

Australia Award for Urban Design 2012 winners

The Australia Award for Urban Design is Australia's premier award for urban design achievement. Winners were announced and presented at a dinner at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra at the end of June. In her introduction, Kirsty Kelly, CEO of the award host Planning Institute of Australia, said, 'This is a very significant year for Urban Design in Australia. The adoption of Creating Places For People - An Urban Design Protocol For Australian Cities, brings together Australian Federal Government, the States and Territories, Local Government, peak industry bodies and community organisations in a collective agreement on the importance of Urban Design and provides a framework for improving our urban environments. It highlights just how central the issue of good urban design is to the future liveability, sustainability, wealth and prosperity of our nation'.

The Award is hosted by PIA, and supported by the Australian Institute of Architects, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, Consult Australia, Green Building Council of Australia, Property Council of Australia and the Urban Design Forum. Entries are assessed against agreed criteria by a jury made up of experienced practitioners from the supporting organisations.

This year the judging panel was challenged by the diversity of entries covering a range of urban places, urban design programs, policies and new initiatives. The entries included bold inner city corporate projects that showed strong leadership in corporate responsibility through to remote community town centre enhancement plans seeking to make stronger communities in our resources sector. All entries showed a fundamental concern for the wellbeing of people and a desire to contribute to our nation-building through the creation of more inclusive, successful and engaging cities, towns and places. The awards and citations are as follows.

Darling Quarter

The Darling Quarter project by Lend Lease, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, fjmt, Aspect Studios, Arup, and Hyder Consulting, was the winner in the Delivered Outcomes Large Scale category.

The Darling Quarter precinct is a 1.5 hectare site beside Sydney's CBD and Darling Harbour South. The redevelopment of this area has created a vibrant and dynamic mix of commercial and public space that includes grassed community areas, a children's theatre, a retail terrace beside Commonwealth Bank Place, and a 4,000m² illuminated water playground. The innovative design of this precinct allows for more activated public domain, with better connections of the areas and creates a place that can be shared by a wide range of city users. The sustainability features and eye catching architecture give this project both an iconic presence and enduring integrity and, as a place, it not only is a success in itself but significantly contributes to the urban environment it is sited in. As such it represents the aspirations of good urban design.

River Quay, Brisbane

The River Quay, Brisbane project, by Arkhefield and Cardno SPLAT, was the winner in the Delivered Outcome Small Scale category.

As a conversion of one of the last key riverfront sites near the Brisbane CBD, the project has done well to respond to a wide range of considerations such as sustainability, natural heritage, maritime history and setting in an informal and appealing project. The project

blends the iconic character of the Goodwill Bridge and the landscape through simple bold emblematic forms that are urban and contemporary, but also reflective of local tradition. The result is an elegantly delivered exposé of best practice in urban waterfront enhancement. From the gentle bowl of the river side park with its carefully considered urban and river walks and edges, to the arrangement of restaurants and buildings to create intimate meeting and gathering spaces, to the elevated decks looking through the riverine trees, and to the recycling of the old wharf as a look out, the project expresses care for the place as part of our history and as a part of our future.

The Future of Penrith, Penrith of the Future

The The Future Of Penrith, Penrith Of The Future Project, by Campement Urbain (Sylvie Blocher, Francois Daune, and Tim Williams), was the winner in the Policies, Programs and Concepts Large Scale category.

This vision for the Regional Centre of Penrith has been created by valuing the issues, observation and ideas of local inhabitants. It has resulted in a concept that embraces urban design fundamentals such as accessible public space, recreational precincts, densification, pedestrianisation, sustainably and connectivity. The Future of Penrith is also an inspirational vision. While it is utopian in its idealistic imagery, the concept sets out to meet every challenge with fresh imagination, re-connecting Penrith to the river, proposing environmental initiatives that might be supported by the private market and identifying economic opportunities.

Parramatta River Urban Design Strategy

The Parramatta River Urban Design Strategy by McGregor Coxall and Equatica was the winner in the Policies, Programs and Concepts Small Scale category.

The Parramatta Council commissioned strategy has resulted in an advanced concept that carefully blends management of peak river flow and the desire for river front green space with a strong activated urban edge. Beyond the concept, the strategy takes a dynamic leap forward by introducing a broad mix of land uses that directly relate to the river, opening up new lifestyle and economic opportunities. The vision of the open space network, public spaces and future development, demonstrates the potential for the City to reclaim its relationship with the river while being environmentally responsive and assisting in resilience for future generations. The project is a highly competent demonstration that well considered urbanism can contribute to the environmental assets of our cities and encourage us to revalue them.



▲ River Quay, Brisbane

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▲ Darling Quarter

Taronga Zoo

The Taronga Zoo project, by BVN, was awarded a Commendation in the Delivered Outcomes Large Scale category.

This project has redressed the balance between parking needs and the experience of arriving at and engaging with one of the world's great Zoos. The sweeping away of the forecourt parking into a simple multi level parking station tucking against the hillside opens up the view to the historic grand entry building and provides a large new plaza. The way the new entry, shops and spaces have been grouped as a cluster of buildings with hillside-village-like gathering spaces overlooking a landscape play area creates a very special place combining urbanism and the environment with inspiring simplicity, demonstrating our best hopes for the future of Australia's cities.

Next Generation Planning Handbook

The Next Generation Planning Handbook by Deicke Richards and Buckley Vann Town Planning Consultants, Council of Mayors (SEQ) and Queensland Government (Growth

Management Queensland) was awarded a commendation in the Policies, Programs and Concepts Large Scale category.

The Queensland-focused handbook documents a wealth of learning from successful traditional places and neighbourhoods as well as best practice urban projects. In doing so it assists to create contemporary urban environments that are successful and engaging. The simple, concise and informative handbook provides a guide to and broadens the reach of those professions who are concerned with our communities as places for all, and helps expedite decision making.

The handbook also puts urban design in the hands of the community demystifying it and enabling ordinary people to ask questions about what is being delivered and whether it meets the benchmarks for good urban design. It will enable them to become positively vocal in overcoming misaligned regulations and supportive of well considered place making. The Handbook represents a wonderful combination of visionary intent and pragmatic research. It is well positioned to help improve the cities and towns of future generations.



▲ Future of Penrith



▲ Parramatta River

Celebrating urban design progress...

As announced in the June 2012 edition of *Urban Design Forum*, a compendium reflecting on and celebrating the progress of urban design in Australia over the past 25 years is in preparation. The initiative was stimulated by the imminent marker of the 100th edition of *Urban Design Forum*, but it has a much broader intent than simply celebrating that milestone.

There has been a considerable, and diverse, interest in the request for contributions, and John Byrne, Bruce Echberg and Bill Chandler are now grappling with the plethora of people and subjects, and shaping the book before confirming the invitation to write. The

intention for the publication is to provide a very useful, well designed, full colour reference book, rather than a super-glossy coffee table piece. This publication cannot cover the whole field, but themes are evolving, and the challenge will be to mould the individual contributions into an attractive and enjoyable publication that can assist future action in our cities and towns.

...and looking toward the future

Are we there yet? Bruce Echberg's sobering article on page 3 of this edition challenges us to keep progressing. So we can think about:

- beyond the Australian Urban Design Protocol – is it having the intended influence on best (or better) practice?
- are Green Star Communities to become the norm – and how do we retrofit the old unsustainable suburbs?
- is the demise of the much-admired South Australian Integrated Design Commission the end of an era – or a new beginning?
- the UK initiative of an annual Urban Design Week – could there be an Australian equivalent?
- beyond *Urban Design Forum* No 100 – is there still a need for hard copy publishing?

- can the *Urban Design Forum* website be developed – the UK Urban Design website is much more engaging.

- there seems to be reducing interest in, and resourcing of, urban design by state governments – how can we raise the profile and skill level at the local government level.

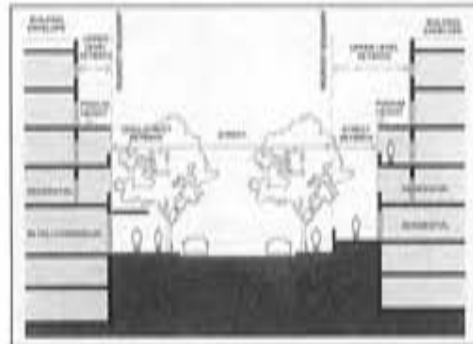
That's a lot of questions, and they might stimulate you to write an article for the 100th edition of *Urban Design Forum*, copy due 10 November 2012.

Moreland Higher Density Design Code

Munir Vahanvati

In recent years, Moreland has experienced a surge in mixed use apartment buildings, mainly concentrated in the inner city suburb of Brunswick. The Victorian planning system has very minimal guidance on buildings above three storeys. ResCode provisions are limited to residential buildings with maximum three storeys and the Design Guidelines for Higher Density Residential Development (DSE 2004) has a set of objectives and guidelines - but no standards. The Moreland Higher Density Design Code is intended to fill this 'gap' in planning scheme provisions and improve the quality of development outcomes.

The Moreland code is intended to apply to any development of four or more store. The code



▲ 2.1.1 Street setback defines the scale and proportion of the street

emphasises the importance of site responsive design, with a focus on improving site analysis processes and site design. This approach is intended to result in better environmental performance, improved internal amenity (especially with regard to daylight access and natural ventilation) and greater regard to off-site amenity impacts.

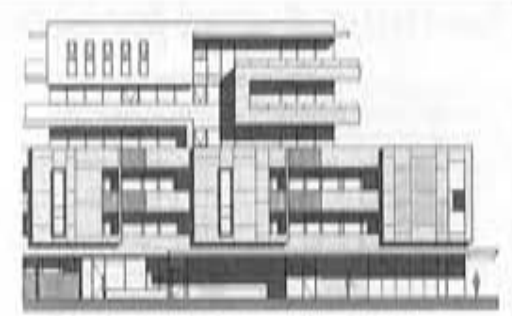
The code provides a generic set of assessment requirements and design guidelines for a range of design aspects, irrespective of where a proposal is located within the municipality. This approach removes the need for repetition of general design standards in place-specific controls such as zones and overlays. The code will be applied concurrently with 'place-based' planning scheme controls for designated activity centres as part of the planning permit assessment process.

Research-based objective, standards, and guidelines

Development of the code including Objectives, Standards and Design Guidelines is based on solid research and analysis. In house, Council Officers developed the 'Development Activity Monitor' (DAM), a database which tracked data on 130 planning permit applications in the last five years across Brunswick. The DAM was utilised by Council Officers in conjunction with the detailed analysis of 20 higher density mixed use planning permit applications (1,350 apartment units in total) to form detailed case studies. The detailed case studies identify



2.1.1 Higher density development should strengthen the existing fine grain diversity on the street both in uses and built form



2.1.2 Facade which has fine-grain details, particularly on ground floor, contributes to the liveliness and creates interest on the street

key issues on apartment quality relating to: Apartment Types; Lot Frontages; Building Depth; Living Area Depth; Borrowed Light; Dual Aspect; Use of Light Courts; Balcony Area and Depth; Communal Open Space Area; Street Interface; and Ceiling Height. This research work confirmed the need to improve the quality of development outcomes, with emphasis on improving internal amenity, site response and off-site impacts.

The research and analysis directly informed the content of the code, which is based around building typologies common to Moreland and introduces key site design principles like Building Separation. In developing the code, Council Officers also utilised earlier research commissioned by Council's ESD team on Daylight and Natural Ventilation. Daylight factor standards from this study were used to determine the Building Separation distances that will ensure adequate natural light in apartments without compromising the future

development potential of adjacent sites.

This approach was a deliberate focus of the project to ensure the code could be seamlessly integrated with issues that can be considered at the planning permit stage of a development - a focus on site design and building envelope. The code is a planning tool and therefore it was important to avoid moving into the realm of the Building Code and setting up inconsistencies with Building Code requirements.

The code will greatly contribute to improving planning practice and addressing planning issues in Moreland and is readily transferable for use more broadly. A copy of the Code can be downloaded from Council's website <http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/building-and-planning/higher-density-design-code.html>

For information contact Munir Vahanvati, Unit Manager Urban Design, Moreland City Council at mvahanvati@moreland.vic.gov.au

Green stars for communities

Adam Beck

For nearly a decade, a Green Star rating has been a symbol of environmental sustainability in Australia. From glittering skyscrapers to low-rise schools, Green Star has driven a market shift which encourages an integrated, holistic approach to building design and construction.

Until now, Green Star was restricted to buildings. In June 2012, the Green Building Council of Australia launched the Green Star - Communities rating tool to assess and certify the sustainability of community-level development projects.

Green Star - Communities evaluates environmental issues - such as minimising energy and water consumption, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, managing waste and reducing dependence on motor vehicles.

However, the rating tool also reaches beyond environmental efficiencies to broader holistic sustainability issues, such as economic prosperity, liveability and health.

The 'Liveability' category, for instance, rewards projects that encourage healthy, active

communities through parks, playgrounds, cycle ways and footpaths, as well as through local food production. The 'Economic Prosperity' category encourages projects to consider proximity to employment and education opportunities, and access to high speed internet. Strategies for improving housing affordability, developing local skills and enhancing investment in community infrastructure are also encouraged.

The first project to register for a Green Star - Communities PILOT rating was the 'loop' precinct - a 40,000 square metre development at the Belconnen Fresh Food Markets in Canberra. Rock Development Group's plan for the precinct includes Green Star-rated buildings, electric vehicle recharge points, a residential car-pooling scheme, precinct-wide energy generation, waste management, and a focus on healthy, active living.

With support from industry and federal, state and local government, the Green Building Council of Australia expects Green Star - Communities rating tool to become a voluntary national standard.

The Green Star - Communities rating tool will provide federal government with a vehicle for



delivering policy outcomes, state governments with guidance for planning and approval of significant projects, and local governments with a framework for greater sustainable development outcomes and collaboration with industry.

The rating tool will also facilitate more efficient development processes and ultimately help developers get their products out to market

quicker. Financiers will gain a framework for sustainable investment. And consumers will have the ability to make informed decisions about their lifestyles.

Adam Beck is Executive Director - Sustainable Communities and Market Development Green Building Council of Australia, and can be contacted at Adam.Beck@gbca.org.au More information: www.gbca.org.au/communities

QUDAL Symposium 'City of our Dreams'

Juris Greste

What motivates a conference or symposium? To me there are four distinct drivers:

- the commercial interests of an events organising company.
- the desire to 'show and tell' - a form of self promotion.
- a talkfest for academics to meet the need to publish and present, usually to one another.
- an interest to stimulate ideas and raise questions rather than provide answers.

These days, when everyone is flat out conferencing under one of the first three objectives, the one day QUDAL Symposium was a welcome change. It is interesting to note that according to my Macquarie Dictionary, a symposium is also 'a drinking party in ancient Greece...with philosophical conversation'. In a sense, this event was true to form, with much thoughtful and even intoxicating ideas during the day, rounded off with a few ales after sunset.

The theme itself provided a diverse and open ended context - City of our dreams! But whose dreams? This time it was largely the aspirations and wishful imaginings of professional city makers. I wonder what

the city dreams of financiers, engineers and grandmothers are. Here are my highlights.

Gil Penalosa, Director of 8-80 Cities, sent us reeling, as if in a hallucinogenic spin, with the idea that cities are for people, walking and cycling; that the urban glue is public space; that we should make public space first; that the glue of the city is its streets; that linear parks will not kill us all, that there is no such thing as bad weather - just bad clothing. While some of us were climactically high, a few traffic people, road engineers, developers and bean counters would have been having nightmares. That all the above would be good for us was given the cutting edge - good quality living makes us more competitive. Good fodder for politicians and economists! We need to change our thinking and doing. While courageous and enterprising political leadership might be a bit hard to come by, Gil urged us to be more surreptitious - use 'pilot projects', 'temporary' structures, get the public on our side. Much of the time it is not a financial issue but one of building the right alliances.

Dr. George Hazel of MRC McLean Hazel presented a kaleidoscope of ideas and possibilities of how we can make a city work - well, work better. The very reason that we come together in a city or town is for the purpose of various forms of exchange - active as well as passive. If you accept that 'cars don't spend money but people do', it must

follow that you minimise movement space so that you move more people and goods, not cars. Our whole mindset about movement must also be rebalanced from an operational model to a focus on serving the 'customer' - the end user. Make every part of the mobility chain as easy, pleasant and seamless as possible. Design the service, not just the roads, buses and trains. Add to this the endless applications and software via mobile phones and other electronic devices, and a whole new world emerges on how to rebalance our mobility options and opportunities.

Peter Morley of Hassell reminded us of the importance of high speed Metro Rail infrastructure to connect cities. However, my more important take-home message was that too frequently the procurers and commissioners do not realise that every part of the system is also public domain - from the surrounding area, to the entry 'statement' to the platforms and everything in-between.

Tim Horton, South Australia's Commissioner for integrated design, described design as being about creating upper end value. Whatever you think 'design' is, the recipe to achieving better end results, according to Tim, is to dissolve barriers and boundaries between people and departments. Getting all the key players physically closer together, preferably in the one room, certainly seems to have produced results in South Australia.

His statement 'public engagement is not an eight week sprint but a marathon' should be a mantra for all bureaucrats and systems of governance.

Malcolm Middleton, Queensland Government Architect, titled his story rather fatalistically 'Being in the room'. Using a number of case studies, he recounted how significant turns took place largely through certain people (with the right relationships), being in the right place and at the right time. What it also said to me is that when so much urbanity that we have produced is badly wanting, using the same old systems or structures again and again is being too optimistic to expect to produce something better. You need to change the method of doing it. 'Planning schemes are a blunt instrument.'

My sobering awakening came a few days later while listening to ABC RN Sunday Extra (27.05.12). I heard Jane Caro say 'we will not change until it is too uncomfortable to stay the same'. Sadly, I think she might be right. In the meantime, back to dreaming!

Juris has entered the electronic ether with a vengeance. See his blog at <http://jurisgresturbanblogger.blogspot.com.au/>

Australian cities: how are we going?

Bruce Echberg

I have just had the luxury of spending several weeks strolling around cities in northern Europe and experiencing their urban design qualities first hand. Having studied urban design in UK close to 40 years ago, and returned a few times over the years, I feel a sense of perspective on change in some of these cities.

While I was away the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Survey was released, putting Melbourne at the top of the pile and ranking other large Australian cities well also.

I'm afraid I'm not one of those Australians who returns entirely satisfied with home. There is no doubt the urban design of our cities has progressed in some areas but we are clearly heading the wrong way on many fronts.

Density and building form

All these cities are compact and dense by our standards but there are no towers. Mandatory building heights and development designed to fit local context between four and 10 levels produces high quality streets. Our cities are crude and arbitrary and without urban quality by comparison. These cities all have a strong community lobby that resist any forms of tower development. Development in these cities is mainly infill that appears to be far more sustainable than new development in our cities.

Transport balance

The car does not have a significant presence in these cities. Public investment in public transport has been substantial. Copenhagen just completed building a state of the art

underground system but is now excavating all over the city to build a major expansion of new lines and stations. Copenhagen has long held the mantle of Europe's most bike-friendly city but most other northern European cities are doing well or even better in this area. The staggering difference between these cities and Australia is that there is hardly any lycra, or fast light-weight bikes, to be seen. Cyclists are all ages and physical capability in normal dress, and they move slowly, abide by the rules and rarely have to share the road space with cars.

Transport interchanges are a growing and vital part of cities attracting plenty of investment. Stations typically deal with multiple intercity trains, local train, metro, tram and bus routes, and often also have below ground car parks and bike storage facilities for literally thousands of bikes. You can usually walk out of many revamped stations into a new public square and a connected pedestrian precinct. In this setting cars become inconvenient. By comparison, our cities are totally car-dominated and our recent decade or so of building off-street car parks in our centres will make it hard to reverse this imbalance.

Sustainability

I not surprised that per capita energy use in Europe is around 30% less than Australia. Lord Mayor Robert Doyle may be pleased with Melbourne's regained number 1 status but that is about the lifestyle of high flying executives now, and not about the rest of us and our quality of life in the future. We have plenty to learn and a lot to do.

Bruce Echberg is Principal at Urban Initiatives Pty Ltd and can be contacted at bruce@urbaninitiatives.com.au



▲ Munster centre civilised and car free

▼ Revamped railway station, Strasbourg



Placemaking@places.vic

Malcolm Snow

The name is unambiguous. Places Victoria is a placemaker, not just a developer. As the Urban Renewal Authority for Victoria, Places Victoria is taking the lead role in shaping the future of key locations in metropolitan Melbourne and across Victoria.

The value of placemaking was established through the VicUrban Uni initiative in 2009 and further refined through the successful Melbourne Place Making Series held in 2010. Both public forums were pivotal to confirming placemaking as a core business concept for the organization. The challenge now is to embed the placemaking ethos and translate it into an organisational culture driven by clear principles and processes that are understood and consistently applied.

Places Victoria defines placemaking as:

'the deliberate task of imbuing a location - whether it is at the site, precinct or city

scale - with distinctive qualities that people are attracted to physically and connect with psychologically. Good places are beautiful, work well, facilitate exchange in all its forms and strengthen existing positive attributes. Placemaking is an ongoing activity, undertaken in partnership with other stakeholders, recognizing that both people-oriented design as well as integrated place management must work in combination to achieve success.'

Particularly for urban consolidation and redevelopment projects, places already exist; perhaps not yet in the form we might envisage them. Identifying and assessing the unique attributes and meanings of existing places is therefore important. Drawing on a wide range of data and resources to develop an understanding of what constitutes the 'essence' of a place, its strategic context and its potential for transformation are some of the vital first steps whether revitalizing existing places or in creating new places.

A collective and collaborative activity

Creating great places invariably requires more than one profession. Of necessity, it is both a collective and collaborative activity that requires long-term vision. The combined skills, expertise and organizational make-up of an urban renewal agency such as Places Victoria are critical to achieving successful place outcomes. Acknowledgement of that success however can only be made by the people who use those places. Engaging the community in setting the place vision and values from the outset is therefore fundamental.

What distinguishes the typical project development process from one informed by placemaking? The simple answer is that placemaking as practiced by Places Victoria requires that all those involved in the creation of a place are committed to achieving the requisite principles and to ensuring that their business practices work towards achieving those principles. In essence, a strong placemaking ethos provides Places Victoria with the critical framework to assess and make informed decisions throughout

The Elements of Placemaking in the Development Process



the life of a renewal project from inception, to implementation and to evaluation. The diagram on the right illustrates the elements and skills that in combination help achieve successful places.

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Smart Growth

Amanda Wetzel

Smart Growth is intended to address the adverse impacts of sprawling urban environments. Its fundamental aim is to instigate step changes that will provide people with sustainable and relevant lifestyle choices. While I can't definitively imagine what that looks like, I certainly agree with this approach.

Most urban frameworks in the last 10 to 15 years adopted some version of a growth boundary, compact design and/or transit-oriented development as part of their spatial vision for strategically managing growth. This is a comparatively short period of time when one considers the cultural changes to professional practice, organisational management and human behaviour required to fully realise policy objectives on the ground.

Successful first-generation projects have sought to change the quality of places by fundamentally changing how places are delivered. The Circle in my hometown of Normal, Illinois is a great example of achieving multiple, meaningful outcomes by changing how professional disciplines engage with one another. This roundabout simultaneously manages vehicle, cycle and pedestrian traffic in a location adjacent to a regional rail halt. It also captures, filters and re-distributes

stormwater, and provides a focus for social and commercial exchange. The Circle's biggest drawback is that the deceptively simple design belies the concerted 10-year journey to streamline various engineering solutions to produce a beloved multi-functional space.

Undermined intended outcomes

For other projects, ongoing economic and political momenta have often undermined intended outcomes. Critics also point to Smart Growth-based policies as contributing to increased congestion, localised air and noise pollution and artificially inflated land and property values. Yet, these failed or unintended outcomes may ultimately provide the acute, localised conflict necessary to instigate a wider paradigm shift by mobilising communities and creating a market for more sustainable lifestyle products.

For example, the acute pressures of the national housing shortage in Kuwait means that residential projects in the western metropolitan area will be delivered at least 15 years before its Metro infrastructure. These are already delivering plots in excess of 600sqm for Kuwaiti villas. At current household sizes, the resulting form would not support appropriate transit accessibility. However, the physical characteristics of the villas would allow them to accommodate much higher population densities in proximity to transit stops. This will require changes to existing



▲ The Circle, Normal, Illinois, USA

landownership and tenancy rights and would be best supported through early improvements to streetscape designs.

The challenge for the next generation of projects will be to appropriately direct local and multi-sector momentum through wider regulatory systems. One to watch is the Central Scotland Green Network. This national planning designation intends to enhance land and infrastructure multi-functionality. Its approach is to connect local community and practice networks to deliver a connected

physical network. The diversity of projects coming forward under this designation makes it almost impossible to establish a tangible vision of what the Network will ultimately become. Though, if successful over time, these collective efforts may truly embody the fundamental aim of Smart Growth by providing accessible and adaptable processes within which people can create their own choices.

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Travelling by bike

David Rayson

With three friends, I travelled to England and Europe last month in search of good cycling, eating and expanded horizons, and to find some new high density, sustainable urban places, where people wanted to live, work and visit. Places where cohesive communities had evolved. So after purchasing new bikes for around £300 and adding pannier racks and puncture proof tyres we headed for Paddington Station and a six hour fascinating train trip to the far south west. The ride up from Penzance to Bristol was arduous but rewarding, with stunning coastline, beautiful countryside and lovely quaint towns.

Bristol is wonderful, it has undergone a remarkable transformation from being overwhelmed by failing industry and obsolete ports to a beautiful, thriving, services-based city. Its main commercial strip is dominated by the neo-gothic university entry. The surrounding suburb of Clifton is buzzy and full of night life. Jamie Oliver's restaurant provided an exceptional, visual, cultural and dining experience. Everywhere there are beautiful public spaces surrounded by upgraded housing, the ports are still working providing recreational and tourist activities, and a perfect setting for new and restored apartments.

Most important was our visit to SusTran, the group who devised the national bike path routes and, in conjunction with local government, have implemented the construction of the bicycle infrastructure and signage. SusTrans also focuses on

'sustainable neighbourhoods' where there is an emphasis on promoting walking and cycling in residential areas.

The track to Bath is along a disused rail track, even though fast and straight, is a bit boring even the 1km long tunnel is a bit underwhelming. Bath is, however, wonderful. It was particularly interesting that the 19 Century terraces in the Royal Crescent were developed by the architect who only built the facades, the land behind being sold to individuals who engaged independent builders to tailor houses to their requirements. (no mezzanine finance arrangements then!).

Riding along the canal tow paths which followed the Avon and the Thames back to London was delightful, passing through intensely green and lush agricultural countryside. The canals and the system of locks and retaining basins were an essential part of the 18 Century industrial process, displaying the great skills of the early engineers, in places the canal even cross rivers and gorges. Many of the old industrial buildings, which the canals serviced, have been successfully converted and provide wonderful alternative housing. The preservation of this industrial heritage was a highlight of our trip.

Travelling north, Leicester, Sheffield and Leeds have the legacy of both the heritage and obsolescence of early industrial eras. All have seen remarkable conversion of their central business areas to beautiful pedestrian orientated vibrant precincts which work. At

the Sheffield station is an impressive square which is dominated by a massive stainless steel sculpture which leads the traveller up to the university. This is the gateway to the city and sets the tone. Beyond the city precinct is dominated by young people, there were many grand old buildings surrounding the impressive squares and malls, great places for people to congregate.

Leeds lifts the bar again with the rejuvenation of the public space, it also has a number of wonderful 19 Century shopping malls, similar to The Block in Melbourne, but much more extensive. The large produce market has a most extravagant exterior and its interior an intricate glazed roof system of beautifully designed riveted trusses. Leeds also has an underground train system. The ride through the suburbs was however not so impressive and there are areas of significant disadvantage with high quality dense residential areas limited to special places close in, and around the canal.

My impression is that the English have the design and management skills and regulative framework to implement great renewal programs in business districts. However this work generally does not include housing as there seems to be an intrinsic aversion to mixed use.

David Rayson is very fit and regularly involved in Urban Design Forum activities in Melbourne. He can be contacted at david@rayson.cc



▲ David Rayson and friends in search of sustainable places



Working in the humanitarian sector

Emily McRae

More than ever there is a crucial and immediate need for architects (along with other built environment professionals) to bring their training, competence and ingenuity to disaster risk prevention, mitigation, response and recovery. Marie Aquilino, 2011

Introductory courses for built environment professionals to work in the humanitarian sector are being run by Architects without Frontiers Australia. Architects without Frontiers Australia (AWF) and the Australian Red Cross have been working with a number of partner organisations including Red R, ARUP, Engineers without Borders, and Emergency Architects to develop a training course that introduces built environment professionals to the humanitarian sector and identify pathways for their continued and successful involvement.

This course is primarily aimed at Australian built environment professionals. Its aim is to be a stepping-stone for professionals to gain an introduction and then be given pathways for further training with relevant agencies/organisations in the relief sector. The course has already been accepted into the Australian

Institute of Architects Continuing Professional Development program - Refuel.

Proposed course structure

The proposed structure is an intensive 2-day course facilitated by experienced experts in international development, the shelter sector and humanitarian design/ building. The program is made up of a mix of 'from the field' case studies, expert presentations and practical exercises. There is also a significant amount of shared learning and discussion.

The content will clearly outline the phases of post-disaster response: emergency response, disaster risk reduction and long term reconstruction/development, along with offering participants pathways in getting involved in each of these areas.

AWF proposes to run two training programs per year, the first

being run 13-14 October 2012. The cost for the two days is \$950 (maximum 25 participants). This covers course fees, training materials, certificate, lunch and snacks each day, and a final dinner.

For more information contact Emily McRae, Architects Without Frontiers Australia, at vic@architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au and see www.architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au



On the internet

Along with the rest of the world, the plethora of information, ideas, and opinions about urban design grows exponentially on the internet. Urban Design Forum used to be able to highlight some of the more important or useful links. It has accelerated to the point where this whole page 4 could be filled with links and still not keep up! So here is just a sample.

Plandemonium

You've read the book, now watch the cartoons! Congratulations to Rob Cowan and Fergus Carnegie for this creative step. Fergus Carnegie is the power-house behind the www.urbannous.org service.

Why do architects wear bow ties?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qh3-Ys56GNU&feature=plcp>

Why don't foreign countries have pedestrian guardrails?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xcpeoffwNY&feature=relmfu>

Why do highway engineers wear short-sleeved shirts?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwMFQgbG00k&feature=relmfu>

Community consultation and engagement

Next time you are planning to communicate your great planning and design ideas, you might like to look at this 1948 UK promotional film <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iraX8Azcncg>

Conferences, etc

5th International Urban Design Conference

10-12 September 2012, Melbourne

The theme of this year's conference, Opportunistic Urban Design, will consider innovative urban design solutions that respond to a specific context. For more information see www.urbandesignaustralia.com.au

International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF)

16 -19 October 2012, Delft, The Netherlands.

The conference will be co-hosted by the European Association for Architectural Education and the Delft School for Design. The theme of the conference is New Urban Configurations. Sub-themes on which proposals are particularly invited include: innovation in building typology; infrastructure and architecture; complex urban projects; green spaces and the city; and water management and urbanization. Further information, including registration procedure, is available at <http://www.newurbanconfigurations.nl>.

Walking and Sustainable Cities

30 September- 4 October, 2012

Mexico City

With the title 'Step into the future', the Walk21 partnership is calling for papers and proposals for its next conference, for the first time in Latin America. Themes are: Inclusion; Trust; Well-being; and Community. For details see www.walk21.com

2012 UK National Urban Design Conference

18-20 October, Oxford, UK

This year's conference celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Joint Centre for Urban Design (JCUD) at Oxford Brookes University and the 30th annual conference of the Urban Design Group. It will be held at the Nelson Mandela lecture theatre at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, and for the annual dinner, the medieval Pembroke College Oxford.

The programme has been developed by Louise Thomas, co-editor of Urban Design, and Professor Georgina Butina-Watson, at Oxford Brookes. For more details see www.udg.org.uk

Concrete drain to river

Bishan Park is one of Singapore's most popular parks in the heartlands of Singapore. As part of a much-needed park upgrade and plans to improve the capacity of the Kallang channel along the edge of the park, works were carried out simultaneously to transform the utilitarian concrete channel into a naturalised river, creating new spaces for the community to enjoy.

Sixty-two hectares of park space has been redesigned to accommodate the dynamic process of a river system which includes fluctuating water levels, while providing maximum benefit for park users. Three playgrounds, restaurants, a new look out point constructed using the recycled walls of the old concrete channel, and plenty of open green spaces complement the natural wonder of an ecologically restored river in the heartlands of the city. This is a place to take your shoes off, and get closer to water and nature!

This article provided by Jessica Read Atelier Dreiseitl GmbH, who can be contacted at jessica.read@dreiseitl.com For more details see www.dreiseitl.net/pdf/120311_Today_on_Sunday_Bishan_Park.pdf Also a film 'Friends of Bishan Park' www.youtube.com/watch?v=NM_-2tHOIB4&feature=youtu.be and a time lapse film made by a local neighbour <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m152d7YLBW>

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

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