a traditional

building block; no longer will we be able to consume at an alarming rate; no longer will we be able to rely on fossil fuelled energy to sustain the wasteful lifestyle to which we have become accustomed; and no longer can we turn to, or look to, technology as our saviour.

Importance of community

Survival revolves around a few fundamental elements and one of those is community that provides a sense of belonging, something that good urban designers understand. Charged with the responsibility of creating place, most good urban designers know that a truly friendly and people conscious built environment will help in creating a welcoming community that works within the prescribed boundaries of a low energy future and a wholly different economic system.

A community assembled with the welfare of people ahead of machines allows for the creation of a workable and practical informal

economy that actually bolsters that which our Taxation Department considers formal.

In creating communities, designers need to be aware of the philosophy that all of us need to 'Live Where We Live' - that is our homes, our work, our recreation, our shopping, our friends, family, and our leisure all need to be within easy walking, or cycling distance, or quickly accessible by a sophisticated public transit system. Decades or pursuing the great Australian dream - an individual house on an individual block - has left us with culture deeply entrenched with the military-industrial complex. That culture, the modern 'Western' way of living, is failing and wholly unprepared to address the containment that awaits in the looming low-energy future.

Food security is an issue that communities need to address, and the present iron-like grip of world-wide food corporations can be weakened substantially through the creation of community gardens. Anyone who doubts that

should first examine what happened in Cuba in the final decade of last century, following the collapse of the USSR combined with an American trade embargo. Through community and home gardens, the community survived a peak oil situation and now is stronger, and healthier, than ever.

The world is evolving toward difficult times, but among those who have some of the answers stand urban designers, architects and others in similar professions. The "bigger is better" idea was ill-founded and has brought only trouble, and so the time is right for us to pursue E.F. Schumacher's philosophy that small is beautiful. Community designers need to now step forward and help us build a better world.

Rob McLean is a journalist based in Shepparton, has keen interest and insight into cities and towns, and is a regular contributor to UDF. He can be contacted at robed@mcmedia.com.au

Building activity centres -strategies for developing strong local economies and communities

Daniel Khong

Recent research undertaken by VicUrban suggests that there is a large gap between what we need in activity centres, and what is actually being delivered.

A series of well-known terms are used to describe desirable urban form - fine-grained, street-based, active-frontage, mixed-use, activity centre . . . these terms just roll off the tongue. It is a vocabulary developed in response to post-war degradation of cities, and the development of that most pejoratively described of all human settlements – suburban sprawl. However, these terms alone are not sufficient to define ‘real’ places which foster local communities, lifestyles and economic opportunity.

More than aesthetics

Most new activity centres which claim to be a success are indeed mixed-use with street-based, fine-grained built form and active-frontage. However, they are also generally associated with four characteristic failings:

- ✗ limited and formulaic use mix, with standard tenancy listings;
- ✗ ownership in the hands of few, and often only one entity;
- ✗ privatised open-space masquerading as public realm; and,
- ✗ absence of significant and diverse employment opportunities

New Activity Centre / Old Activity Centre - the difference is more than aesthetic.

These characteristic failures are common to most new activity centres in Australia, and the United States. The projects have often succeeded on urban design grounds, but the focus has been too heavily on aesthetic outcomes.

Diverse local business and employment

A significant claim for the mixed-use activity centre is that it will reduce travel distances. This leads to reduced carbon emissions, less commuting time and, as we know from Robert Putnam, much healthier and happier communities. However, unless opportunities exist for diverse local business and employment to occupy the vast majority of a centre, residents will be guaranteed of a commute elsewhere. Workers commuting take a large portion of their spending power with them, and in doing so further compound the geographic dispersion of their communities.

A new approach to housing affordability

Claire Kelly

There's no doubt that we need to re-think our approach to housing affordability. Even with the government's recent rescue package, Australians are still finding it increasingly difficult to start setting up their white picket fence – this news is nothing new. However, there may just be a new approach – but you won't get anything for nothing.

One of the biggest issues with housing affordability is that Australians are expecting more from where we live, craving that elusive “sense of community”. The problem is governments and developers are struggling to find the balance, especially between affordable housing and public space. Craig Baynham, Head Urban Designer at THG, says “The concept of ‘sweat equity’ may offer that balance between cheap and cheerful. Sweat equity revolves around the notion that people have to be ready and willing to work to create their communities.”

Sweat equity or community-based development uses community muscle to contribute to the development of public space and collective facilities. The Government and private sectors work together to teach the recipients of affordable housing the skills to contribute to their public space, whether it is through the landscaping of a local park or the construction of a neighbourhood centre. Through extensive community consultation, a government and development partnership establishes what the residents need and give them the skills to be able to create it.

The scheme has obvious social benefits, like up-skilling low income families with

So what are we trying to describe when we use the term mixed-use activity centre? How can activity centres be delivered to foster great community places and true local economies? Such places are more than just attractively designed shopping-plus centres. They are underpinned by the following critical attributes:

- ✓ Density of Tenancy – as well as the quantum of floor area, there is a need to consider the number of tenancies. The higher the number of tenancies per overall area, the smaller the tenancy will be. Small tenancies provide for small businesses which employ the vast majority of Australians.
- ✓ Diversity of Tenancy Type – a focus on small is good, but this should not be to the exclusion of medium and larger sized businesses. The resilience of any economy is assured only by the balance in variety, size and function of its participants. Diversity of tenancy types also provides capacity for a more complex mix of uses, and ability for these uses to adapt and evolve over time.
- ✓ Density of Business Ownership – more owners per activity centre is likely to result in more of the owners being local residents. Small businesses are more likely to be locally owned and operated. If this is the case, a high proportion of profits will be captured locally.
- ✓ Density of Tenancy or Building Ownership – more landlords per activity centre is likely to result in more of the landlords being local residents. Smaller, rather than larger, tenancies and buildings are also more likely to be attractive investments for locals. If this is the case, a high proportion of rent will be captured locally.
- ✓ Diversity of Delivery Participants – arguably this is the most challenging aspect for contemporary development in greenfield locations. More developers, builders and designers involved in the planning and delivery of an activity centre is likely to result in more of these economic participants being locals, or at least sub-regionally local. If this is the case, then a greater share of fees and profits will be captured locally.

The greater the diversity and density of all these attributes, the higher a centre's capacity will be for developing local economic resilience. Various scenarios have been modelled and the effects are stark. Ownership profiles typical of locations such as Lalor

techniques they can take to the broader workforce. Sweat equity also creates a sense of pride and ownership in the public space, meaning residents are more likely to use and help maintain these spaces – all of which contributes to creating a sense of place. “It's all about empowering the recipients of affordable housing, so they don't feel like they are getting a handout,” Craig said.

Sweat equity examples

Evidence is showing that it actually works out cheaper to engage in a sweat equity program. The World Bank has tangible examples, particularly in third-world countries including in Pakistan's Orangi Pilot Project, which provided sewerage facilities to nearly one million people in a poor area of Karachi. The costs of this project were one-eighth of conventional sewerage provided by city authorities.

An example of where this concept could play a starring role is in Australia's Aboriginal communities. European design principles are thrust upon these communities, most of which don't fit with the traditional Aboriginal lifestyle. As a result, the sense of community is lost. However, with sweat equity or community based development, the end-users work with the public and private sector to design and build spaces that foster interaction. Community development emphasizes participation, initiative and self help by local communities.

Clare Kelly is Manager of Marketing Communications for THG in Brisbane. For more information see www.thg.com.au



▲ New Activity Centre / ▼ Old Activity Centre - the difference is more than aesthetic



or Yarraville in Melbourne triple the local economic benefit when compared to a shopping centre of equivalent size which is in the ownership of one entity and filled with largely non-local businesses.

Ensuring local economic resilience

To ensure local economic resilience in activity centres the solution is quite simple. Provide a fine but mixed grain subdivision and a set of building types with capacity for diversity of business and ownership. Preferably, this would be delivered by many parties from day one. However, an alternate strategy is the incremental sale over time of buildings which were initially developed in sets by a master developer.

Studies of several existing activity centres in Melbourne reveal that density and diversity are consistent attributes of successful places, regardless of when they were developed. The built form may differ, but the levels of diversity and density are very similar and have been critical to those places evolving over time to reflect the local community. What is worrying about the way more recent activity centres have been delivered is that change can only occur if the (usually single) ownership decides the centre should undergo wholesale redevelopment.

Adam Haddow named ‘Future Leader’

SJB Architects Director, and presenter at the NUDFo8 in Nathalia last year, Adam Haddow, has been awarded the 2009 Property Council of Australia Future Leader Award. The award recognises the contribution of individuals under the age of 35 working in the property industry.

Adam has a strong belief in developing sensible, well-designed higher-density living in cities, curbing urban sprawl. “This needs to be a period of time where we think much more about ‘us’ and less about ‘me’. We need to engage in built experimentation which delivers better quality public space, which is more connected, inclusive and sustainable. Higher densities can deliver really fantastic outcomes and it is time that we give it a try.” Adam receives a grant of \$10,000 that he will use to further research urban densification.

Congratulations Adam! For more information see propertyoz.com.au or sjb.com.au

Our efforts to deliver a ‘real’ activity centre must not be limited to aesthetic outcomes. A fundamentally different design and delivery model needs to be employed. The attributes of density and diversity outlined need to be made preconditions of new activity centres. Otherwise, the dream of living life locally will remain the privilege of a few, and be elusive to those in new urban areas.

Daniel Khong is Urban Design Director – Liveable Communities at VicUrban, and can be contacted at daniel.khong@vicurban.vic.gov.au. Daniel will be presenting this work at the upcoming ICTC conference in Geelong in October.

VicUrban will be holding forums later this year to outline common types of design consultancy requirements. Daniel and his colleague Emma Appleton, Urban Design Director – Regeneration, will present projects representative of VicUrban's portfolio. Consultants who are interested in working on future VicUrban projects will be able to submit a capability statement. If you would like to receive notification of these forums please email sarah.holt@vicurban.vic.gov.au Please do not send in any information about your practice at this stage.



▲ Adam Haddow

Curbs on the burbs

Rosie Niven

The recent bushfires in Victoria were yet another reminder to urban dwellers of the dangers lurking in their backyard. The state capital Melbourne escaped the blaze, which hit townships in the north-eastern commuter belt. But city residents could not ignore the smoke that turned the air hazy in the days following Australia's greatest peacetime disaster.

The communities affected by the fires, including Marysville and Kinglake, are within commuting distance of Melbourne. At the time of writing [March] more than 200 people had been confirmed dead. Many of these worked in Melbourne or had moved out of town in search of a better quality of life.

While Victoria's premier John Brumby has offered the State's assistance in rebuilding properties and putting communities back together, the severity of Black Saturday's fires is prompting questions about whether it's desirable simply to replicate what was so easily destroyed. And some of these questions could cut right to the heart of how Melburnians live their lives.

Australians as a people have come to typify themselves as suburban. For generations, the abundance of land around the edges of cities has encouraged people's aspiration to own a newly-built home on a plot in the suburbs. And while the popularity of city living has increased in Europe, the suburb remains the community of choice for many Australians.

Melbourne is currently gearing up for its latest phase of expansion in anticipation of the city's population reaching five million within the next 20 years. In its original form the plan, *Melbourne2030*, signalled a break from the traditional approach of setting growth areas

to accommodate housing on the city's edge. On its publication in 2002, it was hailed for its attempts to move planning in Melbourne towards a more European approach, centred on urban renewal.

So far, progress towards realising the document's ambitions for containment and consolidation around a number of 'activity centres' has been limited. But the fallout from Black Saturday has led to calls for sprawl to be curbed and for housing development on dispersed sites to be ceased. And this could mean that *Melbourne2030*, with its ambition to direct development to defined areas of the inner and middle ring suburbs and for higher density housing, sets the tone for planning policy further afield as the State recovers from the bushfires.

The prioritising of six Central Activities Districts (CADs) in the 2008 *Melbourne2030* update has been widely welcomed by those impatient at the lack of progress. But the update's inclusion of a policy to widen the urban growth boundary to accommodate more housing in the outer suburbs has prompted criticism...a signal to developers that if they buy up land outside the boundary, then they will make a fortune when the boundary inevitably changes. Another danger...is that some of the new areas zoned for development outside the boundary could be at risk from fire.

Jane Monk, chair of the State Government's Priority Development Panel, says that the prominence of the sustainability and climate change agendas is helping to persuade a public that was initially wary of *Melbourne2030*. She believes that the bushfires may have an additional galvanising effect. 'It might make this endless fringe issue a little more carefully thought through,'



▲ Residents survey the remains of a burnt-out house that was destroyed during the February 2009 bushfires

she says. One of the key challenges facing Ms Monk and her colleagues is to kick-start development in the CADs. She accepts the criticism that little progress had been made in the six years since *Melbourne2030*'s publication, something she attributes to the planning department's focus on setting an urban growth boundary. But she insists that the CADs are now at the centre of the department's attention. 'There is lots of energy going into how we can start delivering CADs,' she says. 'Whatever lessons we can learn from those we can apply to other activity centres.'

While the State Government has signalled its approval for stepping up development in the CADs, it has indicated that growth pressures in the areas surrounding Melbourne

will have to be managed more carefully. A study by Prof Buxton's RMIT team for the Victorian Government advocates tougher planning controls in these areas to prevent the development of scattered holiday homes and hobby farms. This research has taken on new resonance in the wake of the bush fires.

Rosie Niven is a journalist who visited Australia earlier this year, and the above extracts are from New Start (a UK magazine for regeneration practitioners), April 2009 edition (see www.newstartmag.co.uk for the full article). Rosie can be contacted at rosie.niven@googlemail.com or see www.rosieniven.wordpress.com

Better waste disposal

-Barcelona's lessons for the transition to higher density

Alan March

Technologies and professional procedures relating to most aspects of city life have steadily improved over time to provide reticulated sewers, water, electricity, public transport and so on. However, rubbish collection practices have progressed little, and are now complicated by the sorting necessary for recycling.

There are many impacts of outdated rubbish disposal and collection upon amenity and sustainability. Municipalities maintain or outsource fleets of collection trucks, often requiring manual handling due to the nature

of public bins and inner-city streets. Trucks visit activity centres daily to deal with overflowing, smelly and unsightly bins which attract vermin, and present health and safety issues. High density developments and streets are constrained in their design and amenity by the need for bin storage and waste truck access. Amenity is further reduced by periodic waste truck noise, smell, and spills, often at inconvenient times. Residential and commercial streetscapes are regularly blighted by bins being left on-street at least once a week.

In Barcelona, various projects now integrate pneumatic pipes using suction to carry waste from the point of disposal to a central

processing plant, eliminating the need for most on-street bins and their collection. The suction has the benefit of allowing ongoing organic waste collection, while removing odours.

The technology has been employed in two main settings. First, in existing medium and high density areas, when ongoing street works are undertaken, the necessary pipe works are included so that the bins (which never overflow) may be located on-street. These are used by residents and businesses alike, eliminating the majority of organic and general waste collection via on-street bins and trucks. Second, in new and major redevelopment areas such as 22@, the on-street system is integrated with waste disposal points within buildings.

The lesson from Barcelona, however, is that the technology can only be used in concert with integrated forward planning and urban design as a long term investment in public amenity and sustainability.

Alan March teaches planning and urban design at the Melbourne School of Design. He has been on sabbatical in Barcelona and Istanbul, and can be contacted at alanpm@unimelb.edu.au

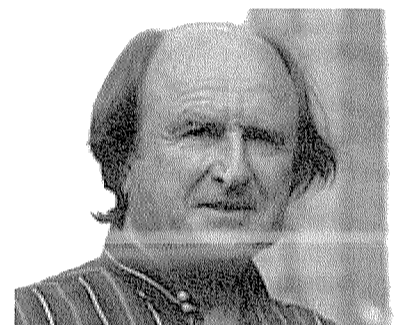


▲ Melbourne



▲ Barcelona

Vale Barry Rae



It has come as a shock to many in the design professions to hear that Barry Rae, Managing Director of NZ design and planning consultancy Transurban, recently died. He was involved with the Australian version of Urban Design Forum, and was instrumental in setting up Urban Design Forum in New Zealand – and assisting it to make great progress. As urban designer, planner, and architect, Barry led a small but very creative practice, and was a contributing member of a number of professional organisations, including the World Society of Ekistics, where he studied with C.A Doxiadis alongside a number of Australian colleagues. He was also Adjunct Professor of Urban Design, University of Auckland.

Barry had a wry sense of humour that will be missed by his family and friends, but with more than 30 years experience in trans-disciplinary work in urban design and planning, he will also be sadly missed by many professional colleagues.

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Web: A new consultant register and an increasing range of related information is available at www.udf.org.au

Co-ordinating Editor: Bill Chandler

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Send to: Bill Chandler Email: wchandler@bigpond.com

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Conferences

42nd EAROPH Regional Conference 5 October 2009, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

The theme is "Affordable Housing - from nomadic life to city life". For more details see www.earoph.info

More Footprints Less Carbon New York City, 7-9 October 2009.

For this 10th International Conference on Walking and Liveable Communities, the themes are: walkable communities are sustainable communities; paved with gold - investing in the public realm for a successful city; there is more to walking than walking; design strategies for urban quality; fit cities: community design for active living. For more details see www.walk21.com

ISOCARP Low carbon cities

The 45th ISOCARP International Congress will be held at Porto, Portugal, 18-22 October 2009, focused on the theme of low carbon cities. ISOCARP is a global association of experienced professional planners. It was founded in 1965 to bring together recognised and highly qualified planners in an international network. Jim Coleman is the Australian Vice-President. For more information see www.isocarp.org/index.php?id=409

ICTC Society 2009 27-30 October, Geelong

The International Cities, Towns and Communities Society (ICTC) 2009 conference and exhibition will be held at Deakin University Waterfront Campus, Geelong, Victoria from Tuesday 27 October to Friday 30 October 2009. Membership of the ICTC Society (no charge) and more details are available at www.ictcsociety.org

48th International Making Cities Livable Conference

Charleston, SC, USA 17-21 October, 2010

Co-sponsored by the City of Charleston and IMCL Council, this conference will focus on ways to improve children's health and development by improving the built environment. The conference will bring together 350-400 delegates - elected officials, practitioners and scholars in planning, urban design, land use development, landscape architecture, architecture, public health, paediatrics and child development - from around the world to begin to develop tools for changing the way developers build, and how cities reshape existing neighbourhoods. Those wishing to present papers should submit a 250 word abstract for consideration before November 15, 2009, following the Call for Papers Guidelines on the web at <http://www.livablecities.org/conferences/forthcoming-conferences/18.html>.