



Submission for C376 Sustainable Buildings, City of Melbourne

Urban Design Forum Australia is an independent non-profit industry organisation that supports public interest outcomes in cities. We were founded in 1986 and have recently undergone significant renewal and expansion under the directorship of our new leadership committee. We believe that well-designed and effectively governed cities are essential to solving the major challenges of our time. Our members come from private consultancy, state and local government, the development industry and academia and we draw upon this expertise in framing our submission.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are two of the biggest challenges of our time and require urgent action across all tiers of government. Urban development can contribute significantly to climate change and biodiversity loss, but also be part of the solution.

Support for City of Melbourne's Amendment

We strongly support the City of Melbourne's Sustainable Building Design Amendment (C376) and commend Council for the preparation of a policy that will have a positive impact on the environmental performance of the city. The amendment demonstrates City of Melbourne's track record as a proactive leader in urban and environment policy that sets a benchmark for other local governments as well as the Victorian Government.

The amendment establishes an improved baseline for all new development, within a municipal area where the highest levels of design and development sophistication should be expected. In particular, we are supportive of the following initiatives within the policy:

- The introduction of a Green Factor Tool with a 40% minimum requirement for landscape which positions the city as a leader in Australia in embedding greening requirements into development, while following well established frameworks in operation in a number of cities across Asia and Europe.
- The requirement for mandatory environmental performance, noting that voluntary requirements are no longer a legitimate public-interest policy position for any government to take in Australia.
- Linking environmental performance to development scale, which is a practical response to the environmental impact of larger developments, the cost of certification and anticipated level of sophistication of developers.
- Setting a mandatory requirement for carbon neutrality (effectively delivered through the policy requirement tethering to 5 star Green Star).
- Setting a 6 star Green Star as a 'should have' requirement which recognises the ambition and track record of more progressive developers.

The focus of this policy should be on quantifiable performance standards which allow for ease and economy of evaluation and assessment. These performance standards can either be embedded directly into policy, or, as the City of Melbourne has done, delivered by linking the outcomes to an existing tool such as Green Star, with a reputable overseeing body. So long as the performance targets are transparent and effective, we are agnostic about which method is utilised.

Re:
Manager Planning Policy
City of Melbourne
GPO Box 1603
Melbourne VIC 3001

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Pages:
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From:
Urban Design Forum
Australia
Suite 1.2/2
Collins St.
Melbourne VIC 3000

Future policy direction

The evidence, technologies and industry perspectives on tackling climate change are always evolving. We would encourage Council to continue to lead, by committing to a timeframe of evaluation, review and ratcheting up of this policy in order to ensure that the construction industry in Melbourne is fulfilling its obligations in the climate emergency, and positioning itself as a world leader in sustainable building design. We anticipate that this will require specific elements including

- Commitment to reduction in upfront embodied carbon
- Greater integration of materials recovery and re-use into the planning and design process
- Waste minimisation through the construction phase

We also note that the reliance on Green Star will need to be monitored to ensure that performance requirements are not diluted and keep up with best practice. This is particularly important where a governing body sits outside of the planning framework.

This likely need for future updates, however is a relevant consideration in all planning policy and does not diminish the need to implement this policy now to urgently address the climate change impacts of our built environment.

Conclusion

We recommend that Council adopt this policy in its current form with a commitment to a timeframe for review in the future. This will position the City of Melbourne as an environmental leader in Australia, directly reducing carbon emissions in the municipality and creating critical space for nature to address biodiversity loss.

Kind Regards,

Leanne Hodyl
President, Urban Design Forum



Andy Fergus
Advocacy Lead, Urban Design Forum

