

Queensland urban design is jumping!

This edition of *Urban Design Forum* focuses on what is happening in urban design in Queensland. Most of the edition, and financial support for it, has been put together by Mike McKeown and his colleagues at Queensland Urban Design Alliance (UDALQ). A big thank you to them, and the supporters: UDALQ, PIA Queensland Division, Queensland Government, Brisbane City Council, Conics, Deicke Richards, and Malcolm Middleton Architects.

Mike has been so successful, and authors so enthusiastic, that some items have had to

be held over until the next edition: Lily Chan and follow-up to the recent very successful conference on the Gold Coast; Andrew Hammonds on his current work with PIA to provide urban design training for planners; and Tony Hall's suggestions that sustainable and affordable housing in Australia could benefit from looking at the 'Essex' model which has been evolved since the mid-1970s. So enjoy the contributions to this edition, and look forward to more from Queensland in the next edition.

URBAN DESIGN FORUM

ISSUE No. 88 December 2009

Queensland's Board for Urban Places

Philip Follent

The Board for Urban Places, a recent initiative of the Queensland Government, met for the first time on 16 October amid great expectations of its 24 person membership and of the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, the Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe, an enthusiastic and passionate advocate for better urban outcomes and through whom the Board will report to Parliament.

The Board has been established to champion high-quality urban design and to cultivate a more holistic approach to land use and infrastructure planning.

Although the Board is non-statutory and does not have any formal decision making role, it will provide general and project-specific advice on urban design, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, sustainability and built environment issues.

The membership is comprised of specialists from disciplines including architecture, urban design, planning, sustainability, social and cultural policy, economics and transport and is not solely Brisbane centric. Membership has also been drawn from regional Queensland, and interstate from Sydney and Melbourne.

Applicants numbered over 170...a most impressive signal that the allied urban design professionals wanted to make a difference...a fact not unnoticed by the Premier who is also one of the three Ministers who will direct issues and projects to the Board for advice.

The inaugural membership under the chairmanship of the Queensland Government Architect is: Brit Andresen, Emma Appleton, Stewart Armstrong, Stephen Ashton, Gordon Beath, James Birell, Neil Cagney, Penelope Coombes, Julie Edwards, Juris Greste, Ed Haysom, Peter Hyland, Richard Kirk, John Mainwaring, Michael Rayner, Peter Richards, Robert Riddel, Noel Robinson, Malcolm Snow, Caroline Stalker, Shane Thompson, John Wardle, and Elizabeth Watson Brown.

Impediments to good urban outcomes

Members were canvassed soon after their appointment to comment on their own "take" on the "culprits"/impediments to achieving good urban outcomes. Not surprisingly the issues of procurement (especially of infrastructure), the lack of urban design awareness and understanding amongst clients and government (at all levels), and the ironic complexity of planning schemes that ultimately foster mediocre outcomes rather than exemplary design were among the most cited problems.

It is intended that this survey prompts the Board to prioritise the "problem" issues and then focus on the development of strategies to tackle some of these "repeat offenders". Stay tuned.

Meanwhile the Board will have plenty to look at across Australia's most regionalised mainland state where urban projects and infrastructure delivery are travelling at a cracking (and scary) pace. Take, for example: the Gold Coast Rapid Transit (Light Rail); the Griffith University Hospital and Knowledge Precinct (Gold Coast); the Gold Coast Cultural Precinct; the Townsville Mall redevelopment; hospital projects on the Sunshine Coast, Townsville and Cairns and the cross-river (underground) rail project, Brisbane.

All of these projects could be designed well and delivered well but the journey from design to delivery is through a minefield of hazards, compromises and disappointments. These projects will be part of the community's assets (or liabilities) for years to come. Therefore they should be delivered with long life, community relevance and pride in mind.

It is the role of the Board for Urban Places to steadfastly champion these principles to all parties whose actions shape our towns and cities!

Philip Follent is the Queensland Government Architect, who can be contact at Philip. FOLLENT@publicworks.qld.gov.au For more information on the Board for Urban Places visit www.dip.qld.gov.au/urban-planning/board-for-urban-places.html



▲ James Street, New Farm, Brisbane



▲ Class of 2009 – the QBUP Board (20 out of 24 anyway)

UDAL landmarks

Juris Greste OAM

There is an old Latvian saying "who else will lift the dog's tail but the dog itself". So here goes with some UDALQ tail lifting and vigorous wagging.

The Urban Design Alliance of Queensland Inc has been making its mark in South East Queensland. It is unique in Australia as a truly multi-disciplinary group around the one urban design table. As such, it is even the de facto urban design chapter of the Planning Institute of Australia in Queensland. Now well into the tenth year, we warmly welcome the 100th member – Peter Browning of the Hornery Institute. For a diverse group which is not a heart warming charity, where members do not join to primarily further their own interest and broaden commercial networks, but to share concern for the most public of humanity's institutions – the city and town – that deserves some applause.

Of course that was not quite like that from Day 1. In a highly bunkered community of the built environment professions ten years ago, there was opposition, indifference and even derision. Come to think of it, if we were to start something similar today, it may not be all that different. Urban design 'arrived' in Australia 22 years ago with the first post graduate course at QUT. However, well established practitioners are still heard asking today "what is this thing urban design"?

A few passionate hard-heads persisted in their belief that it makes no sense for groups of

specialists to be presumably concerned with the same issues and challenges of urbanism and never come together to sit around the same fire. As Peter Richards has iconically drawn in his daisy, urban design – making good places for people – is the uniting centre which must link us all.

After six or seven years of what sometimes seemed like an effort from one meeting to the next, an important landmark was the drafting and publication of our 'agenda for urban quality for Queensland' document – the first of its kind in Australia. The next courageous step was to become a formally incorporated organisation. It has advantages in going 'public', but it also places responsibilities and some legal obligations. Nevertheless, there are initiatives that could not have been taken were we not publicly accountable.

Many ideas, not enough time

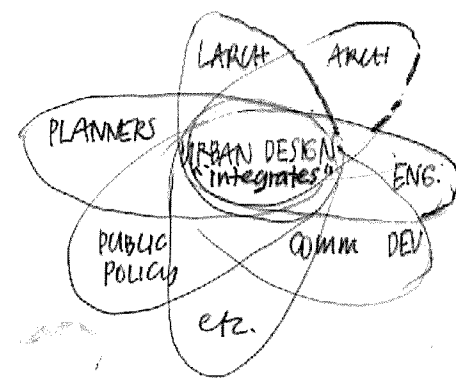
Probably the boldest move, without a generously pocketed benefactor, was to contract a part time executive officer. We had so many great ideas but not enough people with time to push them along. With most practitioners having to be more productive (working ever harder for their day jobs) and armouring themselves against the GFC, we were fortunate to secure the services of Donnell Davis who has injected the energy for what retrospectively will surely be seen as a renaissance. Without Donnell's enthusiasm and seemingly endless networks, who knows when we could have reached our 100 members strength?

We also wish to acknowledge that without strong corporate support, especially from the South Bank Corporation and Brisbane City Council, we could not have got to where we are now. We trust that our associations will continue and grow stronger.

What have we actually been doing? Apart from making public submissions and representations, doing general advocacy work, providing the intellectual as well as organisational leadership of various workshops, updating the agenda and reconstructing our web site www.udal.org.au, the life blood of UDALQ has been the monthly forums with appearances of leading local identities and attendances of 50+. Here is a short list from 2009: SEQ regional planning; Lessons from subtropical cities conference; Urban design and the new government; Which way north? Professional education; Riverfront futures design studio and book launch; New urban precinct design; SEQ stimulus package - recession rescue; Youth roundtable; Housing the homeless think tank/design studio; Urban acupuncture for the city centre. If that menu does not have something for almost everyone, you are off your intellectual nourishment!

Queensland University of Technology has generously provided us with a Forum venue that is not only the envy of many but also has one of the most tantalising views of Brisbane city, especially at Forum time at sunset. That alone is worth the attendance.

So, to give the UDALQ tail a final arrogant shake, if you have not been attending the



▲ Peter Richards' daisy

forums, you have not been part of the professional urbanism conversation in SEQ. That is the only place where it is happening in public in Brisbane. Be there for the next one! And for the chance of becoming UDAL's 200th member, contact Donnell at udal@envirobusiness.org

Finally, thanks to the dedicated management committee, lead by James Tuma, which was confirmed for another year at the October AGM.

Juris Greste OAM is an urban designer and passionate advocate for urban design, and Treasurer of Urban Design Alliance of Queensland Inc

Vibrant laneways and small spaces

Brisbane City Council

The recent unveiling of the new look Jacob's Ladder and King Edward Park by Brisbane City Council continues the roll-out of discrete interventions in Brisbane's CBD that are redefining how the city looks at itself. Born out of the City Centre Master Plan, the Vibrant Laneways and Small Spaces program identifies opportunities to revitalise overlooked and forgotten spaces. Other Vibrant Laneway projects include Market Street and the upcoming Burnett Lane and Little Roma Street projects.

What characterises these projects is a successful merging of small capital works and a program of activation through the 'Inhabit' initiative which was recently recognised with an award by the Queensland Chapter of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

Jacob's Ladder and King Edward Park sit high above the CBD and were an underutilised pedestrian link to neighbouring Spring Hill. Revitalising the existing park and heritage stairs has returned a significant piece of public space back to the city. Through the removal of a traffic slip lane, a new plaza space has been created at the base of the stairs featuring the iconic *Forme Del Mito* sculptures, first purchased by Council after Expo 88 and previously located in King George Square. Other elements of the revitalisation included landscaping improvements within King Edward Park, sandblasting of the stairs and upgrade to the balustrade, and improved pedestrian lighting.

"The rejuvenation of King Edward Park and Jacob's Ladder demonstrates how Council's Vibrant Laneways program can take

forgotten CBD areas and use clever, creative design to transform them into popular CBD destinations," Chair of Neighbourhood Planning and Development Assessment, Cr Amanda Cooper said.

A stairway to heaven

With views to and from the retail heart of the city, the dramatic landscape of the Jacob's Ladder space is further enhanced by a creative art installation, including light projection. Internationally acclaimed Maltese artist, Norbet Francis Attard, was commissioned to transform the Jacob's Ladder stairs and has created a red carpet stairway to 'heaven', when viewed from below. From above, it is a rainbow coloured invitation to step down into the city, with long views down Edward Street to the Kangaroo Point cliffs across the river. At night, the stair landings are illuminated with projected images drawn from local historical themes evoking a strong sense of place, discovery and intrigue.

This Jacob's Ladder installation was the first Inhabit initiative for 2009 - a program of permanent and temporary public art and activation events. By its very nature, the works 'inhabit' the city and seek to engage with city residents, workers and visitors alike. Previously, a large floating head in Burnett Lane, a 'greened' astro-turf laneway, and spaces lit by projection have created debate and interest in the public realm of Brisbane's CBD.

The Inhabit initiative helps identify those forgotten spaces that also become places for further intervention through capital works programs such as Burnett Lane. The lane runs parallel to the Queen Street Mall and is the next Vibrant Laneways and Small Scale



▲ Jacob's Ladder, Brisbane

Project, to be delivered in 2010. After working with traders, building owners and other key stakeholders, Council is currently drafting a plan to breathe new life into the service laneway by encouraging a diverse alternative to the retail centre of the Queen Street Mall.

Capital works, creative lighting and activation are all part of this 'catalyst' project for the Vibrant Laneways and Small Spaces program, which is due to commence in 2010.

For more information about these projects contact Brisbane City Council on 07 3403 8888

Towards integrated Main Street Centres

– a perspective from South East Queensland

Jo-Ann Baynham and William Owen

An interrelated and mutually beneficial relationship exists between best practice urban design outcomes in Main Street Centre design, and economic vitality and sustainability. This article provides an outline of a current research project by Conics to explore these ideas through a comparative investigation of a range of case studies within South East Queensland.

Can the economic value of good urban design be quantified?

Case studies that are underway include some traditional Main Street Centres around Brisbane that have developed incrementally over time, such as Oxford Street, Bulimba approximately 5km east of Brisbane CBD; Park Road, Milton 2km west of CBD; and Latrobe Terrace, Paddington 2.8km north west of CBD). Case studies of more recently constructed Main Street Centres include Kelvin Grove Urban Village 2.5km north of CBD; James Street, New Farm 1.8km east of CBD; Portside, Hamilton 6km from CBD; and Varsity Lakes, Gold Coast 8.8km south of Surfers Paradise).

The case study analysis has highlighted a similar range of issues that have hindered the full realisation of economic and place-making potential of many recent developments:

- these sites are not well integrated into the broader urban fabric, but are 'dead-end' destinations.
- their current public transportation network is limited

- workforce populations in adjoining areas are too low (successful Main Streets Centres such as James Street and Park Road both benefit from a substantial workforce population in excess of 15,000 people)
- surrounding residential densities are too low (the 1.2km radius of the Main Street Centre fails to provide the foundation threshold that the centre requires)
- resident populations within retail/commercial developments are too low, or non-existent (reducing thresholds, safety and surveillance etc)
- the demographic mix of residents can be too uniform (a mix of family types enhances the economic success of the Main Street Centre - for example, at Portside, the majority of the resident population are working professionals that exit the area during the day, returning in the late evening)
- there is a tendency to overbuild the retail/commercial space (resulting in vacancy rates in excess of 30%) by allocating shop front uses to the entire ground floor plane of the project. The practical economic limitations of the centre need to be recognised and the design needs to embrace low intensity fringe and non-core space. Core retail precincts generally include a catchment of approximately 200m radius, where retail activity is consolidated rather than being 'spread too thin'.
- parking provision remains a key focus for current retail developments and a key design challenge



▲ Portside, Hamilton, Brisbane

- newer Main Street Centres are often devoid of 'unique' character that contributes to a sense of 'ownership' with users
- Main Street Centres are not always adequately 'comfortable' for pedestrians (this covers a range of physical and visual aspects within Main Street Centres, including, for example:
 - provision of shade and shelter
 - building and streetscape quality, including landscaping
 - street furniture such as seating, lighting, bins, bicycle racks
 - activated interfaces with smaller more frequent 'shopfront displays' and front doors

- legibility, street widths, block sizes and frequency of pedestrian crossings
- negative visual impact of services, loading areas, parking lots
- the Main Street Centres are not supported by public investment in facilities such as libraries, community centres and post offices.

It is intended that the outcomes of this ongoing research project will provide the industry with a greater awareness of the importance of achieving a good foundation of core urban design elements and preconditions within a Main Street Centre, in order to achieve ongoing economic viability, community building, place-making and local employment creation.

Jo-Ann Baynham is an urban designer and William Owen an urban economist with Conics

Griffith University

- establishing benchmarks in architecture and urban design.

Professor Gordon Holden

Starting in 2010 on their Gold Coast campus, Griffith University will enter the architectural education and research field with a three-year program, the Bachelor of Environmental Design (Architectural Studies). In 2013, a professional Masters in Architecture of two-years is planned to build on the undergraduate program.

I have returned from the position of Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Design at Victoria University in New Zealand to head up Griffith's venture into architectural education.

The undergraduate program in Architectural Studies will have a strong relationship with the Environmental Sustainability major, sharing a common first year.

Shared courses with the Queensland College of Art, as well as with programs in Urban and Environmental Planning and with Engineering will ensure that Architecture students are well versed in the essence of allied disciplines and they will graduate with a healthy culture of collaboration across disciplines.

The focus of the program will be on the sustainable design of buildings, urban places and recreation areas, with an emphasis on tropical and sub-tropical climates. Of particular note is that urban design will be taught from foundations in first year.

Programs in Landscape Architecture and Urban Design will be explored by Griffith in the future.

Gordon Holden can be contacted at g.holden@griffith.edu.au

Interesting way of using a UDF article!

Dear Editor

Thank you for these excellent articles. [Ed. the various articles from the NUDFo8 conference in Nathalia and Shepparton] For financial reasons I am exploring the concept of moving from Melbourne to a country town. While I would be relieved to be rid of my mortgage, I am doing my 'homework' to avoid making a costly mistake and ending up in a dying backwater town or a place where the inhabitants are not accustomed to accepting newcomers. Your articles are most insightful, thank you for them.

Kind regards,
Catherine Jenkins

Good urban design in remote and disinterested locations.

Malcolm Middleton

When the developers of the Seaspray Residential Community purchased a site with elevated views of Queensland's Capricorn Coast near the town of Emu Park, they inherited a rare phenomenon from this by-passed part of the Queensland coastline.

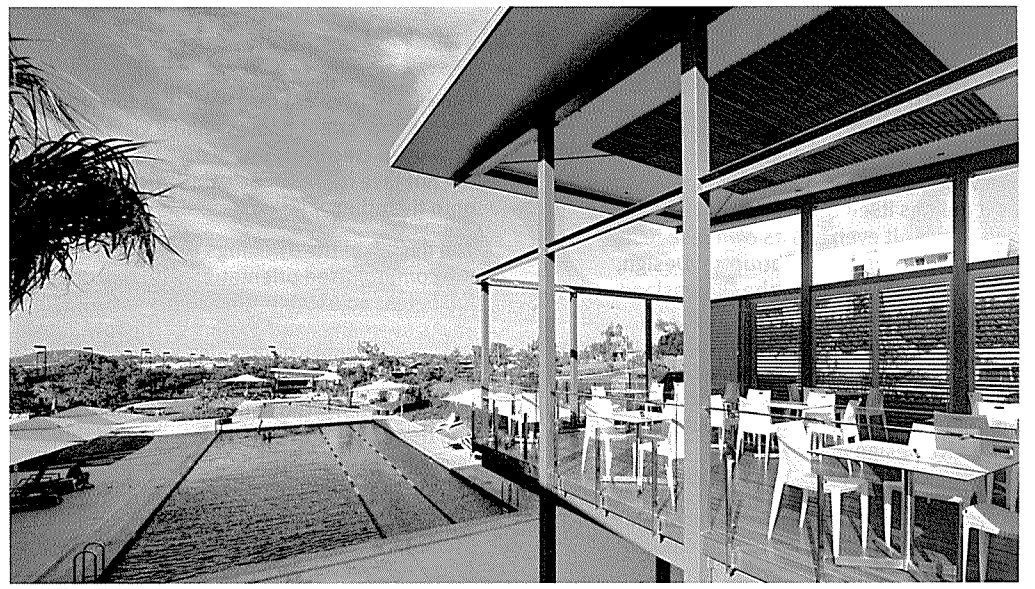
In a community with almost no history of, or interest in, good design concepts there was a small but vocal group aggrieved at proposals by a previous developer to develop areas of native forest and to develop locations close to the headland. Land development in this part of coastal Queensland has traditionally delivered a slash and burn, terrace and shape approach for the brick and tile, air-conditioned product. Seaspray's design team commenced a (non-compulsory) community engagement process to present an alternative vision for the site.

This resulted in an almost completely new approach to urban development in this region and was initially greeted with suspicion and concern. The new vision proposed to remove all headland development, preserve all native bush areas and donate them to form an extension of the adjoining National Park. It was also proposed to establish design and planning restrictions to deliver

high quality future development. These principles were proposed as statutory "Place Code" measures within the Local Planning Scheme. Design covenants attaching to the land were developed to promote a design culture that reflect optimal tropical design responses, significantly diminish dependence on air conditioning, and create a site specific architectural expression. Site masterplanning on the previously rural lands was preceded by an unusually thorough, on-the-ground engineering analysis by a walking GPS review. This resulted in an understanding that delivered significant, staged infrastructure investment, provided for storm-water harvesting for landscape reuse and an enhanced landscape approach from the outset.

Community infrastructure ahead of development

Most radically of all, the developers committed to build important community infrastructure ahead of the development of the majority of the lands to provide a focal point for the new community. These facilities included a Sport/Recreation Club and Pool complex, a local cafe with a casual dining terrace, resort style accommodation, medical consulting rooms, a pharmacy and a developed landscape setting



▲ Seaspray Recreation Club and Public Terrace/Community Meeting Place (Photography by Christopher Frederick Jones)

of high amenity. All this was in place when only a dozen or so houses were completed - most of which were commissioned from a panel of well-known architectural practices. Opportunities were also given to a group of emerging architectural designers. The result is a project that has overcome initial scepticism, changed an anti-design mindset for many in the region and has sustained the investment values embedded in it, despite the sluggish market. The project

has received numerous accolades from industry and professional sectors for design and execution excellence. The project is clearly well positioned for the long term, and vindicates the belief in good urban design at every level to present better places in which to live.

Malcolm Middleton is Masterplanner and Urban Designer for the Seaspray Residential Community, and can be contacted at malcolm@middletonarch.com.au

TOD and P&R

Garth Nolan

There is a current focus on Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in modern planning. The inclusion of park and ride facilities, be they existing or potential, is receiving attention as the requirements for TODs are being developed.

Park and ride facilities are, by their very nature, staid, land-intensive, and devoid of any real activity for the majority of the day. They also tend to be focused solely on the car rather than the driver and produce poor quality pedestrian environments. These qualities are in direct conflict with TOD principles and best practice urban design.

In a recent paper I conclude that, in the long term, park and ride facilities should be limited, possibly only providing for persons with disabilities at stations that are, or should be, part of TODs. I also conclude that existing

facilities should not be expanded at these locations and any replacement of parking should be in temporary locations that can be redeveloped in the future, or at key park and ride locations elsewhere on the network.

The case study used in the paper, Albion in Brisbane's inner north, has highlighted a number of issues facing development within TOD precincts in inner city Brisbane. The most prominent of these is the reluctance of the transport provider, who in this case is a key land-holder, to accept a lower provision of park and ride bays around the station. This reluctance is considered to be in direct conflict with the current focus on TOD principles.

The cost of park and ride

The second issue raised is the cost implication of providing dedicated park and ride facilities within private developments. This

is an additional cost for developments that are focused around public transport and encouraging the use of same.

As a result, the provision of park and ride facilities in the development is not, as it should be, a temporary solution. As the precinct develops, less park and ride should be provided. In this case study, the initial developer is paying a high cost for being an initiator of the conversion of the area from a local centre to a TOD precinct. A more equitable strategy for the development of park and ride may lie with the temporary provision of park and ride facilities on another site in the vicinity, or in the provision of these facilities at another station. The latter should be the focus of network planning.

Park and ride provision is a conflicting land use with the development of TOD precincts in the long term. Due to the incremental nature

of development, the transition of park and ride away from TOD precincts will occur over time. It is important to consider the long term intent for the TOD area in the initial developments to ensure parking requirements are, or will be, consistent with the desired development pattern. This, coupled with a well planned network including dedicated park and ride facilities will ensure TODs can reach their intended potential.

Garth Nolan recently completed the Masters of Design Urban Design programme at Queensland University of Technology and can be contacted at garth.nolan@connect.qut.edu.au

Queensland Streets 2010

Steven Burgess

After a 30 year hiatus from Queensland subdivisions, it appears that quality places may be allowed to return to our neighbourhood streets.

The Institute of Public Works Engineering (Qld), with support from the Queensland Department of Infrastructure and Planning, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland Health and the Department of Communities, have appointed Parsons Brinckerhoff to conduct a review of the old Queensland Streets guidelines. The aim: to produce a contemporary street design guideline for sustainable neighbourhoods.

Queensland Streets 2010 will encourage and facilitate good design. The guideline will provide designers and assessors with the ability to consider innovations such as laneways, streets with no on-street parking, mixed use developments with lower parking provision and narrower streets, subdivisions with pedestrian-only access and naked streets.

Whilst none of these innovations are compulsory, they provide alternative solutions for developers who think beyond our current car-dominated product. This car-dominated product is often produced as a response to the 'rules' rather than a response to good design. Designers and assessors can now access more diverse development types with more confidence of their acceptance.

Hierarchy of street users

Queensland Streets 2010 concentrates on a hierarchy of street users, as opposed to vehicle traffic. Priority of design is given to pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and cars respectively. Street types are described by their function, not their traffic carrying capacity. The new street hierarchy consists of living streets, mixed-use streets and main streets. This is consistent with international street design guidelines such as the UK Manual for Streets.

Neighbourhood layouts are also addressed encouraging designers and developers to consider more permeable options. This will reduce geographical interruptions to walking, cycling and public transport routes; reduce pressure for more road space; and improve neighbourhood amenity. More intimate and secure spaces will also result through the provision of increased flexibility in street cross-sections.

While Queensland Streets proposes a variety of solutions to represent the principles outlined in the document, it also encourages designers, developers and local governments to genuinely push the envelope. The ultimate aim is to achieve quality streets that fulfil their social, gathering, open-space, recreational and communication obligations - and not just act as conduits for cars.

The guideline development process commenced approximately a year ago with a series of



▲ Diverse participant in design workshop

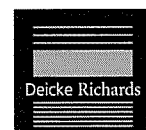
design workshops throughout Queensland and a review by a technical committee. The draft version of Queensland Streets 2010 is available for review and comment via the IPWEAQ website: www.ipweaq.org.au/qld/qldstreets. Comments from Urban Design Forum readers on the draft Queensland Streets 2010 are encouraged.

Steven Burgess is a Principal, PlaceMaking and Planning for Parsons Brinckerhoff, Sunshine Coast. Steven can be contacted at SBurgess@pb.com.au

Thank you to the supporters of this edition of Urban Design Forum



Dedicated to a better Brisbane



Orientation vs Urbanism

Peter Richards

Southeast Queensland, one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, is possibly unique as it defines itself by its climatic region - the subtropics. It even has its own research group, the Centre for Subtropical Design, a collaboration between the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane City Council and Department of Infrastructure and Planning, based at QUT. At its heart is the idea that design should be appropriate for the subtropical climate and this should drive our collective design approach.

Recent projects of the Centre have focused on higher densities and urban growth, with design-based research with industry partners on row houses and apartments from three to nine storeys in urban fringe locations. All this has occurred in the land of the detached house, the usual exemplar and our traditional response for subtropical living.

Obsession with orientation?

Discussions about appropriate subtropical design often focus on orientation with an objective to lessen solar heat loads in summer and encourage cross ventilation. North is clearly the preferred orientation for buildings. Architects can be obsessed by this idea and see this as the primary generator of design. At the recent Gold Coast Urban Design Conference I was outed, with others, by Associate Professor Peter Skinner from UQ, as an architect who dared design one of the subtropical row house schemes facing west, as though this was some type of (cardinal) sin.

The row houses did face west, but towards the primary street address and a view to a vegetated creek corridor across the street. It did not face north to the side streets, siding onto the primary street.

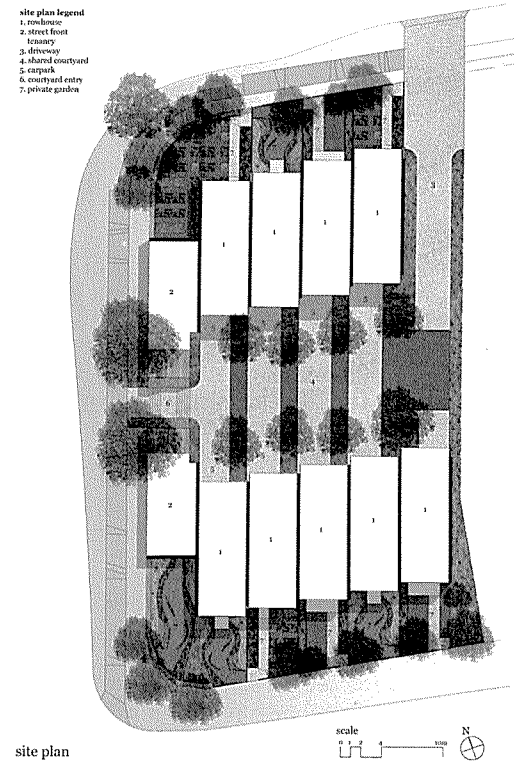
The design of the dwellings took into account the compromised orientation with balconies, full height adjustable sunscreens and generous eaves overhangs and awnings. The row house was comparatively wide, nine metres, not very deep and had a narrow single storey tail extending along the southern boundary of the site that faced north towards a deep planted rear garden. The site width allowed the deep planting zone and the single storey limited overshadowing of the neighbour to the south. Perhaps this was not a bad architectural and urban outcome.

If these views on orientation are applied to the scale of the city, does that mean well designed urban places only need to comprise collections



of well-oriented buildings? Can an over emphasis on ideal orientation for buildings make urbanism, or is there an essential contradiction between orientation and urbanism? In urban places there is the well recognised desire for buildings to front and activate both sides of all streets, to physically define the public realm. Even if streets ran generally east/west or north/south in an interconnected network, not every frontage can have an ideal orientation.

The issue of what is the best orientation for a footpath, a street, a plaza or park is also important and needs to be balanced with the needs of the private realm. It seems simple to me that in order to get the best urban outcome, some buildings may have compromised orientation and this needs to be addressed through the architectural design process. I like orientation as one of the important ideas to inform subtropical design, but I am not obsessed by it. Responses to topography, locations of riparian corridors and taking advantage of significant views, say to the ocean can also shape good urban places. I am more interested in appropriate design for urban environments and places, not just individual buildings.



Peter Richards is an architect and urban designer, director of Deicke Richards, based in Southeast Queensland. He chairs the Board of the Centre for Subtropical Design and contributed to the Subtropical Row House project that he presented at the October Gold Coast Urban Design Conference. He can be contacted at peter@deickrichards.com.au

Cardinal rules for passive design

In subtropical South East Queensland, passive low-energy housing design requires understanding of solar geometry and respect for the cardinal orientations, not just by architects, but also by planners.

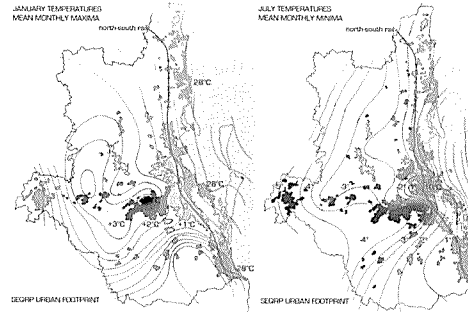
Go East, Young Plan

Despite strong current demand on the coast, the South East Queensland Regional Plan inexplicably projects major future population growth into the western corridor. This inland zone is up to 4°C hotter in summer and 4°C colder in winter than the coast (Fig.1). Energy conservation guidelines suggest an extra 1°C of cooling or heating could equate to a 10% increase in energy use. Westward growth would inevitably increase overall cooling and heating use, currently 27% of household energy consumption. Heavy air-conditioning use on the hottest summer afternoon generates peak electricity demand, and hence has a disproportionate impact on overall power network provision. Of greatest impact is the 'tipping point' decision to install air-conditioning. Air-conditioning of homes doubled from 32% in 1994 to 68% in 2008. Conversely though, almost a third

of Queensland residences are currently un-conditioned and consequently consume very little energy for cooling or heating. Government agencies recommend summer thermostat settings of 24°- 28°, however, along the coastal zone, mean January maxima are only 28°- 29° with significant further cooling effects from reliable breezes. Focussing population growth in this salubrious region would significantly reduce energy demand for air-conditioning and heating.

Utilise the north/south spine

Currently, a 225 km transport corridor connects 70 rail stations from Cooran to Robina, all within 15 km of the coast. 14,000 hectares of land lie within ten-minute walking circles of these underutilised stations, and the line runs through hundreds of square kilometres of low quality state-owned pine plantations. Responsible urban planning would focus future population growth along this major public asset. Fast-tracking planned rail links to northern and southern beaches would dramatically improve amenity and equity for all intermediate stations.



▲ Fig 1. Thermal discomfort in SEQ Western Corridor [Ed. see www.udf.org.au for colour versions of these diagrams]



▲ Recent Queensland masterplan analysed for lot orientation: best- green (n-s); worst- red (e-w); sub-optimal- yellow (ne-sw) & ochre (nw-se).

Insist on east/west residential streets

In small-lot suburban houses, only front or rear windows now reliably admit summer ventilation or winter solar gain, as side windows are typically closed for privacy. The orientation of residential lots is thus crucial to the potential for passive housing design. Only on east/west streets, will front and rear gardens have optimal orientation to north and south. On north/south streets either the front or rear wall will face directly into the western sun. Diagonal street alignments (nw/se or

ne/sw) are little better, as every building face is exposed to low-angle summer sun that is difficult to shield without also reducing ventilation. Some recent urban projects achieve less than 30% of well-oriented lots and an equal number of worst-case orientations (Fig 2). Energy-conscious subdivision design should produce long east/west residential blocks to give ideal orientation to every house. A passive future requires action now.

Peter Skinner is Associate Professor at School of Architecture University of Queensland, and can be contacted on p_skinner@uq.edu.au

Conferences, etc

Volunteers needed for international development placements

The Post Tsunami Reconstruction Planning Support Project is now calling for volunteers to work in Sri Lanka in 2010 to complete base mapping, structure plans and urban design frameworks for tsunami affected towns in the southern region of the country. Volunteers will also be involved with building the local planning capacity through individual mentoring and larger group training when applicable. There are also many ways to contribute as an organisation while remaining in Australia so do not be dismayed if life prevents you from physically being able to work elsewhere.

If you are available for a 3 month placement in March, June, September or December next year or are interested in learning how your organisation can contribute in other ways please contact Micaela Driberg on +61 3 9347 1900 or mdriberg@planning.org.au.

International Planning Conference Christchurch 20-23 April 2010

The Planning Institute of Australia and New Zealand Planning Institute invite you to attend their 2010 International Planning Conference, *Planning Pathways to the Future*.

The Conference will explore future directions for planning and what pathways we need to take to change the way we plan, work and live in response to global issues. The call for abstracts is now available on the Conference website. For more information please visit www.planningpathways2010.com

Australian Council for New Urbanism Congress

Adelaide 28-30 April 2010

This Australian Congress for New Urbanism will focus on how we can improve our implementation of plans into actual places, at all urban scales and across Australia and New Zealand. Join Australian New Urbanists, our allies and hopefully some critics, at our fourth National Congress, for in-depth presentations, critical analyses and debate about what we have achieved, how we have failed, and how together we can do better. For more details see www.acnu.org

New MSc in Sustainable Urbanism

In September 2010, UCL Bartlett School of Planning will launch an MSc in Sustainable Urbanism. This new program provides students with both the skills to conceptualise a sustainable city and the skills to design one.

This new MSc is directed at students and professionals from a range of fields including:

architecture, engineering, geography, planning, property, social sciences and surveying, who wish to enhance their understanding of sustainable processes and practices and who are interested in specialising in sustainable cities.

Students are taught by a range of top theorists and practitioners working in the field of sustainable urbanism, including Bill Dunster (founder of Zed Factory and designer of BEDZED), Prof Yvonne Rydin, Dr Jo Williams, Dr Susan Moore and Prof Matthew Carmona. Teaching is based on a mix of theoretical discussions, focussed case study methods, and hands-on project work. For further information see www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/co/sustainable-urban

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. For more information see www.livablecities.org/conferences/forthcoming-conferences/18.html This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it

The top 100 urban thinkers?

In a recent survey of US professionals, Jane Jacobs tops the list of 100 urban thinkers. Take a look at www.planetizen.com/topthinkers and see what you think.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Sponsorship: Thanks to the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development and Melbourne City Council for their continuing support.

Word processing, layout and printing: New Litho, Surrey Hills, Victoria

Distribution: This edition is distributed by the Planning Institute of Australia, by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, and to various other interested people in Australia, New Zealand and across the World.

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

Co-ordinating Editor: Bill Chandler

Contributions for UDF 89 DEADLINE: 10 February 2010

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

ISSN 1030-990X

