then, now, next

SELECTED FORUM SUMMARIES
FROM THE PLANNING INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA (WA)
URBAN DESIGN CHAPTER 2012-2014
Some ten years ago, the Planning Institute of Australia established a special interest group; the “Urban Design Chapter”. Over this time, it has seen progressive growth, and amongst other things, has fostering discussion around the physical planning and design of space.

In 2012, the Western Australian PIA Urban Design Chapter consciously instigated a series of regular conversationally-styled forums to open up Urban Design discussions across the Planning and affiliated professions. In particular, the Chapter sought to engage mid-level practitioners in conversations about Place, particularly at a time when Planners have been otherwise turning attention to matters of process.

The resulting Fora not only proved popular but they also engaged Planners and Urban Designers in debates of considerable breadth and depth. Many of these presentations and conversations have been compressed into ‘snapshots’ for this book to provide a series of vignettes and notes encapsulating some of the contemporary urban issues of the time.

However, the success of both the Fora and the Book has been entirely reliant on the tireless and enthusiastic work of the Chapter’s Committee, and the Editorial/Production team, and it is appropriate that they be acknowledged:

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# Table of Contents

- **PRESIDENTS MESSAGE** // 4
- **CONVENORS MESSAGE** // 4
- **URBAN DESIGN FORUM**
  - **THE START** // 5
- **BEAUTY: IS SHE DEAD OR JUST SLEEPING?**
  - Malcolm Mackay // 6
- **PERRY LAKES – EARLY DESIGN HISTORY IN WA**
  - Don Newman // 8
- **ELLENBROOK NEW TOWN – TIMELESS URBANISM**
  - Mike Day // 10
- **THE MAKING OF W.A.'S “LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS”**
  - Evan Jones // 14
- **DESIGN IN THE ERA OF LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS**
  - Bill Burrell // 16
- **PERRY LAKES – REVISITING HISTORY**
  - Erwin Roberts // 20
- **LEN VER 2.0 - ‘THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UNCONSIDERED’**
  - Greg Grabasch // 22
- **LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS AND SCHOOLS**
  - David Cutland // 24
- **STREETS AS OPEN SPACE**
  - Tony Blackwell // 26
- **THE MEANING OF PLACE**
  - Dr May Carter // 28
- **WHEN PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IS NOT ENOUGH...**
  - Kylie Legge // 30
- **MOVING FROM PLACE-TELLING TO PLACE-DOING**
  - Andrew Hammonds // 32
- **PLACEMAKING IN THE CBD**
  - Tom Griffiths // 34
- **A NEW PHASE IN COASTAL PLANNING - CREATIVE RESPONSES TO COASTAL HAZARDS**
  - Helen Brookes // 36
- **COASTAL DESIGN – WHAT IF?**
  - Chris Carman // 38
- **KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE**
  - Julian Bolster // 40
- **NEXT GENERATION CITIES**
  - Chris Melsom // 44
The turfed expanse of a typical Perth park is poorly adapted to a changing climate and recreational demands.

Urban correlated with upgraded parks near to public transport hubs

IMAGES BY: Julian Boltejer
killing two birds with one stone

- JULIAN BOLTEER - AUSTRALIAN URBAN DESIGN RESEARCH CENTRE -

Presented at the “Green Urbanism” Forum, 13 May 2013

To our estimation two of the biggest challenges facing Australian cities are:

- Kerbing unsustainable urban sprawl, and
- Improving the public domain of our cities

Firstly, while our sprawling suburban fabric has served us well to date, in the context of diminishing resources and climate change it is highly vulnerable. In response to this situation state governments are attempting to achieve infill development in Activity Centres adjacent to public transport nodes and along public transport routes. While the correlation of densification and public transport connectivity is a credible strategy, we believe for Australian cities to be truly resilient a greater diversity of infill strategies is required, not least of all because Australian cities are currently not achieving their infill targets.

Secondly, a society can be judged by the quality with which it furnishes its public domain, and by this measure we could be argued to be doing quite badly. Take for instance the parks in Perth’s middle ring (greyfield) suburbs, the study area for this research. While Perth’s greyfields suburbs contain a reasonable amount of parkland, much of this is generic, offers minimal amenity or ecological function and is typically underutilised (fig 1). Data from the Centre of Built Environment and Health (CEBH) suggests that of greyfields parks larger than 1 Ha, only 32% have a ‘diversity of planted species,’ only 20% have wildlife, and only 4% have wetlands (despite the fact that Perth was historically a city of wetlands). Furthermore, 85% of those greyfield parks have a ubiquitous underlay of reticulated turf, 35% have no walking paths, 76% have poorly shaded or completely exposed paths, and in general there are more parks with ovals (152 in total) than those with either BBQ or picnic facilities.

It is in response to these two pressing issues that the Australian Urban Design Research Centre (AUDRC) and CEBH, both from the University of Western Australia, are exploring the potential of infill development adjacent to upgraded greyfield parks within a 5 minute cycle (1400m) of significant public transport nodes (fig 2,3). It is our belief that these upgraded parks could function as high quality, communal ‘backyards’ for adjacent residents living at higher densities (R40-R80).
whom do not have access to sizeable areas of private open space. By upgrades we mean greater tree and shrub planting (research shows naturalistic parks are more sought after in dense urban areas), a greater diversity of recreational infrastructure such as walking trails, skate parks, and fitness equipment, community gardens (the specifics of which would be established through a needs based assessment) and greater provision of ecosystem services (fig 4).

The Australian suburban dream of the 20th century was synonymous with the stand-alone house on a quarter acre block; a dream which is now rapidly becoming unaffordable, both economically and ecologically. We believe higher density living around a well-connected, well designed and well maintained park which grows food, provides numerous recreational opportunities and performs important ecological roles is a dream worth considering for the 21st century (fig 5).

In short, two birds, one stone!

This diagram shows the process by which densification could occur around upgraded parks

42 then, now, next - Selected Forum Summaries from the Planning Institute of Australia (WA) Urban Design Chapter 2012-2014
BUILDINGS
- CLUB BUILDING PROPOSING OVAL (1)
- PREVIOUSLY MINI-GOLF (NOW PUBLIC KITCHEN) TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL REVENUE FOR PARK MAINTENANCE (2)

LOOSE FIT SPACE AND OVAL
- FLEXIBLE LOOSE FIT SPACE CONTAINING POSSIBLE SKATE-ABLE SPACES, INFORMAL BIKES AREAS, BASKETBALL AND VOLLEYBALL RIMS, SOCCER GOALS AND SPACES, BBQ AREAS, COMMUNITY MARKETS, ENCLOSED-DOCK EXERCISE AREAS, PICNIC AREAS, INFORMAL PLAY AREAS, FITNESS EQUIPMENT AND COMMUNITY GARDENS AS DETERMINED BY NEEDS BASED-APPROACH (1)
- THREE EXISTING GOALS CONVOLUTED INTO ONE NEW MULTI SPORTS OVAL. NEW OVAL TO DISTRIBUTE ARTIFICIAL TURF OR TURF HINTION TO ALLOW FOR MORE FREQUENT USAGE (2)
- PARK ENTRANCES LOCATED AT TERMINATION OF DEEPER RAIN TO AVOID CONFLICTS WITH NEIGHBOURING RESIDENTS (3)
- CIRCUMSPECT PATH TO ALLOW FOR PEDESTRIANS (4)
- DRAINAGE HOLED TO INTEGRATE AND CLEANSE STORM WATERS FLOWING OFF THE ADJACENT RAIN (5)
- CLEARINGS FOR PICNIC AND BBQ AREAS AND NATURE BASED PLAY AREAS (6)

PLANTING ARMATURE
- TREE AND LAWN BARRIER PLANTING TO PROVIDE SHREED OF EXCLUSIVE TO CENTRAL SPACE AND BUFFER BETWEEN RESIDENCES LOOSE FIT SPACE AND OVAL

UPGRADED PARK IN DENSIFIED RESIDENTIAL CATCHMENT

The correlation of density and the amenity of upgraded parks could be a new Australian Dream for the 21st century...

IMAGES BY: Julian Bolster