Tract Consultants
SUPPORTS GREEN STAR - COMMUNITIES PROJECT

Tract is actively involved in the development of the Green Building Council of Australia’s Green Star - Communities Rating Tool and has become one of the first organisations in Australia to sign up to the Green Star - Communities Project Supporter initiative.

We look forward to our ongoing role assisting the GBCA in the production of this exciting planning and design initiative.
Urban design is a term much used, and misused. It is peppered throughout our plans and planning policies; and sprayed around the reports and brochures of development and infrastructure projects. An overseas student conducting a literature review might conclude that good urban design is ubiquitous in Queensland towns and cities, neighbourhoods, streets and places. Of course we know that the truth is often different. As Peter Edwards points out in his article on page 25, the path to experiencing quality urban places all too often begins at the airport.

Perhaps the explanation for this mismatch between rhetoric and reality is simple. Perhaps it is just that no-one agrees what “urban design” really means? Is it planning by drawing? (To me, yes) Big architecture? (Sometimes it is.) Designing the space between buildings? (If this means streets, then it must be this too.) Urban landscape design? (Yes, urban design is this as well.) The point is that urban design involves all these things because urban design is a collaborative pursuit. It employs together the skill and art of planning and architecture and landscape design and engineering, because built environments are clearly shaped by all of these professions.

Robert Cowan’s excellent *The Dictionary of Urbanism* (not be confused with the online Urban Dictionary) devotes more than a page to its definition of urban design. It begins: urban design The collaborative and multi-disciplinary process of shaping the physical setting for life in cities, towns and villages; the art of making places; design in an urban context. Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, and the establishment of frameworks and processes that facilitate successful development.

The Urban Design Alliance of Queensland was formed more than 10 years ago to advocate for good urban design. As the name suggests, it adopts a multi-disciplinary model. Its survival, growth and influence should be a source of pride to all those interested in urban quality in Queensland. There is still no equivalent in other Australian states. UDAL’s Agenda for urban quality (2003) remains influential, acknowledged for example in the SEQ Regional Plan. PIA Queensland’s urban design program is profiled, as is their (with Council of Mayors (SEQ) Next Generation Planning handbook, largely an urban design guide for South East Queensland suburbs. (I must declare here that this document is one which I had a hand in preparing.) In addition, Geoff Mullins looks for blue sky by asking some prominent planners and urbanists about the city of their dreams on page 21.

Active urban design thinkers sometimes say that we should stop spending our time trying to define urban design and just get on with it. A fair point, but the evidence from preparing and reading these stories suggests there is still much capacity building, and convincing, to do before the built results of good urban design are ever-present in this state.

Mike McKeown
Editor

PIA Queensland events calendar

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 July</td>
<td>Being a young planner: what they don’t teach you at university</td>
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<td>Nerang</td>
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<td>12 July</td>
<td>Integrating Linear Infrastructure into the Community</td>
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<td>Brisbane</td>
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<td>26 July</td>
<td>How do... the infrastructure provisions under SPA work?</td>
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<td>5:30pm-7pm, Brisbane</td>
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<td>9 August</td>
<td>How to... prepare conditions that work for applicants, assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30pm-7pm, Brisbane</td>
<td>managers and referral agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 August</td>
<td>QLD Young Planners Present: Building Your Career 2011</td>
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<td>Brisbane</td>
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<td>6 September</td>
<td>How to... be a Court expert</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30pm-7pm, Brisbane</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-23 September</td>
<td>2011 PIA Queensland State conference</td>
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<td>Toowoomba</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 October</td>
<td>How to... prepare a s 242 development application</td>
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<td>5:30pm-7pm, Brisbane</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 November</td>
<td>How to... prepare a structure plan/master plan under SPA</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30pm-7pm, Brisbane</td>
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I was sitting high up over Brisbane in the last few weeks breathing in the cool air of the day, surveying the places and spaces which make up our city. Likewise I did the same when I was recently in Hobart for the National Congress, standing atop Mt Wellington looking down over Hobart and the surrounds, admiring the landscape humanity had created in the city.

Place making is no easy feat and quite often can come about by accident, rather than good design. I have a great deal of admiration for cities which create places of interest amazement and wonder by accident.

In reality every corner and space has a use and a tolerance for use. The use can be any number of things from signage to seating to commerce or living. The tolerance can be the number of people using it, the type of use or the effects of use (noise etc). For example, coffee shops which become popular and spill-out on the footpath are not really offensive to planning law, rather property law, and in most cases this can be tolerated. But it is when that spill-out becomes a “road block” (intolerable barrier to free movement on the footpath) that controls need to be administered. How unfortunate these controls then need to be applied uniformly, in a one-size-fits-all approach.

It is the hunger and desire for great places that can quickly ruin them, but well managed places can adapt and accommodate popularity and success.

And success does not come quickly; it comes through hard work and experience. The experience needs to be sought out, to be considered valuable.

In this past month we have unfortunately seen the passing of two fellows of the Planning Institute, who both had no dearth of experience - Phil Day and Barry Alexander. Both men contributed a great deal to the profession and the focus on simplicity in planning.

I was fortunate to meet both of them during my education and my career - but never for too long. I reflect on how strong the Planning Institute has an influence on men and women who climb the ladder of success. The Planning Institute has both a positive impact on the career path of young planners and a positive mechanism for education from the experienced planners. Membership to the institute benefits a planner on the way up and out (so to speak). There is no doubt in my mind both these men were passionate about development, and had a big impact on the planning results I see today.

I recall a workshop which included Barry Alexander when I worked at Ipswich City Council. Council was facilitating the workshop to ensure a more consistent understanding of the Springfield Structure Plan with the council, the key developers and the key consultants. During one part of the discussion both James Wheeler and I were seeking common ground on an issue of minor importance – an easy application format and process that had become complex. Barry, who had written much of the Springfield Structure Plan, rebuked our clarification and re-clarified......the same thing......a different way. Polite argument broke out as to whose clarification of the application format and process was correct, when we really were all saying the same thing, just a different way.

My raised voice of argument was quickly tempered down by James and as I sat back, suitably chastised I realised this experienced honoured planner was right. Unnecessarily I had not listened to his description, which was the same as ours, and within minutes of realising this error, the matter was resolved. I remember that resolution as very big relief – we had collaborated quite easily and turned a corner in applications for all of Springfield.

Likewise Phil was considerate, educated and entertaining, with his last articles and letters to QP related to a form of “lawyer intrusion” into planners space. A brilliant recognition of the difficulties Planners face in collaborating, not arguing, and how fixed in his view on the theme. Phil would not often concede, because he had given a topic so much thought and testing that his final position was defined. I envy his ability to have strong views from so much consideration of the facts.

This edition of QP will bring you a great deal of opportunity to think more, as the views of many diverse people are considered and documented in describing a city of their dreams. The multitude of views is why the complexity of planning will provide many solutions, which really end up delivering great places anyway.

So I am again reminded of sitting up high, looking down on Brisbane in the cool daylight air looking at the brilliant and popular places. I am reminded of how green Australian cities really are, how close so many places are and that places like Brisbane, Townsville or Hobart are very beautiful liveable places.

Enjoy your planning; please enjoy this edition of QP
Dr Phil Day – A professional life to be commemorated

Geoff Edwards MPIA

Phil Day didn’t ever really retire. He gained his doctorate at the age of 77. In his twilight years he authored a flow of forthright articles for The Courier-Mail and the property magazine King’s Counsel, among other outlets. Even in his final days, before his death on 17 March 2011 at age 87, he was negotiating to launch a new research project that would place taxation of the unimproved value of land back on the public policy agenda.

And until the very end of his life he was mentoring others, encouraging those he thought had the potential to improve communities through planning.

Queensland planners esteemed Phil as one of the consciences of the profession, an intellectual giant yet unaffectedly modest, and honoured him with Life Fellowship of the Planning Institute. He is remembered with respect by a generation of Queensland planners including the profession’s leaders.

Phil Day’s achievements in town and country planning during any one of his senior official appointments would have been worth commemorating. Summed they represent an outstanding record of public service and an enduring contribution to planning.

Born in 1924 and raised in Yeronga, Philip Denny Day completed primary school in 1937 when he won the coveted Lilley medal in the State scholarship examination. After finishing school at Anglican Church Grammar School, he commenced a law degree but enlisted as soon as permitted. During seven years in the Army he learned Japanese and served for three years in the occupation forces in Japan as a commissioned intelligence officer. His duties included tracking down munitions stores before they fell into the hands of criminal gangs. He enjoyed his time in the army and seriously considered making a career of it.

After repatriation he graduated from the University of Queensland in 1953. He moved to Canberra and the Commonwealth Public Service.

In 1959 he resigned and moved to Sydney where he qualified in town and country planning from Sydney University and joined the Department of Local Government. He transferred to the State Planning Authority in 1964 and in 1968 to the Department of Decentralisation and Development then was promoted to head it as Director. There, he advocated growth centres as the best vehicle for stimulating population growth in regional towns. “There’s no particular magic about it,” he observed later in his typically dismissive approach to his own achievements, “commerce and industry and population are attracted to centres where public decisions are made.” He was involved in the establishment of the long-remembered Department of Urban and Regional Planning and his policy approach was pursued by the Commonwealth through its growth centres policy of the seventies, notably through the promotion of Albury/Wodonga and Bathurst/Orange.

Disappointed with ineffective implementation of regional policy in NSW, Phil returned to Queensland in 1974 as Brisbane City’s Director of Town Planning. His strong commitment to the public interest resulted in clashes with the equally strong minded but development-oriented Lord Mayor, Clem Jones. He left to join Professor Lewis Keeble and Betty Trevenna in the Department of Regional and Town Planning in the University of Queensland and was head of school from 1977-80. From 1980-82 he was seconded back to Canberra as Director of the Australian Institute of Urban Studies where he authored Planning and Development: the philosophy and practice of development contributions, a topic of modern salience. He retired to his teaching role from which he officially retired in 1988.

The then Lord Mayor, Sallyanne Atkinson, appointed him as a member of the Chalk Committee of Inquiry into Valuation and Rating and in 1989 he wrote its final report, which to this day stands as a landmark exposition of municipal financing. A two-part water pricing scheme was mooted in this report.

As editor of Queensland Planner for 16 years from 1987, Phil influenced professional opinion through plain-spoken editorials and attacks on transgressions of good planning policy. On one occasion the Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen took time on national television to attack Phil, saying something like “what would a town planner know about economics”, a sneer with contemporary resonance.

In his latter years he was distressed at the creeping dominance of economic rationalism that starved departmental budgets and corroded the foundations of the tenured professional public service which he knew to be crucial to giving governments impartial advice. Three times during his career he resigned from a secure position on a matter of planning principle.

Phil’s political sympathies evolved over the years, reflecting his thoughtful policy-based rather than ideological partisan-based approach to politics. In the 1952 Brisbane City Council election he stood unsuccessfully with the Liberal team in the ward of Baroona. From 1955-59 he held elected office on the ACT Advisory Council for two terms, initially as a Liberal and then as an Independent. This was a part-time role, additional to his position in the public service. He also stood unsuccessfully as an Independent for a federal seat. In Sydney he joined the ALP and became president of the local branch but resigned once he became Director of the Department.

Phil left instructions that his family and colleagues should avoid personal accolades after his passing, so it seems fitting to use the space remaining in this obituary to draw attention to the substance of the four issues that he pursued most vigorously during his latter decades.

First, he was highly critical of the “lawyerisation” of planning, especially of appeals. His status as a lawyer and his earlier experience in assessing appeals in New South Wales gave his critiques credibility. If writing this article today, he would counsel the planning profession to step up demands for a planning appeals tribunal rather than a court.
Second, he was a critic of Queensland’s process-heavy planning legislation, publishing critiques of the Integrated Planning Act from its announcement in 1997. He was dismayed that the recent revision resulted in a regime that if anything, even more fully subordinated planning substance to legalistic procedure. He would counsel the planning profession to start again by initiating a comprehensive, independent review.

Third, Phil was a long-standing advocate of decentralisation as an economically efficient and environmentally favourable alternative to continual sprawl of the metropolis and to housing unaffordability. He argued that concentration of population in south-eastern Queensland would entail construction of inevitably unaffordable infrastructure, such as Brisbane’s tunnels are turning out to be. He would counsel the planning profession to revive its interest in regional development.

Finally, and pre-eminently, Phil was convinced of the potential for land value taxation to achieve public interest objectives. Land value taxes capture unearned windfall gains which properly belong to the community that funds the infrastructure and other development from which value in urban land derives. Australia’s municipal rating systems are based upon land value taxation, but it constitutes a small proportion of the tax mix. In his own words, “...charging for the use or consumption of the nation’s natural resources would go a long way towards reducing the necessity for income taxes on productive labour and capital, which because of all their distortions, inequities and complexity are the taxes which the clamour for tax reform is largely all about.” Today we are inclined to think more about water than land as a scarce resource, but the principles of value taxation apply in that field also.

The titles of two books Land: the elusive quest for social justice, taxation reform and a sustainable planetary environment 1995 and Hijacked Inheritance -- The Triumph of Dollar Darwinism? 2005 reflect his advocacy of land value taxation. Phil however recognised that in a modern complex industrial society other forms of taxation such as tobacco excise are also necessary and he distanced himself from the Henry George purists who would abolish all other taxes. Land value taxation is one of the least distorting forms of raising public revenues and, with the related mining resource rent tax, has gained recent respectability in the Ken Henry tax review.

In 1997-98 the Land Values Research Group sponsored a national competition with a purse of $25,000 for the best attempted refutation of Phil Day’s Tax Reform: a Rational Solution, a work presenting an alternative to the proposed goods and services tax. One of the two co-winning essays, by Dr Julie Smith, argued that the case was politically vulnerable to opposition from interests benefiting from the current tax regime, but conceded that it was logically unassailable.

Phil Day was perceptive aware of these obstacles but would counsel the planning profession to contemplate land value taxation as a tool to achieve better utilisation of land and more defensible funding of infrastructure – in short, better planning. It would be appropriate for the Planning Institute to honour his memory by convening a public event on this subject in 2011 and perhaps by commissioning a modern research project to explore the possibilities.

Friends, colleagues, former students and all those touched by his life can perpetuate his legacy to the profession and the community by becoming involved in these causes and by upholding public interest planning in their own circles.

Barry Noel Alexander

Ken Todd FFPIA

Barry was born in Brisbane on 29 June 1945 and attended Brisbane State High School. He joined the Brisbane City Council as a cadet draftsman and, after completing year 12, Barry began studying Civil Engineering and continued at the Council as a cadet engineer. He and Tricia met in 1964 and married in January 1969, they then moved to Maryborough where Barry joined GHD as an engineer.

Barry joined the then Pine Rivers Shire Council as Subdivision Engineer in 1972, towards the end of 1973 Barry was appointed Head of the newly formed Town Planning Department, the first person to hold that position. Barry’s next move was to the Brisbane City Council as Controller, Land Development and then to Manager, Development and Planning. During this time with the Council Barry was responsible for the completion and implementation of the 1987 Town Planning Scheme.

After leaving the Council in 1988 Barry initially worked as a Consultant with his Arena Projects, Alexander Consulting and APT Planning before joining the Springfield Development Corporation. He quickly became a key player in developing strategies and a planning regime for the long term development of Springfield. Barry became the full time leader of a small dedicated, fearless and talented group of Springfield staff and consultants that created Greater Springfield. The Springfield legislation and the Gazetted of the Springfield Structure Plan were and still continue to be a monument to Barry’s dedication, professionalism and persistence. These visionary documents have stood the test of time and still guide the development after some 17 years.

We will all have our own thoughts on the different and unique characteristics that defined Barry Alexander. He was loyal, dedicated, incredibly knowledgeable, forthright, hard working and had an incredible gift to extract the very best from those who were a part of the team at Springfield.

While Barry apparently retired from Springfield about 5 years ago he never really left as he was often seen back there lending his wisdom to solving issues that arose, as recently as a few weeks ago Barry spent some time preparing an update. At the time that he “retired” from Springfield Barry was certain that he had put in place all the key milestones that would see Springfield achieve its ultimate status of Australia’s Best Planned City. Barry’s legacy will always be there for the current generation and future generations to enjoy as they live, work and play in Greater Springfield. It is fitting that the Barry Alexander Drive, within the Central Business District of Springfield, will be a permanent monument to Barry Alexander.

In recognition of his contribution to engineering and planning Barry was elevated to a Fellow of the Institute of Engineers and a Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia.

Barry had an earlier illness and seemed to be recovering but after a short recurrence, earlier this year, he passed away on 2 May 2011. He is survived by his wife Tricia, their daughter Danette and her husband Colin and their two children and their younger daughter Gina and her husband Adam (both planners) and their two children.
Designing for floods
Allens Arthur Robinson Brisbane, 5 April 2011
Mike McKeown

Architect Michael Rayner is, in his own words, a prominent flood victim. Soon after the Brisbane River flooded his home in January of this year, The Australian featured his story as well as his design for a three-storey flood resilient house on the front page. As it turned out, this architectural response was one of the first of a flood of ideas (this pun is itself the title of a flood related project, see http://www.floodofideas.com.au) now filling the pages of news and professional publications (Queensland Planner included). Rayner spoke openly about his own experiences, and of the planning and city-building priorities he sees as appropriate responses to the floods and to growth pressures.

This seminar was a joint effort by PIA Queensland and the Urban Design Alliance of Queensland (UDAL), and was hosted by Peter Edwards. Greg Tupicoff began the discourse with a defence of recent planning, pointing out that contemporary greenfield developments performed very well during the floods. Brownfield land in older areas, he argued, present more of a challenge.

Academics Darryl Low Choy and Peter Skinner broadened the discussion. ‘Retreat, defend or redesign?’ became the talking point. Choy reminded the audience of the individual and community costs that come with disaster recovery. Attention then turned to the notion of a tipping point, when planned retreat becomes a real option. Generally, contributions to this seminar were positive suggestions about doing things better next time. For some this means being ‘plan ready’ well before disaster strikes. Peter Skinner advanced the cause for more flexible development rights as an incentive to redevelop flood affected sites more densely, and more resiliently.

Designing for floods highlighted the sizeable number of planning and design choices that Queensland cities and communities could make in their flood recovery and in future planning. There is no shortage of ideas.

How to... change an application, an approval or make a minor change in Court
Brisbane, 8 March 2011
Nicole McMaster

The second seminar in the How to... series provided attendees with insight into the intricacies of how to change an application, approval or make a minor change in Court. Along with John Brannock, chair of the seminar, the two speakers, Ashley Lane of Urbis and Michael Leong of Norton Rose provided practical tips and advice.

Ashley discussed very practical approaches to changing applications and approvals, including providing case studies, including a permissible change at Nundah Village and a permissible change at Edward Street.

Ashley provided a number of practical tips, including:
• where a minor change and response to information request are undertaken at the same time, these should be clearly and separately be set out
• when making a request for permissible change to the assessment manager, the notice that was sent to the referral agencies should be attached
• there is no penalty for a responsible entity when deciding permissible change and therefore the timeframes should not be necessarily relied upon, and
• “track changes” are recommended for permissible changes to have input into the approved conditions.

Michael discussed “substantially different development” and noted that whilst there is no definition in the Act, the explanatory notes for the Sustainable Planning Bill state that the intention of the term was to make things easier, to provide flexibility and is to be considered on the facts. He also noted that the Statutory Guideline lists examples which “may” apply and should not be applied as gospel.

The message from both speakers was that SPA is in its early days and that much of the criteria for changing an application, an approval or making a minor change will undoubtedly be further litigated over time.
Social planning seminar
Cairns, 5 April 2011
Tony Croke

On Tuesday 5 April 2011 the Tropical North Queensland branch hosted a professional development event in Cairns on the theory and practice of social planning in rural places.

The event was well attended with over twenty attendees from state government, local government and private sectors. There was also representation from a range of disciplines including planners, environmental planners, engineers and corporate planners. Attendees included those developing local government community plans.

The seminar gave a brief overview of the theory of social planning to provide the basis for social planning practices.

The first case study was an analysis of attitudes, motivations and environmentally responsible behaviours in the Lake Baroon (Sunshine Coast) catchment. The study illustrated how sense of place can be integrated in planning schemes. When developing the strategic plan and the codes for this particular community, the strategic outcomes should ensure that the aspirations for development (and maintaining sense of place) of the community are met.

The presentation outlined the ‘social impact assessment’ methods for identifying and mitigating the impacts of development upon rural and remote communities. The second case study described the impact of a resource development upon the community of Chillagoe from fly in fly out (FIFO) workers and a temporary workers camp. Tenure constraints and urban footprint constraints on the growth of Chillagoe were also discussed.

The relationship between the Community Plan and land use planning was also discussed. A key observation was that land use planning cannot underestimate the value that a well thought out and researched Community Plan can contribute to the strategic framework of a planning scheme.

There was an open question and answer session at the end as well as active participation from audience members during the presentation. Feedback from attendees about the event was positive.

The presenter Sharon Harwood is a qualified urban and regional planner, practicing social impact assessment consultant, a recent PhD graduate and currently a lecturer in planning at James Cook University.

Sharon’s planning experience in remote areas coupled with the research outcomes from her PhD in West Papua has led her to believe that urban planning theory and practice is unsuitable for application in non urban settings. Her primary research interest is now centred upon how non urban communities plan for change.

Sunshine Coast branch welcome function at USC
Sunshine Coast, 23 March 2011
Ryan Longland and Sian Davis

The Sunshine Coast Branch held its annual welcome function, kindly sponsored by Goodwin Midson, at the University of the Sunshine Coast on Wednesday evening, 23rd March. The event was moved to a new venue on campus, the Uniclub which proved a rousing success with a total of 48 people, consisting of students, lecturers, and planning professionals from council as well as the private sector in attendance.

Attendees were introduced to the Sunshine Coast representatives of the Planning Institute of Australia and the Queensland Young Planners Group who discussed the role of these bodies and provided membership information. The winner of the 2010 PIA Sunshine Coast student scholarship to attend the PIA QLD State Planning Conference, Rebecca Reitano, spoke to the assembled students of her experience and encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunities that are available through PIA membership and involvement.

Entertaining and informative presentations were then provided by Paul Gleeson (Sunshine Coast Council Coordinator Master Planned Communities) and Mark Farrell (RPS Group, Sunshine Coast General Manager) who spoke about the highlights and challenges of their careers. The benefits of working in regional locations as well as coping with, and taking advantage of the unexpected twists and turns faced in a planning career were features of the presentations.

Following the official portion of evening, hot slices of pizza were served and attendees were provided with networking opportunities in a social environment with a diversity of planning professionals. At the close of a successful evening, student attendees were provided with a carry bag of material donated by PIA and Goodwin Midson highlighting the many possibilities available to those within the planning industry.
Andrew Hammonds is at the leading edge of urban planning and design. He’s recently elected President of the Urban Design Alliance of Queensland (UDAL) and teaches the PIA CPP course on Urban Design. His experience covers both private and public roles. He has established www.placefocus.com to provide news, tools and learning on urban design and placemaking.

What is your definition of urban design?

Urban design creates authentic and quality public places for people across our urban environments.

This focuses our attention on the outcome - which is the creation of places. It confirms that the focus of urban design is to meet the needs of users of places – who should determine the benchmark of success (not the designers). It also acknowledges that good places which are economically vital, environmentally responsible and socially equitable share qualities honed over thousands of years. It reminds us that our area of influence is not just cities but the suburbs as well as the towns and centres in the regions of Queensland.

Do you call yourself an urban designer?

The short answer is no – the long answer has been germinating for a few years. There are two key words here – urban design and urban designer. Successful urban design involves a collaborative and multidisciplinary process of place creation (more on this later) involving users, community, stakeholders, developers, builders, professionals. In my view an urban designer needs to understand urban design and have training and experience in design. Many good urban designers have dual qualifications in design or planning. There are also planners in Queensland who have the skills and experience to take a design leadership role without having formal design training. They, like me, benefitted from a planning degree with design teaching and integrated learning with design students. I have purposely honed my project facilitation and placemaking skills rather than design. Facilitation of the collaborative process is equally important as design – have a look at the marshmallow challenge at http://www.ted.com/talks/tom_wujec_build_a_tower.html.

This is why I call myself a planner (urban design), rather than an urban designer. Keep in mind that there is no accreditation for urban design or ‘urban designer’ in Australia (although AILA is considering a proposal).

Is urban design a new tag for planning - how do they differ?

I don’t think so, as urban design is collaborative and multidisciplinary process it cannot be ‘owned’ by any one discipline. Planners make a significant contribution though - particularly where we re-engage with our town and city making skills to facilitate good places in conjunction with managing the development ‘system’.

Some may say urban design is simply putting lipstick on the pig - how would you respond?

Harsh, but unfortunately true, particularly in the past! This tends to happen when one discipline (planning, landscape architecture or architecture) dominates the process and doesn’t involve others. This shouldn’t be called urban design. We also need to spend time understanding a place so we can propose the right solutions. This may involve urban design and/or economic, environmental or community strategies like tenancy mix, car parking plan or festivals and events. In some instances it may be better to do nothing!

Can a community be well planned with little regard for urban design?

When I ask people this question some pick new places like South Bank, but most pick a place built before WWII. For example, West End in Brisbane would be one of mine. It was designed by surveyors and developers and built by builders. While the word urban design didn’t exist, they built places which reinforced the street and made it safe and comfortable for pedestrians. Which I call ‘urban manners’. In some ways urban design is about re-learning principles and practices of town and city making which we have developed over the last 2000 years or more but forgotten in the last 60.

According to William H Whyte, “It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished!”

Can you cite some good examples of urban design in Queensland?

Fortunately, there are a lot to pick from. My focus here is places which have benefited from urban design intervention or been created from scratch: James St in Brisbane for reinforcing an existing street with retail and entertainment buildings which attract people during the day and night; Kelvin Grove Urban Village for using public buildings to create a new street based centre (“town and gown”); The Esplanade in Cairns for sleeving the diversity of uses at street level, awnings over the street and 4-6 storey buildings which help to enclose the street which is a public place. This is not expensive. It simply isn’t dominated by carparks. It is cost-effective to design buildings which have fewer carparks which are located at the back or underneath. What is a challenge is to ask people to do the opposite of what we have been telling them to do for the last 50 years! Challenging the retail and carparking paradigm is also difficult (near impossible?) – have a look at http://www.storyofstuff.com and the “The High Cost of Free Parking” by Donald Shoup.

What’s the best way to make people feel better about their surroundings? Does urban design cross over into social planning?

While everyone is different, I acknowledge Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’. We have physiological and safety needs; we want to belong and we want respect of others. Good urban design can facilitate these outcomes for people. Just think of how a place can make you feel hot or cold, safe or unsafe, comfortable or un-comfortable. Social planners have a critical role in helping us understand the needs of the users as well as the community.

What’s the key to creating a quality place?

We have identified 13 Place Qualities on our website! Of these two stand out. Character is the hardest to ‘manufacture’ – it comes from the history, environment and culture of a place. South Bank is an example of a good place which is working hard to develop into an authentic part of the city. The second quality is diversity – which needs to be considered from day one (or probably before!). It is influenced by smaller street blocks and allotments, day and night time activities, housing affordability, density, public buildings and older buildings. West End in Brisbane is a classic example which demonstrates these outcomes.

What are some of the common challenges urban designers have to overcome - cost?

Not necessarily cost - good urban design does not have to be expensive. Wickham St, Fortitude Valley is a good place because of the diversity of uses at street level, awnings over the street and 4-6 storey buildings which help to enclose the street which is a public place. This is not expensive. It simply isn’t dominated by carparks. It is cost-effective to design buildings which have fewer carparks which are located at the back or underneath. What is a challenge is to ask people to do the opposite of what we have been telling them to do for the last 50 years! Challenging the retail and carparking paradigm is also difficult (near impossible?) – have a look at http://www.storyofstuff.com and the “The High Cost of Free Parking” by Donald Shoup.

Q&A: Andrew Hammonds

Geoff Mullins
Q&A: Kate Isles
Geoff Mullins

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority, led by Major General Mick Slater, was established in the wake of the disasters that struck Queensland with brute force over the summer of 2010/2011. Thousands of people were affected, 37 lives lost, and homes, businesses, roads and major infrastructure across the State destroyed. The Authority is tasked with delivering the almost $6 billion reconstruction effort. Kate Isles is Director, Planning at the Authority and has been at the centre of all planning activity since reconstruction began.

Can you briefly outline your planning career so far?

During my time at the University of Queensland, I was very fortunate to be offered work experience at a firm now known as PLACE Design Group. I started at PLACE as an unpaid work experience student and left having reached the position of Manager – Planning, Gold Coast. After six years as a planning consultant, I decided to my broaden my knowledge of the development industry and joined DGS Property Group as a development manager. Equipped with this knowledge, I accepted a position with the State Government charged with the delivery of transit oriented development outcomes across the State.

During the summer events of 2010/2011 I was deployed as part of the community recovery efforts operating in Bundaberg, Theodore, Brisbane and Ingham. My passion for this work and my determination for outcomes made the decision to accept the secondment position at the Queensland Reconstruction Authority very easy.

What initially attracted you to planning?

Like many people I think my attraction to planning early on is very different to what some believe is more of an addiction now. To be brutally honest I was in Year 11 and I was handed a brochure “What is Planning?” from the then Caboolture Shire Council on a field trip. I said yep that sounds good. Funny thing is that my husband actually features in the brochure... spooky!

What are you passionate about outside work?

Ha ha. Many people who know me, know that work really is my passion and it would seem as though I don’t have a life outside of my work! I am passionate about food, wine, rugby, family, friends, and our beautiful beagle, Ally. I love to entertain and do go to great lengths to ensure everyone has a great night. I am also known to break out a move or two on the dance floor! Love to dance.

What was your first priority in your role with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority?

The first priority for the Authority and our work is the people. Our role is to ensure that Queensland and Queenslanders emerge stronger and more resilient. My role in helping to achieve this outcome is different across the State. No one size fits all. In terms of our immediate priorities these were and still are Grantham and Far North Queensland – as they were the hardest hit. From re-building Grantham to Tully Heads/ Hull Heads, to leading policy direction to ongoing visits on the ground across the state, our role is diverse but it will always be centred around people and their needs.

How long do you think the rebuilding process will take?

The events of summer 2010/2011 were unprecedented. The recovery task - never before undertaken. The rebuilding effort is already underway and is underway at an accelerated rate. We need to remember that all 73 Local Government Areas are disaster activated and the task across the state is enormous. These activations were a result of 7 separate events. In terms of how long I think it will take, that is dependent on what aspect of rebuilding you are referring to. The Authority itself has a life of two years at which time the state would have physically recovered from the summer of 2010/2011. Emotionally, the rebuilding efforts will be ongoing for many many years. Our work however, will assist in that emotional rebuild by showing that step by step things are getting better and that importantly we have learnt and improved our processes to improve our collective resilience.

Has the experience with the reconstruction so far shown up ways in which planning can be improved?

Some of the exciting work we have been doing is actually the utilisation of existing planning mechanisms such as Temporary Local Planning Instruments to assist in the recovery process. We recently used a TLPI to allow Grantham businesses to open in temporary facilities whilst the rebuild of their damaged premises is undertaken. The powers under our Act (Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011) will only be used by exception. We have used these powers to assist in the rebuilding of Grantham however, like most planners would agree, with places such as Grantham an extraordinary measure was needed to assist in getting people back in their homes. The other great aspect of the Authority and the work we are doing is the strong working relationship with all state agencies and the local government. Everyone is up to the task and is doing what they can in their own jurisdictions to remove red tape. What would normally take months, if not years, is taking weeks. It is exciting work and very very rewarding.

What will you do when the reconstruction work is done?

Starting a family is an important next step for me and my husband, however, I see this being balanced with part-time work. Not sure which direction I will go after my work with the Authority. Even in the first couple of months I feel a tremendous amount of pride in the work I am doing and the team I am working with. The smiles on the community’s faces makes all of the long hours so very worthwhile.

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Queensland Planner – Winter 2011 – Vol 51 No 2 – 9
The state of urban design in the smart state

Juris Greste OAM

What is the state of urban design in Queensland? It very much depends on whom you ask. Thus I better declare myself.

Urban design arrived in Queensland with the establishment of a Master’s course at QIT (now QUT) in 1987. I was one of the foundation staff in that program when I arrived back from the Joint Centre for Urban Design at Oxford Polytechnic – now Oxford Brookes University – with an urban design Masters degree. The Oxford program was then and still is one of the leading institutions of learning and research on urban design and urban quality generally. Twenty five years have passed. Since those early days we have indeed come a long way but not in all aspects of urban design. In 1990, few knew or understood what it was about. In 2010 there are lots of practices and people who profess to be ‘doing it’ or offering services. How many of those have credible backgrounds and skills is questionable. Architects will claim that they have been doing it forever. True, but pretty poorly since the modernist era which is one reason why we now need the practice of urban design. However, in the sense that THE IDEA of urban design is on the map, we have made progress. The value and importance of urban design has even been acknowledged in Hansard.¹

To an urban design educator who has been practicing, advocating and preaching it, progress has been regrettably slow. Perhaps I have been too impatient. I have come to realise that it probably takes a generation for some of the seeds to grow and start flowering. After 25 years, a number of the early student cohort are now in practice or in positions of influence, doing excellent work. The down-side is that there are not nearly enough of them. This time lag was brought home to me very recently at an Urban Design Alliance of Queensland forum. A senior urban design practitioner declared that high rise residential buildings, especially of the type common on the Gold Coast, make a poor city and that streets are in fact important public spaces! It brought tears to my eyes to hear this. The depressing observation is that this discovery has taken not only 25 years but also as if we have been living on another planet. Is it the Queensland culture that makes us such slow learners? Or is it that we just do not value urbanity enough for its own sake?

City making is a slow process, notwithstanding Queensland’s and the SEQ region’s rapid growth. Most of the best major work is still on paper. It will take years yet to prove its worth. Certain ideas, concepts and phrases are now truly part of the lexicon. Connectivity, legibility, centres and active fronts are on the lips of many and liberally sprinkled in well intentioned planning instruments. We are getting better at the broad brush stuff; the conceptual and aspirational level. However, that is not where it ends. How well these ideas are implemented and translated into the ground level urban experience is where it counts. By the built evidence at this stage, the road ahead is still long. Our public space / place making skills are still at a low level. We produce too much building and development that would not pass very fundamental urban design criteria. That is not to say that there are not some commendable examples. However, at the whole of the state scale, our skills and knowledge development are still at a very nascent stage, especially compared to some of the other states (particularly Victoria).

What other symptoms are there of our shortcomings? The establishment of the Board for Urban Places has been applauded. It is an advisory group to lift design standards for major government infrastructure projects. That we need a panel like that at all is an admission that we have been doing things poorly. But the Board is not just helping government agencies. Most of the consultancies doing the design work are private sector. The skills and knowledge have just not been there. Yet, the Board and the Government Architect’s office are under-resourced. How serious are we about urban quality?

After 25 years of observation, my conclusion is that many, especially in the public sector, which includes our political leaders, still think that urban design is an unnecessary garnish that adds cost and/or limits options. Queensland has done OK without it for 100 years. Why do we need it now? Testimony to that kind of thinking is a recently drafted guideline for urban design standards for government buildings.² Commendable as this objective is, it is not addressing rigorously enough the fundamental urban quality values of public buildings. It is then rendered almost meaningless by being optional.
This is despite Queensland having a Design Strategy which states that “Good design is essential in meeting the future environmental challenges of our cities ….”

The public domain is the prime responsibility of the public sector. Yet, it has not shown leadership by what it does nor does it set high benchmarks for the private world.

Urban design standards and best practice seems also undervalued by the development industry. Of course they have less to gain because the consequences will be mainly on the long term urban quality and less on their investment which is evaluated in much shorter time frames than the city. They are fearful of having to comply with criteria not of their own choosing. They see urban design standards as a potential constraint on their decision-making. The public sector (government) has been persuaded that the market is omniscient and wise. The market is also short sighted, self-serving, conservative and often not very intelligent. The tobacco industry exists in response to the market but we have learned that their market is not always right or very smart. Our public sector appears fearful of setting high urban design bench marks in case the investors take their money elsewhere, despite our continuing rapid growth and attractive opportunities. Setting urban form/built form constraints, however well argued and researched, is considered too threatening to the industry. They must be free!! (to often make poor public realm decisions).

It seems that our governments see their commission principally as looking after jobs and economics, not to build sustainable habitats and communities. It does not mean that the two are incompatible or that we need a radically different model for the latter to happen. It just means a mindset and priorities adjustment as well as consistency. While pure development decisions have primacy over urban quality considerations, urban design will fight a rearguard action.

When I expressed critical comment that a recent building in Cairns does not serve the public realm very well at all, I was challenged. I could not help recall the words of Louis Armstrong when he said, “man, if you need to have jazz explained, you will never know.” I tried but I am not sure that I succeeded. We spoke different languages, had different mindsets. His was about development. Mine was about the quality of the street. That is the thinking and capacity building gulf that still exists. That is the challenge.

In a formal sense, urban design in Queensland is 25 years old. In that time we have moved a long way. It is regrettable that we still have far to go. We will have arrived when urban design – as an activity and process in which many professions must collaborate in pursuit of quality in the public domain – is no longer contested territory or concept. Unfortunately it still is.

While the last 25 years have been valuable, the important question is what we might need to do to further strengthen urban design to take us into the next 25 – no doubt the most important period for our cities and towns, the nation as well as the world.

We need to:-

**Understand our urban heritage.** Urban design has a long and rich heritage. Humans have lived in urbanised settlements for at least 5000 years, counting from the Sumerians and Egyptians. In a generic sense, there are very few urban problems or situations which have not presented themselves since then. Ignore this at your peril or certainly great detriment. Urban history too keeps repeating itself. It is not smart or efficient to be re-inventing the wheel (or the city) time after time. The street layout and planning of old Pompeii is still relevant to most cities and towns of today. The enduring and most valued cities emerged by evolution, not revolution. We must learn not only from our heritage but the more recent past and other cities. Over the centuries we have changes less than we think. We have not evolved as a new species over the last two generations. Pompeii still holds valuable lessons for us today.

**Beware of pleas for innovation.** We live in a consumerism obsessed society. Consumption is driven by innovation but the urban setting is not something that is consumed like a disposable razor or the latest soap powder with Zing. If you must, be clear about where to innovate. There is as much or more scope for urban innovation in the areas of policy and agenda, governance, structures and processes, communications and methods as with built or urban form. Urban history is littered with failed radical innovations such as the Radiant City, the Radburn recipe for circulation and many more. The wheel is even turning for big box inward looking shopping centres, single use zoning and traffic led planning.

**Appreciate that urban design is based on knowledge.** The built environment professional community has not yet acknowledged that urban design is based on knowledge, well proven concepts and principles. Over the last 60 or so years we have formally distilled, assembled and structured the experience and observations of at least 3000 years of urban heritage into knowledge and learning which is now available. Urban design as a practice or notion is thus supported by sound knowledge, research and wisdom.
It did not appear out of the mist. We must make sure we do not lose touch with that source of learning and knowledge. Writing a dissertation is not just a bit of homework. It immerses one in a lot of reading, acquaints one with literature and develops some intellectual rigour. Yet, our post-graduate urban design education is currently all but non-existent – in the fastest growing urban region in the land! When we run short of radiologists, the health professions see to it that more are educated. Not so with urban design. We must regard resources put into education as an investment, not as an expense. Without learning and a sound knowledge base, urban design becomes like witchcraft or apprenticeship. And an architectural (or any other) degree does not automatically make one competent at urban design. We need better understanding of urban concepts in all built environment undergraduate courses.

The essential aspect of education and learning is that it establishes basic concepts, principles and criteria with a broader understanding of their meaning and implications. It applies to urban design as much as medicine or engineering. Without that, appropriate or good urban design becomes whatever anyone thinks it is.

Build capacity at all points in the delivery chain to produce the results that planning documents aspire to. It is one thing to invoke legibility and connectivity but another to have sufficient depth of understanding to actually make it happen. The urbanists can specify it but more often than not, the assessment officer cannot demand or enforce it. It has to happen through a broader understanding of urban design concepts, principles and practices – all of which will only happen through acquisition of knowledge, understanding and training at many levels.

Capacity can only be built if the acquisition of urban design knowledge and understanding is made a part of a professional career structure or job requirements. Who will spend time and money on a degree or course if it does not help in career progression? The public sector, having the biggest stake in public realm quality, must play a greater role in urban design education – by supporting it, promoting it as well as employing people with credible experience and qualifications. We need more decision makers and leaders in the public service with a sound understanding and commitment to urban design and urban quality.

It might sound like an ultimatum but unless we understand and respond to all of the highlighted points, at least in substantial measure, in 25 years time we will still be in much the same position as we are now.

Juris Greste is an urban designer with an architectural background and over 50 years of professional experience as a consultant.

Notes
1 Speech by Rachel Nolan, Member for Ipswich, Hansard, Tuesday, 22 May 2007
3 Design Strategy 2020, Queensland Government, p 31
Brisbane is a rapidly growing, economically robust and culturally vibrant ‘New World City’, but this wasn’t always the case. In the late 1980s Brisbane was struggling with economic stagnation, urban decay and crime creating an exodus of residents and businesses to the suburban fringe.

In 1991, the Urban Renewal Taskforce was established under a tri-governmental partnership and charged with revitalising derelict industrial suburbs in Brisbane. The key objectives of the Taskforce (now known as Urban Renewal Brisbane) were to create sustainable live-work communities in the inner city, revive local economies, deliver affordable housing and reverse the exodus of local residents and businesses. Urban Renewal Brisbane initiated innovative approaches to planning and development in inner-city Brisbane, partnering with the private sector, eliminating bureaucratic obstacles, engaging the local community, championing urban design excellence and sparking new ways of thinking about the city’s heart.

**Post-industrial city**

Within 10 years Urban Renewal Brisbane had achieved a dramatic turn around in the fortunes of the former industrial suburbs of Newstead, Teneriffe and Fortitude Valley. URB prepared exemplary master plans, funded new infrastructure, delivered catalytic projects and facilitated new development including:

- master plans for Newstead, Teneriffe, Fortitude Valley and Bowen Hills
- facilitating the redevelopment of vacant warehouses and industrial sites to deliver over 6500 new homes, including hundreds of affordable dwellings
- the $22m upgrade to Brisbane’s S1 Sewer, essential to inner-city growth
- the $220m Inner City Bypass (ICB) to divert regional traffic from the Valley and City Centre
- the $7m upgrades to Brunswick St and Chinatown malls
- reviving inner-city culture with Brisbane Powerhouse and Judith Wright Centre
- managing the catalytic redevelopment of key Council landholdings, including Green Square, Emporium and Newstead Riverpark.

This sparked a revival in inner-city living and transformed the derelict inner north-eastern suburbs, without damaging the fabric of existing communities or demolishing the industrial heritage of the area. The activities of Urban Renewal Brisbane were the springboard for an inner-city cultural renaissance and a mushrooming of creative and knowledge based industries.

**River city**

Alongside the revitalisation of the inner north-eastern suburbs, Urban Renewal Brisbane also turned its attention to the much maligned Brisbane River. Unloved and polluted by industrial effluent and dredging, the river was in a poor state and underappreciated by Brisbane residents. The redevelopment of the Teneriffe wharves presented an opportunity to establish a riverfront promenade, but URB developed a more ambitious plan to reconnect Brisbane with its remarkable river, by:

- delivering a continuous 14km river walk from Newstead in the north, through the city centre to Toowong and West End in the south
- creating a new public transport network of CityCats to link inner-city suburbs
- initiating new pedestrian bridges and green bridges to connect the north and south sides of the river
- establishing new waterfront parklands and public spaces (e.g. Newstead Riverpark and Howard Smith Wharves).

Brisbane’s identity is now centred on its river-side location, and the river has been transformed from a muddy conduit for industry into a cultural asset, a focus for tourism and residential development, a connecting spine for public spaces, a recreational asset and a means of transportation. Brisbane River is now home to thousands of cyclists and pedestrians using the Riverwalk each year, as well as 17 CityCats and the annual Riverfire festival.

**New world city**

In recent years Brisbane has experienced an unprecedented boom with approximately 60-80,000 new residents moving to South East Queensland each year, with many of these living and working in Brisbane.
Focus

The state government’s SEQ Regional Plan requires Brisbane to plan for 156,000 new dwellings by 2031, not to mention the corresponding increase in employment and infrastructure. This rapid growth has placed great pressure on Brisbane’s inner city, but it also creates tremendous opportunities.

URB has embraced the challenge to plan for growth in the inner city, with 12 new neighbourhood plans recently prepared for CBD expansion precincts such as Fortitude Valley and South Brisbane, major centres including Toowong and Nundah, as well as transit corridors like Milton and Eastern Corridor.

Most notable of these is the award-winning City Centre Master Plan, which represents a bold and comprehensive vision for the CBD as a place to live, learn, work and play. Upon completion of the plan, URB immediately went to work on implementing the plan and its 12 demonstration projects, including:

- revitalisation of King George Square and Queen Street Mall
- Jacob’s Ladder and Market Street upgrades
- Vibrant Laneways and Inhabit Fiesta.

After 20 years of urban renewal, the state’s capital has been transformed with unprecedented growth being harnessed to deliver excellence in urban design and subtropical architecture. Residents (50,000) and businesses (70,000 employees) streamed back to the inner city between 1991 and 2011, and URB’s plans can already accommodate 40% of the city’s future infill target to 2031. URB has also delivered major new cultural facilities, affordable housing, transport infrastructure and major parklands, inspiring Brisbane’s revolution from a ‘big country town’ into a New World City.

**URB learnings**

Dense inner-city development is no longer a rarity in Brisbane, and is rapidly becoming the norm. Other cities are experiencing similar attitudinal changes within the development industry, government and amongst end users. Residents and businesses are beginning to value quality and accessibility over quantity and car parking. Stimulating inner-city development is not as difficult as it once was, but the creation of sustainable urban communities remains a challenge.

**Political commitment**

Successful renewal requires changing the established planning framework, built form and travel behaviours, which can at times be unpopular amongst stakeholders. Renewal also requires significant capital investment into infrastructure and facilities to support the growing population. Successful urban renewal needs to be comprehensive and it takes time. New businesses, residents and developers are less likely to invest in a rundown area if the local government is not willing to commit to catalytic investments in the area. These changes and investments require political and executive support within the local authority, and renewal agencies need to explain and justify proposed changes to internal stakeholders as much as external community stakeholders.

**Focus renewal activity**

Renewal agencies need a clear mandate to manage growth and change, guided by a city-wide growth strategy. Renewal precincts need to be tightly focused on key locations to make efficient use of available resources. Derelict industrial land, stagnant centres and transit nodes are good focal points for urban renewal. Focused renewal precincts will deliver more distinct and comprehensive renewal outcomes in the most critical and visible locations.

**Development economics**

From its inception, URB has sought to partner with the development industry. The Urban Futures Brisbane board comprises industry representatives who guide and advise Council’s renewal activities. URB also undertakes research into development economics to inform renewal strategies and ensure built form outcomes are developable and attractive to investors. Idyllic urban design is futile if it is unviable to build, and given the extent of growth confronting Brisbane, plans need to harness market forces and incentivise private development in return for improvements to the public realm and infrastructure.

**Community engagement**

At the commencement of any project URB proactively engages the community including local residents, businesses and development industry professionals. URB is upfront with the community about the need for growth and change, and presents planning as an opportunity to guide that growth, protect valued attributes and address existing problems. We lead the community through four key stages of the project, including visioning, options, draft strategy and draft statutory plan. This process ensures the community can inform the vision, participate in decision making and provide feedback on draft documents. URB’s community engagement strategy is efficient and focused, allowing Council to swiftly plan for rapid growth and respond to new development pressures in the city.
Built form

Simple and robust built form guidance is integral to planning for urban renewal, and URB puts particular emphasis on the street interface. Built form provisions need to be flexible to ensure developability, but robust enough to ensure positive outcomes for the community. Some key built form principles include:

- density should respond to access to shops, services, employment and transport, and height should be informed by established character, site area, streetscape and development economics
- buildings should address the street with doors, windows, balconies and active land uses
- street frontages should have a human scale in both vertical scaling and horizontal rhythm
- provide sufficient setbacks to allow daylight, outlook, ventilation and landscape amenity, but ensure resulting building envelope is developable
- protect existing heritage, but also create future heritage
- encourage local shops and services to reduce travel demand
- car parking should be underground and vehicle access points minimised

Public space

Investment in public spaces is an affordable and visible catalyst for urban renewal. Dense urban development means more people on the street; commuting, shopping, working and relaxing. Streetscapes need to be upgraded with wider footpaths, landscaping, lighting, street furniture, bikeways and bus stops. Residents and workers will need new places to meet friends and eat lunch, so parks and squares may need to be created. Land is expensive in dense urban areas, so renewal agencies need to seek new public spaces on major development sites and also make the most of available public spaces, including small laneways.

Access and transport

Traffic and parking are common concerns amongst community stakeholders. Any dense and successful place will become busy, and the innate spatial inefficiency of cars means that congestion and parking will always be problematic. Notwithstanding the above, renewal precincts can be highly successful with only modest transport infrastructure and parking provisions. Transport is merely a means of accessing our needs, and dense urban precincts should provide access to local shops, services and employment within walking distance, dramatically reducing the need for vehicle travel. This local access should be supported by pedestrian friendly streetscapes and complemented by an efficient transit service connecting to district and regional destinations.

To contact Urban Renewal Brisbane, call 3403 8888.

Urban design leadership

Transit Oriented Development and Design Division,
Growth Management Queensland, Department of Local Government and Planning

High quality urban design is critical to our quality of life and helps build healthy, inclusive and connected communities. As populations become increasingly urbanised, there is renewed emphasis on urban design in developing and renewing cities, towns and places. Good urban design reinforces the special character of neighbourhoods and helps to build thriving, vibrant and inclusive communities. It covers design for individual buildings, spaces between the buildings, movement networks between buildings and places, landscaping, infrastructure and public spaces.

In recent years, population growth has resulted in unprecedented public investment in infrastructure and public buildings. Queensland’s reputation as a design leader is rapidly rising with a number of high quality buildings and places receiving national and international recognition. Examples include South Bank, Gallery of Modern Art, the Goodwill, Eleanor Schonell and Kurilpa Bridges, and Roma Street Parklands.

The Queensland Government is influencing urban design outcomes in many ways across several departments. This influence occurs through initiatives such as: the work of the Office of Government Architect, the Board for Urban Places, the Next Generation Planning Handbook, the charter of the Urban Land Development Authority, the 2020 Design Strategy managed through Arts Queensland, and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation’s HEAT program which focuses on promoting emerging Queensland architectural talent, to name a few.

Another example of the Government’s influence on urban design outcomes is the recently announced design competition for eight Brisbane ferry terminals destroyed during the floods. The competition is an invitation to designers and architects from across the world to become part of the rebuilding of Brisbane. It is a once-in-a-generation chance to build CityCat and ferry terminals that are truly unique and will be instantly recognisable as a distinctive part of the River City’s landscape.
The Queensland Growth Management Summit in 2010 brought together stakeholders and community members to discuss how to best manage growth. As a result of the ideas generated at the summit, the government committed to 22 new key initiatives and 25 supporting actions. The need for improved urban design and the important role urban design plays in enhancing liveability was a strong and recurring theme expressed by summit participants and through related consultation activities.

Building urban design capacity and initiating a program of leadership in urban design are two actions endorsed by the state government. These summit actions genuinely put the state at the forefront of urban design by following best practice and working closely with specialist urban design professionals. This provides the state government with strong tools and networks to be able to influence urban design outcomes. Below are some examples of how we are achieving this.

The TODD Division

The Transit Oriented Development and Design (TODD) Division in Growth Management Queensland, part of the Department of Local Government and Planning (DLGP), is specifically interested in urban design leadership. The TODD Division brings together the government’s various land use and transport integration and design related activities. The Division promotes mixed use development around public transport nodes and responsive urban design that demonstrates innovation and excellence.

The team’s unique structure enables strategic thinking about urban design policy and master planning, as well as the on-the-ground implementation of great urban design. The benefits of this structure can be seen in transit orientated development demonstration sites, such as the Yeerongpilly Transport Oriented Development.

By pulling together separate teams from other government departments, and continuing to work closely with a range of other agencies, the TODD Division demonstrates that delivering great urban design is about design process, breaking down silos, collaboration, and partnerships. A notable key partner in areas of urban design leadership is the Office of Government Architect, part of the Department of Public Works.

The TODD Division is building urban design leadership by raising awareness, staff development and the creation of policy and resources. Achievements and ongoing projects in this area include the following.

1. The Queensland Design Triennial

The Queensland Design Triennial, *Unlimited: Designing for the Asia Pacific*, was held in October 2010, with a range of events, exhibitions and talks highlighting how good design is as much about process as it is about a product. The Arts Queensland-led event, which is part of the Queensland Government’s 2020 Design Strategy, included an urban design workshop supported by DLGP. The two-day Emergent Cities Workshop explored the driving forces shaping South East Queensland, ideal future scenarios, and ideas to realise these scenarios. The workshop was attended by 59 participants including a number of national and international participants, and sought to broaden the public discussion of urban design.

2. Urban Design Champions

As a Growth Management Summit outcome, the TODD Division is developing training and capacity building programs to increase urban design skills across state government departments. This includes supporting a network of “Urban Design Champions” across all key agencies.

The Urban Design Champions program is a long-term strategy which involves people from across multiple government agencies, and builds their capacity and experience through formal training, network meetings and shared learnings. Participants are from a range of agencies including Queensland Health, Department of Public Works, Department of Transport and Main Roads, and Department of Education. An initial group of 15 champions has been created and urban design training is being undertaken with 60 staff across participating departments in March and May 2011.

The Urban Design Champions will form a professional network that will help develop other tools and resources for ongoing urban design leadership, such as case studies, public awareness campaigns, and design guidelines. The program currently focuses predominantly on project managers in state departments, but forms part of a larger training and capacity building strategy to create a culture of urban design thinking in executives, politicians, external professionals, regional locations, and the general public.

3. Guidelines for Government Buildings, Precincts and Infrastructure

The Queensland Infrastructure Design Strategy is an action from the Queensland Growth Management Summit to assist with building design capacity in Queensland. This action specifies that the Board for Urban Places is to prepare this strategy which would include a review of how current procurement practices could be enhanced to support optimum urban design outcomes.

Another action of the Queensland Growth Management Summit, also relating to building design capacity in Queensland, is the development of a *Guideline for Government Buildings, Precincts and Infrastructure* to which all agencies must comply. The Office of the Queensland Government Architect completed voluntary *Design Guidelines for Government Buildings* in September 2010. This new guideline will inform the Queensland Infrastructure Design Strategy.

Currently in development, the guidelines will provide a stronger urban design policy position and expand on the existing advisory Guidelines for Government Buildings.
Board for Urban Places

The TODD Division is also the secretariat for the Board for Urban Places. The Board for Urban Places is an independent advisory body, established in 2009 to advise Government on urban design, and to champion high-quality urban design in Queensland. It helps to foster a holistic approach to land use and infrastructure planning to create vibrant and adaptable urban places for people in Queensland.

The board includes 23 specialists, and provides general and project-specific advice on urban design, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, sustainability and built environment issues.

During its inaugural year, the board provided advice on a number of state government, local government and private projects including:

- Cross River Rail
- Yeerongpilly Pedestrian Bridge
- Cairns Transit Network
- FKP Property Group's Milton Transit Oriented Development
- Yeerongpilly Transit Oriented Development
- Maroochydore Principal Activity Centre Structure Plan
- Cairns Cultural Precinct
- Cairns Master Planning
- Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct
- Gold Coast Rapid Transit (GCRT) project and Council's GCRT Corridor Study
- Growth Management Summit Actions
- Sunshine Coast University Hospital
- Woolloongabba Urban Development Area
- Commonwealth Games Eco Village

A significant achievement was the final design of the Yeerongpilly Pedestrian Bridge, through early involvement of the board in the planning and delivery of the project. The board insisted that design was paramount to achieving a gateway statement to the Queensland Tennis Centre and recommended the engagement of design professionals for this project. The final design, which links the train station to Pat Rafter Arena ‘through’ the sole of a Dunlop Volley, is a quirky link back to an Australian tennis icon and has become a loved and recognisable feature.

During 2010, the board also developed its first publication, the Charter for Queensland Places. The Charter for Queensland Places is a guide intended for all Queenslanders who shape our environment and who seek to make, use or understand Queensland places. This includes developers, designers, educators, policy makers and individuals.

The charter is being used by the board as the basis to provide advice and feedback on projects, and is also being used to guide some of the work of the TODD Division. Over time, the board will seek to have the principles of the publication reflected appropriately in local government planning schemes.

The charter establishes seven core principles to guide the making of successful places and good urban design:

1. Our places embody our values and our uniqueness.
2. Our places are for people and about people.
3. Our places are ecosystems that we respect and nurture.
4. Our places value our natural landscape and waterways.
5. Our place experiences are enhanced by what we build and the spaces within and between.
6. Our places are connected, accessible and contribute to the surrounding neighbourhoods.
7. Our places are shaped by design, our shared responsibility and our management.

A Charter for Queensland Places can be found online at www.dlgp.qld.gov.au/boardforurbanplaces

The upcoming priorities for the board include continuing work on specific projects, as well as contributing to broader opportunities presented by natural disaster recovery with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. The board will also be examining government procurement practices used for building and infrastructure projects, as well as how such practices can facilitate a great design outcome on a consistent basis.

Conclusion

The Queensland Government, though the TODD Division and other key areas, strongly support and encourage leadership in urban design. We recognise urban design as especially important at the state level. We see this trend in counterparts in the South Australian Integrated Design Commission and the Urban Design Charter for Victoria. To this end, we are delivering projects to improve urban design skills and knowledge, improve collaborative processes, develop tools to enhance leadership, and implement design in demonstration projects.

Urban design is too often mistaken as just built form, but good urban design has the potential to create value for communities, individuals, the economy and the environment. The potential benefits include:

- better public health
- greater social equity
- enhanced land values
- more vibrant local economies
- reduced vehicle emissions
- more sustainable use of non-renewable resources.

The need for improved urban design and the important role urban design has to play in enhancing liveability is a priority for Growth Management Queensland.

For more information, visit us at www.dlgp.qld.gov.au/localareaplanning or contact Yen Trinh on 3989 0455.
I have been so privileged. The first part of my career has involved the whole urban design continuum from regional planning to individual detailed place-making projects. But magically, as if by chance, it has been book-ended by two seriously important urban projects: the Noarlunga Centre and the Kelvin Grove Urban Village.

The drive towards better cities depends upon significant exemplar projects, as test-beds, game-changers, societal landmarks, expressions of community values. But, in urban design, macro and micro interact. You know we have to get the right things in the right places. That is why the move in the previous SEQ Regional Plan to engage major hospital and university institutions as part of a well-detailed centres network was critical. But can it be done?

The Urban Village is clearly one approach. Like any exemplary radical urban design project, it did not arise from a vacuum or by intellectual chance … but it did happen because the opportunity to implement ideas did arise, by a fortuitous “aligning of the stars”. Never underestimate the fundamental importance of chance … political, economic, personal, bureaucratic….in advancing the urgent contribution we can make to effective sustainable cities.

The Urban Village, the joint Department of Housing and QUT brownfields project conceived in 1998/9, did not come out of nowhere. For me it was the logical progression of ideas I had been involved with since the early 1970s.

As my friend, Dennis Gibson, has reminded me: “success has many parents; failure is an orphan”. Dennis, Vice-chancellor of QUT from 1988 to 2003, knows the lineage of QUT’s central involvement in the Urban Village, next to its existing Kelvin Grove campus: the planning, the evolving thinking about education and the relationship of universities with society, the opening up of Gardens Point, the dealings with governments and much more.

I can only know with any certainty about my urban planning and design journey towards the KGUV project over almost three decades. In the belief we are helped in our work by understanding how things happen, let me tell you some of it.

It began with being a student in the 1960s at the University of Adelaide, where the immediate proximity of other institutions and the retail / commercial / entertainment (yes, including pubs) heart of the CBD delivered a rich viable campus life, only a few walking minutes away. The public walked through the century-old campus. We treated the city as an extension of the university scene. Not for us the voguish architecturally-old campus. We treated the city as an extension of the university scene. Not for us the voguish architecturally-old campus.

Some background to the Kelvin Grove Urban Village

Radical projects and chance

John Byrne

As a young graduate, I tried, unsuccessfully, through the Minister’s minder, a friend, to convince the SA Government not to relocate the vibrant Art School from an inner city residential neighbourhood (where its easy expansion was limited and controversial) to a suburban CAE campus … but instead to recycle a number of available brick and timber-truss warehouses next to the vibrant Central Market. Access, urban vitality, a bit of grunge, character…..but No Go: off to the artistic liberation of the wilderness!

My first big job in 1972 was with the SA Housing Trust, public housing and industrial authority, and new town developer. My “young Turk” role included the first big one: coordinating the planning of a new town centre for the southern metropolitan growth corridor of Adelaide. The political father of this Noarlunga Regional Centre was the great Alex Ramsay, public servant extraordinaire. Its creative genius was Newell Platten, thoughtful gifted architect and advocate. Its intellectual champion was Hugh Stretton, historian, political scientist and, in the early 70s, a major influence on thinking about Australian cities and housing. As a young professional, I got to be a lucky intimate part of that exhilarating, frustrating, innovative, game-changing urban planning and design process.

I shall argue, at another time and in detail, the importance to the history of Australian cities of this Noarlunga Centre, especially in its time and context. Let’s just observe that, in the context of Australia 1972, the NRC seemed, and arguably was, truly radical. In many dimensions, there were no precedents for it in national post-war city-making. It flew absolutely in the face of established planning policies and practices of all sorts: development, planning, bureaucratic, commercial. Its roots, if any, might have been found in European university towns and Greek villages … and were about a vision of humane place-making in support of a sustainable, vital and egalitarian society.

Among its radicalisms, from its very first 1972 plans (through to its revised implemented 1976 plan and subsequent development and management until my leaving in 1990), it:

• focussed upon creating and ensuring an integrated “urban place” at each stage of its growth
• therefore “heretically” rejected use-based zones and pursued fine-grained mixed-use as the inevitable and desirable outcome of incremental concentrated growth
• rejected the powerful and evolving “donut around box” approach to major retail centres (enshrined in planning policy and commercial practice) by integrating the AMP centre into the very heart of the concentrated town centre
was closely connected to a new railway station and bus interchange

assumed the town centre would be developed by many different private and public groups and so, while exercising some broad architectural goals, encouraged a degree of variety in expression (in the pursuit of legibility, scale and individual corporate identity), and

in the evolving best practice of the times, tackled the issues of cars by having a pedestrian-only spine at its extending linear heart.

Also, in the context of South Australia,

this practical and intellectual leadership role by the public housing authority was taken for granted……you expect that from public institutions, surely? …and

in recognition of the demands of high quality urban design and planning in pursuit of place-making, a special planning and urban design management mechanism was instituted involving a partnership of state and local governments.

But, most importantly for the subsequent journey towards the KGUV, the 1972 plan centrally included (“20 metres” from the shopping centre, across the central pedestrian spine) adjoining sites for both an urban university and a TAFE …and expected them to front, define and help activate the people-oriented public realm. This “Town and Gown” approach was central to the town centre thinking….and the negotiated acceptances by Australian and SA Governments plus the university and the bureaucrats reflect the brilliance and ideology of Stretton and Ramsay.

While Fraser Government cuts sadly killed off in reality the university development, the central urbane location of such facilities could also be seen in the 1980s in the new Adelaide TAFE campus and the subsequent City West campus of UniSA (to which, in the 1990s, the Art School came, out of the suburban wilderness).

By the time I headed north towards the Sunshine State in 1991 (at a time of major challenge to the SA economy), it seemed obvious the integrated TAFE College was critical to the character, sustainability, vitality and hence survival of the Noarlunga Centre. Good for students and staff and good for the community.

So Town + Gown has been, from at least 1972, a working principle in my work.

In the midst of significant award-winning social housing programs and greenfield neighbourhood development in my new home of Queensland, chances for Town + Gown in SEQ were not immediately frequent …. but two actually arose in the first half of the 1990s, in the time of the Goss Government.

Queensland benefited significantly from the Building Better Cities Program (in spite of the subsequent myth-making that it was a failure), as part of the “de-institutionalisation” agenda for the western corridor, the public housing agency DHLGP acquired “future ownership” of the substantial and historic mental health campus at Challinor (whose functions were being relocated from this inner Ipswich location). Believing that there was support for radical thinking (and in my case based on my NRC and urban renewal experiences in Adelaide), the idea was enthusiastically put forward for “an urban village” renewal.

New buildings could mix with recycled heritage ones. A mix of uses could include higher educational, starter business, cultural, artisan, some retail and a broad range of housing types for a broad range of income groups. Attracted by the urbane ambience, houses for the rich could line the golf course frontage while, among the adjacent middle-income offerings, a small enough percentage of affordable and social/community housing could take advantage of less scenic parts, even demonstrate the creative re-use of old structures and certainly demonstrate further the agency’s dramatic and award-winning pursuit of high quality design, being played out already across Queensland. The agency could lead the planning with Council and create sites for substantial private investment, while taking an acceptable profit from its intellectual capital to subsidise its essential community work.

Alas, no percentage of social housing was small enough for the local council who reacted powerfully and negatively as if, it seemed to me, newly arrived from the deep south, the further involvement of the agency threatened the very future of the community. DHLGP “walked away” from the site and with it went the urban village scenario (to be replaced in due course by the very different UQ campus). Town + Gown? Not yet.

Several years later, another chance arose. Griffith University was looking for a further campus, somewhere between Nathan and the top end of the Gold Coast. Again, the idea of a highly accessible location offering a close urbane relationship with the community, that is, urban design and planning in support of cultural, economic and environmental sustainability (let’s face it, for me the underpinnings of the NRC), was proposed by DHLGP. In detail, and encouraged by transport and state development type agencies, those of us by chance involved proposed, after scouring for opportunities, the large vacant site next to the Logan Council HQ on Wembley Road.
There the new outreach of the university could be

- close to the population served by the new Gold Coast railway,
- able to share central resource facilities with the council (the way, I said, TAFE and Council share and equally own/operate the library at the NRC),
- able to build socio-cultural/educational relationships with the adjacent public schools,
- able to relate to the business community of Wembley Road and take advantage of available rental housing in the community, and
- access open space further along Wembley Road.

Alas, this reaching out to a Town + Gown site wasn't what Griffith seemed to want. As I understood the dialogue, although twice the size of the later KGUV, the site was "obviously" too small and constrained, with not enough room, for example, for the necessary carparks. This was a view apparently shared by the Minister's principal higher education advisers who seemed in favour of the suburban model. The Feds with the building money didn't seem to care and those in charge of Council seemed focussed at the time upon a theme park idea. So in 1995/6, the Government understandably decided upon the isolated Meadowbrook site.

Not yet Town + Gown. But things were changing.

Those of us in the urban design business, based on experience and a changing urban society, had been moving from some of the established approaches of the 1970s and 1980s. Among those was our pursuit now of

- gridded network (not tree) neighbourhoods,
- pedestrian-friendly street-based precincts, not pedestrian only ones (like Noarlunga Centre)
- mixed-use,
- mainstreets more than big boxes …or at least their integration….so, again, streets not malls,
- the importance of transit-served corridors
- the impact of major institutions as centres of urban intensity.

At QUT, my friend Dennis, with whom I continued to discuss ideas, was leading the re-integration of the Gardens Point campus with the City Gardens, strengthening the quality of the public realm connection to the CBD, advancing the urbane reinvention of the campus and the reaching out to the community through encouragement of public access such as that the Goodwill Bridge would deliver.

I can only guess at the complexity, wisdom and energy of the evolving educational and institutional thinking. In line with evolving ideas of the creative global economy and what that had to mean for universities, the QUT leadership was championing a significant re-orientation of ideas and strategies that would lead, for example, to the highly successful Creative Industries cluster with its broad implications.

At this stage, as Government itself began to talk about the Smart State, its emphasis seemed to be upon the scientific research side of things and not much, if at all, upon the parallel implications for the design and planning of smart urban environments, as both expressions of and support for, the smart economy. Nevertheless, when the Australian Government in late 1998 put the Gona Barracks, next to the QUT Kelvin Grove campus, on the open market, it was not surprising that I would want to talk to my friend about an idea for what, on a shared basis, just might be possible.

The site was a substantial dramatic strategic opportunity. Many doubtless had different visions… residential? educational? neighbourhood? gated community?... for how it could be developed. What followed…or, for once, was allowed to follow…. was a powerful mainstreet-based mixed-use project with a range of interacting agenda about social, environmental and economic sustainability.

But fundamentally it was Town + Gown through a remarkable partnership of housing agency and urban university, with substantial support from city council.

It took advantage of a unique chance, in time, place and context, to create what is still in significant ways a radical exemplar of a good thing,…and a good thing we need more of in the pursuit of sustainability.

The success of the multi-award-winning Kelvin Grove Urban Village…and I would argue it has been successful…has taken the political, managerial and professional advocacy, support and contributions of many key champions and committed participants.

We can debate the nature and extent of the success and the lessons to be learned but there are many, from key political and university leaders and significant academics and public servants downwards, who should be proud of what they have led, advised, protected, designed, enabled, managed, implemented. I cannot possibly know all that was done that was important.

But I might observe there is more to be done. It is not fully developed (and it will change over the years) but there are other existing, current and possible future places where the learnings from the KGUV, and the NRC, and the long-present and evolving community and urban design ideas they represent, can be responded to, implemented and advanced upon.

Just as for me there is the continuity of thinking from the suburban context of the 1970s NRC, which was quite unusual at its time, so also we might see the KGUV as having helped re-connect our thinking to the urbanist experience of other global places.

Success has many parents. From my part, I am privileged to have been involved in both projects and take delight in the intellectual links (via Challinor and Wembley Road) over almost three decades. I am confident Messrs Ramsay, Stretton and Platten would approve of the Urban Village.

John Byrne BArch BA MTP FPIA FRAIA is an urban consultant, a former manager of planning for the SA Housing Trust and Director, Urban Design and Planning of Housing Queensland. John is also an Adjunct Professor at QUT. He left the public service in 2006 to act as a consultant.
City of my dreams
Ideas and opinions from planning, design and development professionals

Geoff Mullins

It can be said architects, urban designers and planners are in the business of changing the world. A well planned and well designed physical locality can deliver spaces, places and environments that positively affect human wellbeing.

The strive towards better cities nowadays includes an array of disciplines aimed at getting a higher level of sustainability in a number of areas and better outcomes for our needs socially, culturally, economically and psychologically. Thus, we make a better world.

In this ‘urban design’ themed issue of Queensland Planner we called upon a number of experienced people in the industry to describe how they would achieve that better place by telling us about their ‘dream city’.

As you read this collection of ideas and the motivations and rationales that back them, you get a sense that the bottom line for the dream city is one that makes people feel good about being there.

Adam Beck is currently the National Project Leader for the Green Building Council’s Green Star Communities project. He has more than 13 years experience in environmental and social planning and for the past 8 years has focussed on developing and implementing sustainability tools for built environment projects.

Adam says the dream city is one that has evolved from a previous life. “This dream city has been here before, been recycled, and reused again and again”, he said.

“This is because of its enduring layout, an urban structure that makes sense and lasts. The urban form is organic, and is given the space to evolve. But it evolves thanks to people, not codes. No approvals needed. Not only has it survived with this approach, it has thrived.

“My dream city operates like a high performing organisation, it finds every opportunity to be efficient and effective. It has a clear vision and corporate strategy. It engages its stakeholders and invests in its people above all.

“It’s The Rocks, Melbourne’s laneways and Hong Kong’s city life at night during the rugby sevens brought to a boil, served up on a plate of North Lakes with a side of Fortitude Valley and finished with a garnish of Northern Busway.

“The city of my dreams...makes me fall in love with it. It’s awesome. It’s the place I want to live for the rest of my life. It’s my local village where I bump into my neighbour. It’s a global metropolis.”

When it comes to planning this city Adam makes a salient statement in finishing off his description.

“The city of my dreams has a plan, but it’s always in draft form.”

Each contributor to this article brings a unique element or overarching theme he sees as important in the creation of a dream city. And not all ideas are about form and function. At least one introduces the idea that a dream city skirts on the edge of danger.

Urbis Director James Tuma paints a picture of a utopian city where the introduction of ‘risk’ heads off boredom.

James leads the design studio for Urbis in Brisbane and during the past 18 years has led a significant number of nationally and internationally recognised integrated development and master planning projects.

“We continuously strive for a utopian ideal of order, equity, and safety which pervades every policy and discussion on the topic of urbanism,” James said.

“Aside from the obvious observation that utopia is, by definition, unachievable, it sounds like a pretty boring place to me. In the city of my dreams, a sense of risk and danger is a positive element, codes defining ‘acceptable solutions’ are replaced by a ‘do whatever works’ approach.

“The city of my dreams is duplicitous. It is a place that is both ordered and chaotic where one turns the corner to find something completely unexpected every day. The city of my dreams is dangerous in so far as it is exciting and takes risks in relation to its shape and does not care for being controlled (too much).

“This imaginary city must of course remain on track to deliver urban outcomes that answer serious questions about infrastructure, investment and affordability, but it does it in a thousand different ways...not a single ‘acceptable way’.

“In this fine balance between order and chaos (and sensibility and imperfection) the city of my dreams thrives. An interwoven complex of big and small, green and grey, it evolves, as we have, over time.

“To paint a picture of it is not possible as every second that the sketch begins, the image changes, like a dream.”

Irrespective of which vision of a dream city is created in someone’s mind, achieving it will always have its challenges. The practicalities in achieving it can be at the top of the list of priorities.

For Guy Gibson the challenges are many and varied. The Queensland Regional Manager for Lend Lease sees a labyrinth of constraints working together to stifle any utopian dream city from becoming reality.

“I’m sure other contributors will focus on aspects of urban form and function, so my suggestion for the ‘city of my dreams’ would be one where planners recognised the essentially limited role that they can play in creating successful urban environments, and we restore what I would contend is a proper balance between competing planning and development interests,” Guy said.

“The development of cities and towns is one of the most complex activities that human beings engage in, involving a multiplicity of stakeholders and a web of interacting elements.

“Town planning has been most effective where it has been employed as the leading edge of a plan–design–construct nexus, that is, where planning has been directly related to the development process.”

Even with planners in their place, Guy believes there are more confronting issues. “We have a fundamental problem...
Focus

with the Queensland planning system, namely that it is now dysfunctional, ineffective and counterproductive in dealing with the significant development and infrastructure challenges that we face.

“Local government and state agency performance in planning and development assessment is highly variable and the best authorities perform reasonably well, but the average level of performance is clearly unsatisfactory, and the worst authorities are frustrating development and undermining the housing and construction industry at a time that we can least afford it, given the sluggish market conditions that we are experiencing.

“Reforms of the development assessment systems in Australia also need to be linked with an overhaul of planning education and professional development programs so that town planners are better equipped with relevant knowledge and skills and adopt reasonable expectations about their ability to manage change and create the ‘cities of our dreams’.

“This means a recognition by the planning profession that cities ultimately reflect the collective results of a multitude of decisions at the individual and business level, not just those formally charged with the role of city dreaming.”

In this hypothetical exercise of creating the dream city, Director of Tract Consultants, Mark Doonar does exactly what Guy Gibson assumed other contributors would do. Mark focuses on form and function. His dream has quite some clarity - he can be pretty specific - there is definitely a plan. Here he gives us some of his ideas for the city of his dreams.

“It has a civic heart with community focus - a meeting place. New development complements existing development and doesn’t focus on an enclosed shopping mall,” he said.

“Internal centre access promotes community interaction, and there are no obvious CPTED hotspots. Public transport facilities are within 200m of the heart of the centre, and the heart of the centre is not given over to car orientated uses.

“It has a distinct business atmosphere in which retail, commercial and community uses are consolidated and pedestrians are a priority with universal access for the ‘differently challenged’ among us. Buildings frame a ‘town centre’ with direct visual and functional access to pedestrian paths.

“Finished levels of adjoining developments are compatible along pedestrian spines with active building frontages. Public transport services link nearby centres. The main PT stops are within direct line of sight of the highest concentrations of workers. Vehicle entry/exit points do not create negative impacts on pedestrian amenity.

“Parkland and small informal spaces are fitted out with street furniture, garden beds, luxuriant landscaping and sun and rain protection devices, where pedestrian thoroughfares meet and where there are opportunities to create rest stops and vantage points. Outdoor pedestrian-orientated commercial areas such as street corner cafes, alfresco restaurants, market style shops are integrated with open spaces and pedestrian thoroughfares.”

Mark’s vision addresses numerous other points that include the proper integration of signage with the design and form of buildings, proper coordination of pedestrian signage, streetscape sculptures, paving design and lighting which is designed to assist in the enjoyment of the city centre by pedestrians at night.

The final dream for this contribution to Queensland Planner comes from Hassell architect Christopher Wren who, like the aforementioned others, would have loved to have had a lot more column centimetre space to properly describe the city of his dreams. Christopher’s ideas deal with cultural change - moving away from what we borrowed from America to address the dramatically changing Australian society.

“Most cities hold a fascination for me. It is the complexity, diversity, distinctiveness and grit, that delights me. I am an urbanite and feel lost and deprived in the suburbs. Suburbs do not make a city,” he said.

“It is often quoted that we are urbanites but most cities in Australia are essentially suburban in character that owe their form to the importation of an American ‘ideal’.

“Our suburbs are aimed at what some of our politicians call “working Ostralian families” who now make up less than half the population. This has led to low density places with disbursed uses that are unhealthy to live in and unsustainable. Want a bottle of milk? Get in the car. The paper? Get in the car. Go to work? Park on a freeway. Go to school? Pile in a four-wheel drive. This form of development creates few opportunities for suburbanites to have incidental exercise. Research indicates that the suburban form is partly responsible for increases in weight related health problems. Never mind, drive to the gym … well I meant to!

“We live in a society which is changing dramatically due to a demographic shift, generational change and expectations, transport realities and costs, environmental concerns and a desire to live, work and play locally with a full range of natural, cultural and lifestyle facilities.

“These are not unreasonable ideals but will require sufficient density to create sustainable diversity. Within the existing suburban context, it will require intervention to create multi-centred cities, to provide overlapping activities that collectively make a place.

“All the components of cities need to support the creation of places, with land uses addressing the streets and public spaces, cognizant of the implications of broad concepts at the ground level.

“My dream is for vital cities. I long for attractive, healthy cities that enrich our lives in an equitable, humane and sustainable way.”

It’s often said that anything desired must first be imagined. The thoughts and ideas expressed here by some of Brisbane’s well known design, planning and development operatives could all be put into a great big melting pot to come out with an extraordinary place. But after the imagining comes the doing and to that end we may look again at what Guy Gibson had to say about the process.

A lot has been discussed casually and at industry forums lately about a culture change that leads to all disciplines working better together to overcome the problems in Queensland’s urban development structures. If achieving better, more vibrant cities means higher density to achieve better use of land, the community has to be on side. Maybe the first step is to better engage with the community?
Growth Management Queensland, in partnership with Council of Mayors (SEQ), has developed new guidelines for neighbourhood, street and housing design in South East Queensland, to encourage smart growth and affordable living. The Next Generation Planning handbook is intended to help councils plan for future growth, ‘making places great for people, and ensuring they can afford to live there’. The handbook is supported by a short online video to raise awareness about housing choice, good planning and affordable living.

Partnership

The origins of the handbook are two fold. The South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 calls for a ‘Model code for smart growth’ to provide detailed guidance on planning and design for greenfield developments, whilst the Council of Mayors (SEQ) were also developing an initiative to create consistent residential policies for SEQ councils. Council of Mayors (SEQ) is an advocacy organisation representing the region’s local governments. The partnership between state, Council of Mayors (SEQ) and local governments to prepare the handbook was a clear benefit throughout the research, consultation, drafting and communication stages. The project was further enhanced by funding, secured by Council of Mayors (SEQ), from the Australian Government’s Housing Affordability Fund, meaning that the handbook is a result of all three levels of government working together.

Evidence-based

Urban planning and design for greenfield developments is the subject of many Australian and international guidelines. The Next Generation Planning handbook is of special interest to SEQ planners because it uses empirical evidence to inform regionally relevant guidance. As the introduction explains, ‘The inspiration for this handbook came from the great places of SEQ, studied in detail in its preparation’. A total of 59 locations in Sunshine Coast, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Gold Coast and Brisbane were studied. Each location was nominated by council planners, as representative of the ‘best of the best’ in their patch.

A mixture of new and old urban places, suburban streets and housing, and rural townships were studied. Survey locations typically comprised a length of street about 200 metres long and the buildings and properties on each side. The team adopted a process called ‘synoptic surveys’, where data was systematically collected on everything from dwelling mix to proximity of parks and shops, street dimensions and building use, form, setbacks and landscape.

The handbook

The handbook is arranged in three parts. Part A contains guidance on planning and urban design issues. Each issue receives one page of guidance. Part B develops this guidance into provisions relevant to Queensland planning schemes, such as strategic frameworks, zones and codes. Part C of the handbook publishes the data collected and the methodology, enabling the study to be repeated in other regions should similar guidance be desired. The guidelines are also ordered by scale, with concepts relevant to local government scale planning presented before neighbourhood, street, then lot and building scale concepts.

The print version of the handbook is a colour A5 book, hopefully making it an easy to use reference as well as a pleasant read.

Affordable living

Affordable living is a term that infers a broader definition of housing affordability than is found in some debates on the issue. Affordable living strategies take in not only the purchase or rental cost of housing, but the ongoing costs of living too. This includes things like maintenance and energy costs, but also the expenses of daily life, such as the costs of transport to work, shops, community services, school or recreation. For affordable living, location, dwelling size and energy efficiency become important cost factors alongside upfront expenditure on land, construction and infrastructure charges.

Next Generation Planning discusses the broad framework of affordable living, and then provides detailed guidance on the aspects of affordable living most relevant to local government planning schemes in South East Queensland. Foremost amongst these is housing options, to ‘meet diverse community needs, and achieve housing choice and affordability’ (principle 8.5 of the SEQ Regional Plan).
The handbook advocates a wide range of housing options for SEQ neighbourhoods and centres. This reflects not only regional policy, but the findings of the study, where 75 per cent of suburban streets surveyed contained more than one type of dwelling. Overall a greater than expected diversity of dwelling types was evident in the study. Housing diversity is not a foreign concept to SEQ suburbs, but is in fact associated with some of the ‘best’ places in SEQ.

The housing options advanced in the handbook include large and small detached houses, terrace houses, the ‘plexes’ (duplex/triplex/quadplex/quinplex), as well as ‘fonzie flats’ and apartments. The handbook provides guidance on each housing type, referencing new and old examples from around the region. It also includes model provisions suitable for use in planning schemes, to promote and regulate these housing options.

The housing choices detailed in the handbook could be suitable for new or existing communities, subject to local planning and local decision making (the guideline is not mandatory). Importantly, Next Generation Planning does not suggest that every housing typology is appropriate to every street and every suburb. Instead, the handbook strongly suggests that housing typologies be used appropriate to place.

**SEQ Place Model**

The research underpinning this handbook suggests that settlements in SEQ can be understood as a series of place types, each with common characteristics, similar land use mixes and intensities of development.

The SEQ Place Model identifies eight place types in SEQ from the study of well known locations around the region. Each place type is recognisable by its function, special qualities, intensity, character and housing forms. These include natural areas, rural areas, rural towns, next generation suburban and urban neighbourhoods, mixed use activity centres and CBDs. While the SEQ Place Model is a useful framework, it is not suggested that all place types will be found in all local governments in SEQ. (Next Generation Planning handbook, p4)

The SEQ Place Model is an adaptation and evolution of the well known transect planning technique, promoted by North American new urbanists but also used in some Australian developments. What is of note here is the application of the transect to a specific Australian region. This has resulted in some variations from the ‘new urbanist transect’. A rural township place type (a common and meaningful typology in SEQ) has been added. Suburban and urban neighbourhood definitions are also aligned with SEQ Regional Plan policies concerning residential density (suburban neighbourhoods being 15-30 dwellings per hectare, and urban neighbourhoods 30+).

Development of the SEQ Place Model has not been an academic exercise. It is a tool for broad-scale strategic planning across a local government area, a town or a suburb. Strategic planning is to be expanded in new planning schemes prepared under the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, and the SEQ Place Model is one way that councils can articulate future settlement patterns in their strategic plans. The SEQ Place Model approach, where relatively simple place types are used to express planning intent for a suburb or town or local government area, is easy to communicate and is likely to be useful in community consultation.

A strategic planning tool like the SEQ Place Model complements but does not replace the ‘operational’ components of a planning scheme, such as zones, codes and overlays. It presents an opportunity to plan simply at an early stage in the planning process, and should be used in strategic parts of a planning scheme.

**Form-based codes**

Codes are important in planning schemes and in development assessment in Queensland. The handbook includes guidance for the drafting of codes and for zoning. This guidance focuses on neighbourhood design, streets, reconfiguring lots and planning aspects of dwelling design, based around the housing options discussed earlier.

The handbook advocates the use of form-based codes in SEQ planning. Form-based codes use graphics as well as words to articulate planning requirements. By using graphical content, form-based codes promote more predictable building designs. Successful form-based codes are short, easy to understand and could be used for simpler development assessment processes, such as self-assessable development.

Prescriptive, predictable codes might be said to be contrary to ‘performance-based planning’, but there is no reason why a planning scheme cannot allow a predictable building design shaped by a form-based code as one option, alongside a performance-based option. The difference is likely to be that the predictable option will often be self-assessable (as council and neighbours already have a good idea of what the building will look like and how it will function) while the performance-based option will often require code assessment (the design is tested against performance criteria and therefore needs a more involved assessment process). There is plenty of space for bespoke designs as well as well-considered standard options.

Again, the Next Generation Planning handbook does not suggest that form-based codes and simple development assessment is appropriate in every case. Where form-based codes are to be useful, they should be part of a planning framework, like the one described in the following example:
A clear strategic intent is first established (with a local community) for a particular place (e.g. an urban neighbourhood). Second, the strategic framework sets out which housing options are appropriate for this place (e.g. small detached houses, terrace housing and low-rise apartments) and under what criteria these housing options are acceptable (e.g. on street corners, or near bus stops). If these criteria are met then it can be argued that a form-based code could facilitate development of a predictable form (e.g. height), and do so without lengthy development assessment. But achieving the latter depends on achieving the former.

Conclusions

This project was a rare opportunity to undertake research and development on planning and urban design for (predominantly) residential development. It was an opportunity to produce a useful, quality guideline that it is hoped will be recognised as a benchmark for the next generation of SEQ planning schemes, and be relevant to the next generation of home buyers; hence the online video to communicate planning to non-planners.

Like all plans, the Next Generation Planning handbook is only a means to an end. The end in mind for this work is more communities that enjoy the benefits of affordable living; and well-designed towns, neighbourhoods and streets, all with a South East Queensland flavour. It is timely that the handbook has been prepared when new planning schemes are being written or contemplated by many SEQ councils. It is anticipated that the guidance in Next Generation Planning will inform, be adapted and be used in these new planning schemes.

The Next Generation Planning handbook can be downloaded at www.dlgp.qld.gov.au/growth/ngp where the video Affordable living…what does it mean to you? can also be viewed. For further information please contact Mr Mike McKeown on 3405 8551 or mike.mckeown@dlgp.qld.gov.au

Troll habitat

Brisbane’s most rapidly growing urban condition

Peter Edwards

We all know a version of the Norwegian folk tale of the three billy goats gruff and their encounter with a terrible, goat gobbling troll who, quite naturally, lived under a bridge. When first heard as children this tale served well to instil a fear in us of the kinds of spaces where trolls live. A side effect for me, as I suspect for many, was to catalyse an irrational paranoia of the dark space under my bed for I had learnt well from this story and others that this was certainly the place where monsters lived.

Perhaps this early childhood education is designed to protect us, to program us to be afraid of the underneath, the in-between, the dark. Not a bad idea really having children avoid these places, you know, to keep them safe. Except that when we grow up and begin to tell the stories our parents told us we have become, by then, completely conditioned to believe that these places are in fact non-places, places that belong to danger, discomfort, displacement, the home of all our modern monsters of drug addicts, muggers, rapists, murderous villains. It makes it easier to ignore these places, to avoid these places, to neglect and ultimately forget this part of our city – all to the quiet delight of the trolls.

In the urban realm when we make an “over the top” we make an “underneath” and this is where trolls live.

I have restated this simple maxim many times, to punctuate the bureaucrat’s big handed monologues on the virtues of bridges and overpasses, to rooms full of big brained engineers whose chorus of stunned silence makes pregnant the inevitable pause that follows. “Did he just say trolls?”

It goes without saying, one would expect, that trolls are a bad thing. But I have sat in the rooms and witnessed the decisions that have made acres of habitat for them; a bunch of problems our children are doomed to solve in the future. I can almost hear them exasperating over our ignorance and stupidity – “what were they thinking!”

In Brisbane especially in recent years we have had an explosion of troll habitat. It has mainly come from road infrastructure. In a vain effort to reduce a lost productivity identified by some perverted human abacus as the real dollar cost of congestion we have set out to build more roads to reduce traffic. An idea that John Byrne once reminded me is like trying to cure obesity by loosening the belt.

Our thinking really hasn’t changed since the 70s when British architect Peter Cook in a visit to Brisbane was
being shown, by the Premier of the day, the vista of cranes working to build stage one of the Wilbur Smith Plan - the South East Freeway. As he looked out over all that activity from the elevated position of the parliamentary buildings he was reported to have commented, “Ah yes, we are tearing down our freeways as well”.

One result of this era was perhaps Brisbane’s most famous piece of troll habitat - the realm underneath the South-East freeway. It is an area of the city that sits, in everyday, opposite the sprawling cultural precincts of South Bank. An area notorious for its trolls and their ugly, dangerous practice of coat-hangering cyclists off their bikes and beating them up. It was one such attack that led to a death of a young man in 1999 that motivated some to do something about it. The idea of the “Northbank workshop” was first mooted by UDAL in 2000 and held in collaboration with the BDA in February, 2002 as a precursor and agent provocateur to a government commissioned masterplan.

For two days, over 30 urban design professionals worked on propositions to inhabit what was one of Brisbane’s largest brownfield sites. The schemes were public realm focussed, sensitive, and careful when compared to the bullish designs that resulted from the “at no cost to government”, development led process that followed. Whilst I, like others, breathed a sigh of relief as Northbank was eventually shelved, it astonishes me that the institution responsible for creating the problem the winning scheme so ham fistedly attempted to solve seems to have released themselves of any obligation at all. To this day no real investment has been made in this area of the city. To this day nothing has really changed in a place that remains unsafe, un-activated, and unloved.

It should be a great concern for us all – that in 40 years we have not come up with a reasonable use for the territory created under the South East Freeway. It should be a great concern because we are building so much more of it right now without a plan at all of what to do with it.

There are many areas in the city where troll habitat is expanding but nowhere quite as spectacularly as at Bowen Hills. In this place is the coming together of the Inner City Bypass, the Clem 7 tunnel, Airport Link and various interfaces with the Inner Northern Busway. Each transport agenda needing to interface with the agenda of the others creates a convoluted and bewildering complexity - a ghastly ballet of roadways, slipways, flyovers, and mini freeways.

This "thing" is part of TransApex, a triangulation of cross city links aimed at reducing congestion in the city centre. Not the simple ring road that makes moving around European cities so legible (Paris springs to mind), TransApex is more a series of coinciding bypasses, which makes the decisions at its junctions so determinant. Here at the northern apex of TransApex the early designs quickly demonstrated a liability of this lack of redundancy; that within this jumble of roads and signs, if a decision in incorrectly made, one could end up on the other side of the city – and having to pay for the privilege. But not to fear, for this is exactly the kind of problem engineers like to solve. The solution was to make all the distances involved bigger so that drivers would have more time to make the correct decision and safely install themselves in the appropriate slot. The jumble of roads exploded in size and the “Vomitron” was born.

The Vomitron was the nickname coined by the very engineers working on its inception and it is easy to understand why. Looking down on the site from the air (as one is able to do these days from one’s phone in the comfort of a coffee shop) we can see the sinuous roadways vomiting out from the Clem 7 tunnel curling and writhing to meet their invisible transport imperatives; but it’s the expanse of this stuff that is hardest to fathom. Some 20ha of land has been used, certainly a troll’s share, and gobbled up as surely as any goat. Leaving aside for a moment the enormous cost, not thinking of the city making alternatives set aside for this project (we would have right now, today, an at grade people mover connecting Bulimba to the University of Queensland for similar expenditure) there is the irresponsibility of ignorance towards the urban realm that goes with the delivery of this stuff.

In terms of an urban land parcel the 20ha used here compares with other areas within 5km of the city that we know – Kelvin Grove Urban Village, South Bank, Teneriffe, RNA Showgrounds. Of course these are very different urban conditions and it’s not useful to make direct comparisons but if we were to think of each of these instances as pedestrianised places we begin to get an understanding of the implications at Bowen Hills. Most of the infrastructure occurs in the air and there is a lot of underneath. But when we look at the at the urban design documentation for Airport Link www.airportlinkbris.com/OtherLinks/EIS/pdfs/ Vol3-TechPapers/12_Urban_Design.pdf, not much of the underneath is considered. I accept that much more detailed work has occurred by well qualified practitioners but the absence of a plan of the true ground plane with perhaps the infrastructure dotted over is evidence enough of the modest consideration given to the idea of occupying the ground.

One of the problems may be that we have no plan for the spaces we make in the underneath of our city. There is little precedent, no bylaws, codes, nor urban strategies aimed at dealing with what is an increasing urban condition for Brisbane. There is as well an iron curtain of sorts around some of the large state government departments where the air is thin for any conversation of the subtleties of creative occupation of this latent realm. What are our plans for these spaces that we have made for ourselves? Are we happy to leave them to the trolls? Do we accept the unnerving feeling in the backs of our minds knowing that these neglected places exist?

Around the world are interesting precedents to look at. Art, community uses, public realm, cycling
infrastructure, event spaces, active recreation, shops, schools, weird and wonderful things, things so commercially obtuse they fail to fit into any narrow holes in the normative world of commercial development – but nonetheless exist to the great delight of all.

The Westway in London is perhaps one of the more famous situations where this habitat has been wrestled back from the trolls. This area of North Kensington was bisected by an elevated concrete freeway over and in some instances through an established stock of 19th century housing in the late 1960s. The ensuing twenty years of community protests saw control go to local community groups with a community trust taking control of redevelopment of the problematic spaces made by the freeway. Sporting facilities, community uses, commercial development, the famous Portobello Road Markets feature in this vibrantly renewed part of London all managed by the self funding Westway Development Trust. This entrepreneurial “peoples trust” is an internationally recognised success story, cited as a pioneer, offering a system that can be replicated elsewhere to allow local interests to secure long term assets for those community most put at risk by troll habitat.

There are many other examples around the world and not all from the densely populated cities of South East Asia for whom the underneath of things in their cities are almost always vibrantly active. (I think they serve trolls legs in some stalls – waste not, want not). But even closer to home a simple trip to Darling Harbour is a lesson for our own Northbank in rehabilitating and reconnecting through and under the impenetrable freeways. We should take heart at the examples of success in all instances – the simple, the clever, the completed; it shows that it is possible and sustainable.

And whilst the circumstances everywhere are idiosyncratic we need to move towards valuing the possibilities of these places to enrich and enliven our city. We need to take back this realm from the trolls, get creative with every aspect of realising the quirky and unusual, the fantastically illogical, the lateral use of this expanding unreal estate. The alternative is the drab continuation of the bland that dooms us to board the aeroplanes and travel the great distances to visit those cities made famous for the very spaces we have forgotten to build for ourselves.

Peter Edwards is Director, Archipelago and vice-president of the Urban Design Alliance of Queensland.
Planning students put theory into practice
Using ‘photovoice’ for community consultation
Jessica Grant and Dr Claudia Baldwin

Third year Regional and Urban Planning students from the University of the Sunshine Coast used ‘photovoice’ as an engagement technique to interact with community groups in the Sunshine Coast region, Queensland. The projects were undertaken in the second half of 2010 as a requirement of the course, ‘Participation and Conflict Resolution’, to provide experience in applying theory through practice. 11 groups, each comprised of three or four students, engaged with 11 different community groups. The aim of the project was to gather views of the community groups about what they liked and disliked about the built environment, and what could be improved in the community in which they lived. The community groups were diverse, ranging from residents of local retirement villages, a land care group, a development watch group, a surf club, a permaculture village, a boardwalk committee, students in residential accommodation, and students on the university campus.

Challenges raised by a development watch group shows urban form that distorts the profile of the natural landscape

An increasing emphasis on community engagement (or consultation) about policy, plans, projects and services means that graduating planners need to be familiar with a range of techniques and develop skills in facilitation and group work. Community engagement is characterised by active participation in decision making (Queensland Government, 2005). Current drivers for participation include high individual expectations for appropriate planning outcomes and society’s willingness to contribute to resolve community concerns (Hopewell and Hopewell, 2006; Queensland Government, 2005). Tindana et al (2007, p 2) defines engagement stating that...

“...engagement goes beyond community participation; it is the process of working collaboratively with relevant partners who share common goals and interests. This involves building authentic partnerships, including mutual respect and active, inclusive participation; power sharing and equity; mutual benefit or finding the win-win possibility in the collaborative initiative.”

Community engagement can be represented by a continuum of levels of participation which have an increasing degree of impact, from provision of information, consultation, through to greater collaboration and empowerment (IAP2, 2004). The levels are achieved through a wide range of techniques and strategies at different stages of the process (Hopewell and Hopewell 2006). As a result, citizens can be involved in and influence decisions that affect them and take action on behalf of the public interest.

To seek interest groups’ views of the built environment, the planning students used the engaging and interactive photovoice technique. Photovoice is generally used in community development to give people with limited money, power and status, the opportunity to visually display their perspectives to decision-makers (Liampittong, 2010). Photovoice has the potential to assist in enhancing community needs and involvement in policy and decision-making for the future (Wang and Burris, 1994 cited in Magill, Strack and McDonagh, 2004; Liampittong, 2010). Photovoice allows community groups to collect new information in a visual form through photographs, to understand and illustrate different perspectives, attitudes and motivation. Through this process the group is able to develop a shared understanding to be able to communicate their views to the broader community, private firms and government (Jones and Wang, 2001).

For the purpose of this student project, participants individually took photographs over a couple of weeks and recorded their thoughts by writing captions for each photo. They then shared the photos in their community group with a student as facilitator, and chose those photos that best illustrated their values, challenges and suggested improvements to the built environment. Each student group was then responsible for preparing the group’s presentation in whatever manner the group wished: as a poster, a powerpoint slide show, a web site, or a report. This was a way of expressing appreciation for allowing the students to learn in a real world setting. Each student group also had to give a presentation in class, for course assessment. Many of the community group members viewed the process positively and reported that it made them think differently about the built environment. The combined outcomes of all groups illustrated a general perception of the importance of the relationship between the built and natural environment and the effect of the built environment on society.

The Landcare group looked at amenity through visuals of environmental, physical, and social aspects of the built environment. They also raised ‘place’ concerns and the loss of identity within the community. The permaculture community group believed the method assisted in ascertaining the attitudes of their community and the photos reflected the values and concerns of the group, which therefore proved to be an effective tool to provide a unified voice.

Members of the Development Watch group wanted urban design in their area to blend in with the natural environment.

‘Breakfast Bar’ provides easy going public space which is free to use.
They wanted development to achieve this through building design, orientation, building materials, colours and the use of vegetation. Following this they did not want profit-oriented, segregated monstrosities of structures that ruin the natural profile of the area and have an air of exclusivity.

Surf clubs are strongly linked to the natural coastal environment. As a result it was not surprising that participants from this group believed the built environment needs to incorporate a mix of natural and built aspects to maintain a balance along the coast line. Due to surf club location and presence in the region they believed that they provided a voice for the people who have no power within the community.

Photovoice allowed the university students to convey challenges in student accommodation and on campus. They suggested improvements on campus to stimulate learning behaviours, such as separating smoking and non-smoking students, enhancing bland learning environments with more colour, artwork, and plants, and increasing the balance between the built and natural environment. A major concern was for safety.

A student on work experience in the Northern Territory used photovoice to gather the perspectives of environmental health professionals about how the built environment affects public health issues. The group suggested that improvements to public health were affected by the remote location, staffing issues, security and government policies illustrating the institutional aspects and multi-dimensional nature of planning the built environment.

Photovoice promoted critical dialogue about issues of importance to the community in the Sunshine Coast region. It demonstrated a way to produce shared knowledge which a community group can use to express concerns for the future to policy makers. The collaboration between students and community groups resulted in a useful resource for each community group. From the students’ perspective it provided an insight into real world planning issues, it required them to be self-directed and responsible, and promoted active and reflective learning. Most importantly, as stated by a participant from a retirement village, ‘it is wonderful to see that students are being trained to listen to the community and take their views into account’.

Jessica Grant is a student and Dr Claudia Baldwin a senior lecturer in Regional and Urban Planning, University of the Sunshine Coast. The authors acknowledge all students in Participation and Conflict Resolution 2010: Jillian Ash, Tim Bowman, Rebecca Clark, Hannah Davis, Jon Day, Georgia Everett, James Fogarty, Josephine Garring, Khory Hancock, Christian Hearin, Alexandra Higgins, Emily Holmes, Joanne Jones, Liao Ying-Han, Michael Lyell, Zara McFadzean, Ryan McLean, Sam Mensah, Darren Murdoch, Emma Murphy, Jason Newell, Chris Page, Anthony Rea, Rebecca Reitano, Sarina Richardson, Monica Romanyk, Melisa Shing, Michelle Stevens, Chris Wilmes.

Professionals and the lobbying provisions of the Integrity Act 2009

David Solomon

One of the most controversial and difficult aspects of Queensland’s system of regulating lobbyists concerns professionals involved in seeking planning approvals – town planners, architects, engineers and others – and whether they are required to register as lobbyists before they try to influence local government decisions.

Failure to register might result in the relevant local government officer or councillor refusing to have any dealings with the professional, until they do so. The law puts the onus on the official to decide whether the person needs to be registered before they will have any contact with them.

But there is also an onus on the professional to avoid breaking the law. An entity (person or firm) that is not registered is prohibited from carrying out a lobbying activity for a third party client.

The law regulating lobbyists is relatively new. In early 2009 Queensland introduced an administrative scheme to require professional lobbyists to register if they wished to have any dealings with the state government. This was modelled on similar schemes that had been introduced at the Commonwealth level and in some other states.

Later, as part of the government’s accountability and integrity reforms, the government decided to give the scheme the force of law. It introduced the Integrity Act, which came into effect from 1 January 2010, which set out the rules governing the lobbyists’ registration system and made the Queensland Integrity Commissioner responsible for its oversight and administration.

The new law allowed the government to ban the payment of success fees to lobbyists.

It gave the Integrity Commissioner responsibility for developing a code of conduct for lobbyists, with which they must comply. It also banned certain “former government representatives” from lobbying in an area where they had had official dealings, for two years.

But most important, the law extended the reach of the regulatory system to include all local government in Queensland, and government owned corporations.

It must be stressed that the legislation is intended to regulate only the professional lobbying industry – that is, lobbyists who work for third party clients. This is the aim of all the regulatory effort in relation to lobbying in all Australian jurisdictions.

The Queensland law, like that elsewhere in this country, does not cover lobbyists in the employ of large companies. Nor does it cover small companies, whose lobbying
is also done in-house because they can't afford to hire outside expertise. Nor does it cover churches, charities and not for profit organisations, some of whom may do a great deal of lobbying to achieve political or social objectives. And some of the most active and effective lobbyists, organisations of employers or employees, and of professionals such as doctors, are excluded also.

The key to the registration system is the section in the law that prohibits lobbying by unregistered entities. It says unregistered lobbyists “must not carry out a lobbying activity for a third party client”. And it says government representatives – including people in local government – must not knowingly permit unregistered lobbyists to lobby them.

It is important to understand what the law regards as lobbying. According to the Act, lobbying activity is contact with a government representative in an effort to influence State or local government decision-making, including making a decision about planning or giving a development approval under the Sustainable Planning Act.

The word “influence” means having an effect on the thought processes of the relevant decision-maker. “Contact” is anything from a face-to-face meeting to telephone or email contact.

However it is not lobbying to make contact with local government only for the purpose of making a formal application for an approval or to make an application for any other matter that has to be considered and decided by a government representative in accordance with legislation.

And it is not lobbying to answer requests by local government officers for further information about an application.

Two other concepts need to be explained – who is a lobbyist, and what is an “incidental lobbying activity” that does not require an entity to register as a lobbyist.

Both are defined in the Integrity Act 2009, but the definitions in some instances leave room for doubt about their application. Changes to the law that came into effect in November 2010 have helped clarify some of the issues, but there are still some grey areas.

Relatively few people who conduct lobbying activities are required to register as lobbyists.

Registration is only required of entities that carry out a lobbying activity for a third-party client, or whose employees or contractors do the lobbying.

But people or businesses who make applications on their own behalf, including developers, are not required to register.

Entities such as SIBA that represent the interests of their own members are also exempt from registration.

The most contentious exemption, however, is for an entity carrying out what the law refers to as “incidental lobbying activities”.

This concept is defined in the Act. It says, “an entity carries out incidental lobbying activities if the entity undertakes, or carries on a business primarily intended to allow individuals to undertake, a technical or professional occupation in which lobbying activities are occasional only and incidental to the provision of professional or technical services.”

The Act also includes four examples, and these were changed last year to clarify the intention of the provisions. The second example is “an entity carrying on the business of providing professional engineering services as, or by using, a registered professional engineer under the Professional Engineers Act 2002.”

The government’s intention in making the changes was to make it clear that the exclusion only applies when, for example, an engineering firm is primarily engaged by a client to deliver professional services that would be regulated by the Professional Engineers Act, and any lobbying was incidental to the main services the firm was providing.

However a person with a professional or technical business who was engaged mainly to secure a development approval would have to register as a lobbyist if they were going to make contact with local government councillors or officers to try to influence their decision-making.

It is important to note that the exemption applies only where there is only “incidental” lobbying contact between a professional and a government representative.

Where lobbying activities are more than “occasional only” the activity by the professional is lobbying and the professional has to register as a lobbyist.

Another change to the legislation emphasises to government representatives their duty not to have contact with people who they consider need to be registered if they are to make contact and lobby them.

If a government representative is aware that an entity seeking to carry out a lobbying activity for a third party client with the government representative is not a registered lobbyist, they must give the entity’s details to the Integrity Commissioner, as well as refusing to have any contact with the potential lobbyist.

The Commissioner may take this information into account if the entity later seeks to register as a lobbyist.

For entities providing professional or technical services who may also be involved in lobbying, the simplest way to avoid difficulties in dealing with State or local governments is to apply to be placed on the register.

Registration is free, relatively simple, and is usually completed within one or two days.

Details are on the Integrity Commissioner’s website, www.integrity.qld.gov.au. This also provides contact details.

David Solomon is the Queensland Integrity Commissioner
Excellence and innovation in urban design

Recycling a coal mine into a new traditional Australian town and jobs

Vaughn Bowden

Whether a new city or a small urban space, the common driver of good urban design is innovative and creative thought processes. By looking for new and previously unconsidered approaches to solving problems, urban design seeks to capitalise on emerging technological opportunities to respond to social, economic, environmental and resource challenges.

Each year the Planning Institute of Australia Awards Program recognises an urban design project that demonstrates this type of innovation. This article profiles a project undertaken by New Hope Corporation (NHC) and Tract Consultants. The project received the Urban Design Award for Excellence at the Queensland (2009) and National (2010) Awards.

New Hope Corporation - Recycling coal mines

What is the best way to reuse the degraded landscape that remains after coal mining is finished in an area? Traditionally, most mine sites are rehabilitated to restore environmental stability and then used for grazing purposes.

With the nearing finalisation of their coal mines near Ipswich, west of Brisbane, NHC turned their thoughts to site rehabilitation. Given the location of the 900 hectare New Oakleigh site next to the town of Rosewood and their 1,700 hectare Jeebropilly site within the Ebenezer Industry Area, NHC commenced exploring alternative ways of using the sites post mining. As a result, they have created a new paradigm within the mining industry. Rather than simply rehabilitating land to grazing standards, they have identified how to recycle a coal mine into:

- a new community of up to 75,000 people
- land to accommodate tens of thousands of jobs as a part of South East Queensland’s most significant future industry area.

New Oakleigh - Recycling a coal mine into a new traditional Australian country town

NHC has established a vision to create a traditional Australian country town on the New Oakleigh coal mine site and the neighbouring Lanefield Investigation Area totalling more than 3,300 hectares.

The master plan for the Rosewood / Greater Lanefield area achieves the following:

- room for more than 28,000 dwelling units
- accommodating approximately 75,000 residents
- providing for up to 23,500 local jobs.

The planned staging for the area focuses initial development around the present Rosewood township, radiating outwards over a 20-30 year timeframe. The master plan intends to create a self-contained community. Features of the master plan include:

- two town centres – the main centre is an expansion of the existing Rosewood Town Centre (adjacent to the Rosewood metropolitan rail station), and a new centre in Lanefield. Neighbourhood centres are also provided
- medium density housing surrounding the town centres, located in areas without significant mining constraints
- standard density residential housing (15 du/ha) in areas without significant mining constraints
- lower density residential housing (1-15 du/ha) in areas with moderate mining constraints
- final decisions about density depend on further geotechnical analysis and the severity of underlying mining constraints
- hilltop housing (1 du/ha) in constrained areas
- active and passive recreational open space
- 100 hectares of land allocated for commercial uses to provide for local servicing and employment
- health precinct
- education facilities
- two rail stations
- public transport network throughout
- comprehensive dedicated pedestrian and cycle network.

Recycling challenges

Faced with complex physical challenges, NHC moved beyond broad scale planning and delved into robust urban design strategies. A selection of these innovative design responses includes:

**Organic expansion of an Australian town into a TOD**

Although development of NHC’s holdings around Rosewood provides an opportunity for growth, it is accompanied by the following challenges:

- integrating appropriately with the local character of Rosewood
- delivering urban housing densities and a mix of commercial and community uses
- optimising the use of the Rosewood railway station.

Master planning was undertaken to develop a vision of how this could occur. A range of broad scale initiatives and detailed urban design measures were developed.

**Void treatment**

After mining is complete, an open pit void is likely to remain. Work was carried out to investigate how to transform past mining voids into a community asset.

**Landform and benching**

NHC have a unique opportunity to carry out bulk earthworks as a part of their ongoing mining and site rehabilitation. Investigations were carried out to identify a strategy and program for creating a landform that met the EPA mine site rehabilitation requirements as well as providing large benched “neighbourhood” sized pads suitable for urban development.

**Comparative town analysis and design analysis tool**

A comparative town analysis and assessment was carried out using Tract’s Design Analysis Tool. The town analysis reviews “healthy” towns of a similar size to determine the components required, and the demographic profile for a given population. This information provides insights into whether the master plan achieves key performance measures such as population capacity, employment, adequate open space ratios, retail floor space, etc.

**Geotechnical analysis as a driver for design**

Geotechnical analysis was undertaken to identify the constraints of past mining on future development. The findings drive the distribution of urban development. Two potential approaches to development of the site were identified:

- a responsive development pattern: Create development that responds to geotechnical constraints. This translates into varied development densities which are defined by underlying constraints. Open spaces are located in areas that are heavily constrained.
Building design and servicing should be flexible and capable of adjusting to minor subsidence.

- filling of underground workings: Using a special filling technique, underground workings can be filled to achieve stability, thereby decreasing the likelihood of subsidence.

### Recycling a mine into regionally significant industry

NHC also identified an opportunity to facilitate job creation through the development of their Jeekropilly holdings. The 1,700 hectare Jeekropilly site is located within the Ebenezer Regionally Significant Business and Industry Area. As the largest landowner in the Ebenezer area, NHC is in a position to deliver coordinated outcomes.

The strength of Ebenezer, as a regionally significant enterprise area, is bolstered by its proximity to the following major land uses and infrastructure initiatives:

- future workforce located within the following urban growth areas – Rosewood, Walloon, Thagoona, and Ripley Valley
- Ipswich CBD
- Amberley Airbase and Amberley Aerospace Precinct
- Swanbank and Purga Enterprise Areas
- Western Ipswich Bypass – connecting the Warrego and Cunningham Highways
- Southern Freight Rail corridor – connecting to the interstate standard-gauge rail line at Bromelton
- upgrades to water supply and wastewater treatment.

### The Draft Greater Ebenezer Concept Plan

NHC engaged Tract to prepare a master plan for the greater Ebenezer area. This plan extended beyond the Jeekropilly site and Ebenezer Enterprise Area to consider the important relationship between Ebenezer, Purga and the Amberley Air Base and Amberley Aerospace Business Precinct. The plan provides an integrated strategy for business, industry and enterprise within this part of the Western Corridor. Key elements of the Greater Ebenezer Plan include:

- Ebenezer Regionally Significant Business and Industry Area – 6,000ha
- rail dependant industry – 1,900ha
- non-rail dependant industry – 4,490ha
- Purga – 840ha
- Amberley Aerospace Business Precinct – 150ha
- industrial service centre – 10ha
- recreation open space – 580ha
- defence facilities – 1,940ha
- motor racing – 690ha
- existing residential uses – 220ha
- balance area (rural and other uses) – 13,050ha.

The following uses and outcomes are achieved within the Jeekropilly portion of the Greater Ebenezer Area:

- rail dependant industry – this includes uses that are freight and logistics based with opportunities for intermodal transfer. This area has the benefit of an existing rail spur, which provides a link into the Western Rail Line – linking to the Port of Brisbane and west to Toowoomba. This area also presents opportunities for large footprint and heavy industry. Because of existing mining buffers, there is little trouble in providing necessary amenity and safety buffers for sensitive adjoining uses.
- non-rail dependant industry – future uses in this area may include a wide range of large footprint, heavy and difficult to locate industries.
- service centre – an industrial service centre is provided at the eastern edge of the site adjacent to the future interchange of the Ipswich-Rosewood Road with the Western Ipswich Bypass. This centre will provide for the needs of employees within the Ebenezer area. Uses may include retail, commercial uses and hotel accommodation. Local industrial centres will be provided elsewhere on the site.
- recreation - 580ha of land has been provided for recreational uses. A recreation study has been completed to identify the likely demand for recreational uses in the area. The recreational areas may incorporate large water bodies that may be formed in the remaining mine voids. These water bodies could accommodate a wide variety of recreational activities including sailing, wakeboarding / water skiing, etc. Due to the neighbouring Amberley Airbase, the design of the landscape would minimise bird habitat areas. Given the site’s disturbed landform, there are significant opportunities to provide for active and off-road recreation pursuits. Activities may include skirmish, dirt biking, four wheel driving, mountain biking, etc.
- conservation – due to the site’s disturbed nature there are few conservation values present. A small number of moderate sized areas are identified, and other areas that are unsuitable for industrial development can be rehabilitated.

### Recycling challenges

Faced with complex challenges for the planning of the Jeekropilly mine site, NHC once again moved beyond broad scale strategic planning and provided robust urban design solutions. A selection of these innovative design responses includes:

#### Geotechnical analysis as a driver for design

Geotechnical analysis was undertaken to identify the constraint posed by past open cut mining. The key design measures which were identified include:

- no construction across the interface of undisturbed and backfilled areas (to avoid cracking resulting from differential settling patterns)
- allowing a sufficient timeframe for settling to achieve maximum stability.

The pattern of underlying geotechnical constraints largely drove the precinct planning.

#### Designing For bird strike

The Amberley Defence Airbase is located adjacent to the Jeekropilly mine site. Consequently investigation and careful design was required to minimise the likelihood of bird strike.

#### Void treatment – creating lakes out of mines

A large remaining water-filled void would remain after the completion of mining. This is likely to be more than one kilometre in length and up to 80 metres deep. Design was carried out to identify strategies to turn this lake into a landscape and recreational feature.

#### Jeekropilly recreation precinct

Faced with the challenge of how to plan for future uses along the Bremer River floodplain, NHC also commissioned preparation of a recreation master plan. The master plan utilises land along the Bremer river corridor which is not suited to industrial development. Remaining mine voids are converted into water bodies / landscape features. Areas will be constructed through ongoing mine works and rehabilitation, and will accommodate passive leisure, formal sports, water sports, off-road motorsports, action outdoor pursuits, etc. Some of these have a public focus while others provide an opportunity for commercial operations. The draft plan highlights the relationships and spatial requirements of a range of activities that meet the needs of the local area and the broader region and that can be accommodated on the site.
Moreton Bay Regional Council is leading South-East Queensland local governments on developing a plan that will manage the region’s waterways and water use.

The Total Water Cycle Management Plan, which covers waterways, water supply, stormwater networks and wastewater networks, will aim to ensure they are managed sustainably into the future.

By identifying the relationships between water catchment areas and our networks, the plan will provide a framework for balancing development with the water and waste needs of residents and maintaining the health of the local environment.

To manage water in a sustainable manner, factors such as climate, geography, population growth, urban development, agricultural and industrial activities are being considered as well as what can be done to cost-effectively increase the region’s water use efficiency.

Council is the first local government authority in South East Queensland to begin work on its plan, which is a requirement of the state government’s Environmental Protection (Water) Policy, 2009.

By working closely with regional water utility Unitywater, council has already identified issues for water catchment areas and is now working on detailed planning which will address managing our future water needs over the next 20 years.

The plan, to be completed by June 2012, will be used to provide information for future planning schemes. It will also be a reference point for development assessment decisions and future council works programs.

For more information contact Lavanya Susarla, Principal Strategic Planner, Waterways and Coastal, Moreton Bay Regional Council on 5433 2291.
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Queensland Planner is published quarterly. It is supplied free to members of the Planning Institute of Australia (Queensland Division).

Contributions and letters should be sent to the editor, Mike McKeown qldplanner@qldplanning.org.au

0415 766814

The theme for the Spring 2011 edition is 'Resources and regions'.

Contributions to be received by 31 July 2011.

• Other contributions that relate to current planning issues are also welcomed.
• Contributions should be between 1000 and 2000 words.
• Student contributions are to be sponsored by either a University Lecturer or a senior member of the profession.
• Illustrations, graphs and photographs are encouraged.
• Language should be direct, concise and targeted at a wide audience.

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Just who the bloody hell is this people’s planner? Some say he can lead a large community group to consensus on the most contentious of planning issues using just a full aerosol can of fly spray and a lighted match, others that by using his cognitive powers he momentarily stopped the raising of the Olympic Flame caldron in the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

What we do know for sure is that there is more and more clamouring for the “breath of fresh air” that he brings to planning. We also hope that he does not offend the republicans or urban designers amongst you with his following message. He writes it, we just print it. You are on your own here People’s Planner.

A right royal message from the people’s planner

Yes dear readers it is I, the People’s Planner, once more returned to grace the pages of Queensland Planner, and not a moment too soon.

As I write this missive I sit on the eve of one of the most important events of this century, perhaps the millennia. Yes dear readers the Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. I for one am a Royalist and will be sitting at home with my “Will’s and Kate” Middleton. I’m with John Winston Howard on my love for the Royal Family and it’s time the PIA went backward to go forward. There is a hole in our PIA acronym, where an “R” should be. That’s right fellow PIA members let once again seek Royal Charter and become the RPIA.

.............But methinks I digress too much. Our dear editor tells me that this edition of the Royal Queensland Planner is based around the topic of urban design.

Now I am somewhat of an aficionado when it comes to design and no doubt the following words will bring on cries that the People’s Planner is somewhat of a design snob, perhaps even a zealot, when it comes to the good taste that surrounds good urban design. Bring on the slings and arrows, the People’s Planner has always been a tall poppy.

So where shall we begin? Firstly one must say that good design is timeless. There are so many examples, new and old. For example, the mullet haircut, shoes with velcro or zips instead of shoelaces, the Telstra tower near the Gabba, the Ford Edsel, L Block at QUT, the whole of downtown Flint Michigan, the Leyland P76, Donald Trump’s hair, the Safari Suit (bought to the masses by HRH Prince Charles) or any of the tourist attractions dotted around the colony with the prefix “Big” in front of the name – Big Sheep, Big Pineapple, Big Prawn, Big Banana and my favourite the Big Oyster (perhaps Green Shoe Travel could organise a planning study tour to visit all of the “BIG” things around the countryside). There are great examples of good design all around so take a tip and just copy them.

What do you need to do to raise your skills in the urban design area? I for one have found that firstly one must increase one’s vocabulary. Mentioning that a building “has a strong rubric” is bound to bring knowing head nodding amongst a coterie of urban designers. Surrupetitiously slipping in the phrase “an interesting pastiche” will also place you well amongst the ranks of urban designers.

“Reemisent of Venice” is also bound to get a few agreeing “mmmms”. Just make sure you are not in a display yard for garden sheds or they will work out you are taking the piss.

I have also found that as in many other fields, clothes maketh the man (or woman). Amongst urban designers, if you want to be accepted, all you need do is pull on a black skivvy or shirt, a beret, a pair of checked trousers that look like they should worn by an American golfer, a pair of avant-garde spectacles or a bow-tie and you will be in like Flynn.

So how do we encourage more good design? Perhaps we should have a standard code with a few acceptable solutions so that we can promulgate good design easily across the State. It can’t be that hard to distill the elements of good design into a simple code so that urban design can be easily dealt with. And perhaps while we are at it we can require that everything is designed in increments of 300mm so that it matches standard building materials sizes.

Clearly I have summed up all you need to now go forth and promote and create outstanding urban design. ...............so what are you waiting for get out there and design?

Very well dear readers, even as I write I can hear the urban designers sharpening up their knives to seek some form of retribution. Once more the People’s Planner must blend back into the crowd and seek anonymity.........and next time you hear someone utter “strong rubric” or “interesting pastiche”, ask yourself “Is that the People’s Planner?” or just some guy who does not know what he is talking about.

PP

A PS from PP - since my last article on spicing up our profession there have been numerous requests for the “Exclusive sealed section - SIZZLING model conditions for brothels and pole dancing clubs” as shown on the cover of “State Planner” magazine. I am tussing up whether to provide this intellectual property (free of charge of course – I will not let my art be sullied by a monetary transaction) exclusively to go into the Queensland Planning Provisions or to share these with a wider audience via PIA policy statement. Given that it will be difficult to reach consensus on a standard definition of “pole” it may have to be the latter.

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