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Symposium:
Design Excellence,
Competitiveness and
Global Sydney

Overview

Few people would dispute the benefits of high-quality architecture and urban design for a city, nor the importance of the design process in their achievement. There is much less agreement, however, about how high-quality architectural and urban design outcomes are best pursued through the statutory planning process.

Are there particular frameworks or procedures that increase the likelihood of good design outcomes?

What is the right balance between prescription and flexibility? How can design processes meaningfully incorporate public participation?

To what extent can we regulate “excellence” in design?

Prepared by the Designing Global Sydney research team, this primer offers an overview of four distinct approaches to “design-led” planning: design competitions; design review panels; design charrettes; and design coding. Following is

a description about how each of the four approaches works, its advantages and disadvantages, and examples of existing practice in Sydney and beyond. All four approaches are design-led and can be readily incorporated into statutory planning processes. Where they differ is in their procedures, range of participants, duration, levels of professional direction and prescription, relationship to the planning process, and expected outcomes.

To what extent should these four approaches, individually or collectively, form part of a design-led NSW planning system? How, where and for what are they best applied? How can they help us address Sydney’s many challenges and capitalize on its opportunities?

Symposium Program 04 November 2016

<u>8:30am</u>	Registration	JBA 173 Sussex Street, Sydney
<u>8:45am</u>	Session 1 Design-led planning	The rise, role and significance of design excellence in urban development and planning globally and in Sydney.
<u>9:45am</u>	Break	
<u>10:00am</u>	Session 2 Panel one	The pursuit of Design Excellence in Global Sydney: Representatives of various government agencies discuss pathways to design excellence - what is and isn't working currently? What benefits are being delivered - and at what cost?
<u>11:30am</u>	Break	
<u>11:45am</u>	Session 3 Panel two	Designing Sydney: where to from here? The views and experiences of stakeholders on the challenges in achieving urban design excellence.
<u>1:00pm</u>	Lunch	

Program detail and speakers

Session 1 Design-led planning

The rise, role and significance of design excellence in urban development and planning globally and in Sydney.

Opening remarks:

Why design excellence matters -

Peter Poulet / NSW Government Architect

Excellence through competition: some research findings -

Rob Freestone / Professor of Planning, UNSW Built Environment

Urban design excellence in the neoliberal city -

John Punter / Professor of Urban Design, Cardiff University

Session 2 Panel one

The pursuit of Design Excellence in Global Sydney

Representatives of various government agencies discuss pathways to design excellence - what is and isn't working currently? What benefits are being delivered - and at what cost?

Julie Bindon / Founding Director, JBA (Chair)

Olivia Hyde / Director of Design Excellence, Government Architect NSW

Graham Jahn / Director of City Planning, Development & Transport, City of Sydney

Jan McCredie / City Architect, Liverpool City Council

Sylvia Corish / Director, Public Schools, NSW Department of Education

Kim Crestani / City Architect, Parramatta City Council

Session 3 Panel two

Designing Sydney: where to from here?

The views and experiences of stakeholders on the challenges in achieving urban design excellence.

Prof. Helen Lochhead / Dean of Built Environment, UNSW (Chair)

Chris Johnson / CEO, Urban Taskforce Australia

Caroline Choy / Senior Development Mgr, AMP Capital Real Estate

Brendan Hoskins / Senior Planner, JBA

Tony McNamara / Director of Planning and Environment, City of Canada Bay

Alec Tzannes / Director, Tzannes Studio

Shaun Carter / Principal, CarterWilliamson and President, NSW Chapter AIA



Design Competitions

Design competitions are increasingly used in both the public and private sectors to procure architectural and urban design services. With a rich and colourful history that dates back at least to Ancient Greece, the design competition offers an efficient way of generating varied ideas from a range of different perspectives, and of finding the best design proposal or solution.

Other key benefits of design competitions include their ability to help raise the profile and marketability of a project, drive creativity and innovation, and uncover new design talent. Where they are participatory, design competitions can also help educate members of the public about design.

Internationally, design competitions fall into three main categories: Open, Limited and Invited. In an Open competition, anyone can compete. In a Limited competition, eligibility is restricted to certain groups (for example, professional architects). In an Invited competition, a small number of designers are shortlisted

and invited to compete. Open competitions are the most “democratic” format in that they enable anyone to participate, and for this reason they perhaps offer the greatest potential for the generation of creative and innovative design responses. At the other end of the spectrum, Invited Competitions enable competition sponsors to retain greater control over design and development outcomes, but this potentially makes outcomes more predictable.

The most common criticism of design competitions is to do with the costs that they can impose on designers: much of the time and effort that goes into competing is not compensated by competition sponsors. Despite this criticism, competitions are widely used internationally, especially in Europe and increasingly in Asia. They are also central to the way that design excellence has been pursued in our own city over the last 20 years: although design competitions are mandatory for new public buildings in many parts of Europe, Sydney is the only city where design competitions form a statutory planning requirement for major private developments, and no longer just in Sydney CBD.



Design Our Ryde winner,
International Ideas Competition
Image credit: Beijing Institute of
Architectural Design (China)
Image courtesy: JBA (competition
manager)



Green Square Library
International Design Competition winning
scheme by Stewart Hollenstein
Image courtesy: Stewart Hollenstein

Design Review Panels

Design Review Panels (DRPs) are expert advisory committees whose role is to provide independent advice on specific development proposals.

Although they can and do differ widely in terms of their scope, organisation, and relationship to the statutory planning process, most panels are comprised of experienced design professionals with varied backgrounds, and are commissioned by statutory planning authorities. Their advice may be directed to planning officers and/or development proponents at either the pre-application stage or after a formal planning application has been lodged. Although there is a well-established tradition of the use of expert design review panels in Continental Europe, it is only relatively recently that their use has become widespread within development control processes in North American and Australian cities.

A clear advantage of a DRP to a planning authority is the design expertise that it injects into the planning process, something that is particularly beneficial where design skills among staff are limited. The review of development proposals by independent design experts can help improve design quality and gives authorities greater confidence and ability to resist poor proposals. The use of a DRP over time can also lead to an increase in design expertise among staff. In addition, the advice of a DRP can provide certainty for proponents by identifying problems that might otherwise have led to delays in planning approval.

The most common criticisms of DRPs are that they restrict creativity and add an additional layer of control to an already-complicated process. Where the purpose of a DRP is not clear, where its assessment process or criteria are vague, or where the panel has insufficient expertise, panels are less likely to be effective.

There has been an upsurge in the use of DRPs in NSW since the introduction of SEPP65 in 2002. This policy, which sought specifically to improve the design quality of apartment buildings, made provision for the establishment of DRPs for the purpose of providing design advice to planning authorities or proponents on proposed apartment developments or plans. Many other variants of DRPs are also used in NSW by statutory planning authorities, including the City of Sydney's Design Advisory Panel.



Image courtesy of UNSW
Built Environment

Design Charettes

The term “charrette” originates in the 19th Century practices of professors at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where a cart (charrette in French) was dispatched to collect the work of architecture students when it was due.

The final intense effort of students to get their work into the cart, even up to the very last moment, came to be known as working “en charrette”. Today, the term is used more broadly to refer to a particular form of intensive design workshop occurring in a condensed period of time, and one that is usually collaborative and multi-disciplinary in nature. Charrettes are usually organized by planning and design consultancies, governments or NGOs, but they are not in widespread use in Australia at present.

The design charrette, when organized and managed well, is a collaborative and democratic process that offers considerable potential also as a

tool for community education. The involvement of a diverse group of people in a single – and intensive – event can open up opportunities for highly creative and imaginative design solutions. Due to the emphasis on the use of drawing as a tool for thinking, problem-solving and communication, the design charrette may also be more accessible to members of the public than some other forms of public participation in the planning process. The short duration of a design charrette, often just a few days, clearly makes them an attractive proposition from efficiency and cost perspectives. However, that short duration can also be a disadvantage: the condensed process may mean that certain people are excluded, and that the time available for analysis, reflection and refinement is inadequate. There is also the potential for charrettes to be dominated by certain participants where the event is not well facilitated.



Design Codes

A code is a system or collection of rules and regulations that relate to a specific subject.

Codes have been used for centuries to regulate urban development and change, most often for reasons related to health and safety, and many of our best-loved places were generated in part through some codification of built form outcomes: Haussmann's Parisian boulevards, New Town in Edinburgh and the Manhattan skyline are three well-known examples. In recent years, there has been growing interest among practitioners, governments and academics, especially in the USA and UK, in the potential for site-specific design codes, frequently referred to as "form-based" codes, to help deliver improved urban outcomes through the statutory planning process.

The basic premise behind a design code is that high-quality places are more likely to be achieved through the use of prescriptive standards (what we do want) than through proscriptive standards (what

we don't want). Typically used in conjunction with some sort of masterplan or regulating plan, a design code will specify required standards for certain aspects of the three dimensional form and arrangement of buildings and spaces, without stipulating the entire designed project. Key advantages of the design code lie in its ability to generate transparent and predictable urban outcomes across large sites or areas, to simplify planning approval processes, and to bring together and co-ordinate a collection of disparate interests and expertise under a single, enforceable vision. The flip side of this coin is that high levels of physical prescription, in certain circumstances, may have restrictive and homogenizing effects, generating standardized and mediocre architectural and urban design outcomes.

Design codes are increasingly used by planning authorities and practitioners in the USA and UK, and similar approaches to the three-dimensional codification of



Rather than comply with a code, multiresidential developments such as Barangaroo are required to conform to State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 65 and its accompanying design guide.
Image credit: Dr Gethin Davison

built environment outcomes are common in Continental Europe. In Australia there are all sorts of codes that regulate our built environment: highway codes, the Building Code of Australia and Exempt and Complying Development Codes are obvious examples. But there remain few examples of the sorts of design-led approach to coding advocated by New Urbanists and others overseas.

SEPP65 and its accompanying design guide together can be seen to represent an attempt to codify good apartment design, and the Western Australia Liveable Neighbourhoods Initiative is a form of code. There are also a small number of Australian greenfield projects where development has been regulated through prescriptive three-dimensional codes.

Further resources

The value of good architecture and urban design

[CABE \(2001\) The Value of Urban Design](#)

NZ Government (2005) 'The value of urban design: The economic, environmental and social benefits of urban design'

[RIBA \(2011\) Good design: it all adds up](#)

Design Competitions

Freestone, R., Davison, G., Hu, R. and Baker, S. (2015) [The Regulation of Excellence: Design Competitions in Sydney, State of Australian Cities Conference Proceedings 2015](#),

Freestone, R., Davison, G., Hu, R. and Baker, S. (2016) [Institutionalising Design Excellence in Central Sydney 1988-2000, International Planning History Society Conference Proceedings 2016](#),

Lehrer, U. (2011) 'Design Competitions', in Banerjee, T. and Loukaitou-Sideris, eds. **Companion to Urban Design**, New York: Routledge.

Design Review Panels

CABE (2006) 'How to do design review: Creating and running a successful panel'

Dawson, E. & Higgins, M. (2009) 'How planning authorities can improve quality through the design review process: Lessons from Edinburgh' **Journal of Urban Design**, 14, 101-114.

Punter, J. (2003) 'From design advice to peer review: The role of the urban design panel in Vancouver' **Journal of Urban Design**, 8, 113-135

Punter, J. (2007) 'Developing urban design as public policy: Best practice principles for design review and development management' **Journal of Urban Design**, 12, 167-202.

Design Charrettes

Condon, P.M. (2008) 'Design charrettes for sustainable communities'
Washington: Island Press

Kelbaugh, D. (2011) 'The Design Charrette' in Banerjee, T. and Loukaitou-Sideris, eds. **Companion to Urban Design**, New York: Routledge.

Roggema, R. (editor) (2014) **The Design Charrette**, New York: Springer.

Smith, N. (2012) 'Design charrette: A vehicle for consultation or collaboration?' Participatory Innovation Conference 2012, Melbourne.

Design Coding

Carmona, M., Marshall, S. and Stevens, Q. (2006) 'Design codes: their use and potential' **Progress in Planning 65**, 209-289.

CABE (2003) 'The use of urban design codes'

Parolek, D., Parolek, K. and Crawford, P. (2008) **Form-based codes**
Hoboken: John Wiley.

Talen, E. (2012) **City Rules**, Washington D.C.: Island Press.

Talen, E. (2013) 'Zoning For and Against Sprawl: The Case for Form-Based Codes' **Journal of Urban Design 18**:175-200.

Urban Design Group and UCL (2012) 'Design Coding: Diffusion of Practice in England'

Event partners

UNSW Built Environment

The Faculty of Built Environment at the University of New South Wales has been at the forefront of professional education and academic research in planning, architecture, building and design since the 1950s. Its research activity involves and crosses numerous disciplines with particular strengths in human-centered design, architecture, urbanism and construction. In the Commonwealth Government's national academic research audit last year (ERA2015) the Faculty's research enterprise was rated at "above world standard" in built environment research, one of only three universities to attain this highest rating.

This symposium emanates from just one of the many projects underway in the Faculty: an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project entitled "Designing Global Sydney: the negotiation of public and private interests" (DP150104054).

This research project is situated

at the interface of planning policy, urban design and planning history. It seeks to assess the contribution of design-led policy in reconciling private ambitions for economic growth with aspirations for quality public outcomes in the planning approval processes for major commercial development in the Sydney Central Business District (CBD). Concentrating on the past decade, it examines the changing economic structure of the CBD, links the changing form of the city to evolving design policies, recovers the experiences of participants in the development approval process, and communicates instructive stories at the interface of powerful market forces and the design regime. The project's research findings will inform a new urban design history of Sydney CBD, the epicentre of Australia's most globalised city. The project advances, enhances and enriches both theoretical understandings of, and policy approaches to, the challenges posed for planning systems in securing at once productive and

liveable futures for Australian cities. Knowledge gained will lead to better urban design outcomes for Australian cities in an increasingly internationalised world.

We have already published several articles on the research and others are in progress. If you are interested in finding out more, please visit the “Designing Global Sydney” webpage, which can be accessed at <https://www.be.unsw.edu.au/research/initiatives>, or contact Dr Gethin Davison, g.davison@unsw.edu.au

Team members: Robert Freestone, Gethin Davison, Sarah Baker (UNSW); Richard Hu (University of Canberra)





JBA Urban Development Consultants is one of Sydney's and Australia's major urban development services consultancy firms. They are recognised and experienced design competition managers, pioneering new and innovative ways to manage competitions and achieve the best design outcomes. JBA has significant experience in the management of national and international design competitions, assisting both public and private clients in the management of successful competitions. The pursuit of design excellence through different means and the research being undertaken by UNSW is highly valued by JBA, reflected in their role as a partner for this symposium.

Design excellence is fundamental in shaping the world's best cities and the successful completion of the processes leading to design excellence is critical. JBA strives to make these processes as efficient and effective as possible in the overall planning process. The value of design competitions in the City of Sydney is clearly evident in the high quality built form outcomes currently being produced. There is a broad consensus for competitions amongst the

development community, but an acknowledgment by many that improvements can be made to enhance processes and attain the highest quality benefits a competitive process may deliver.

Challenges currently facing these processes include time implications, the need for greater efficiencies, costs and certainty of the process and outcomes. A collaborative approach is needed by all stakeholders in the pursuit of design excellence to ensure greater certainty of these processes and to ensure competitive processes remain sustainable in the long term.

To streamline the competition management process, JBA has developed a bespoke platform specifically designed to enhance the competition process and improve the experience for all stakeholders. The JBA Design Competition Manager is a web based platform that allows all parties involved in the design competition to have access to a private and secure website. With this initiative, and many others, JBA is working hard to be a key stakeholder in the pursuit for design excellence.

Government Architect NSW

The Government Architect NSW provides leadership for the NSW Government in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture and design thinking. In providing this role, the GANSW supports the government in delivering quality, managing risk and fostering innovation to maximise public value of investment in the built environment.

The role of the GANSW is critical in helping to deliver world class design and planning outcomes in NSW as it continues to grow. As part of that role, GANSW is in the process of reviewing current design excellence processes across NSW with a view to improving their efficiency and effectiveness. The review will deliver better and consistent support and guidance to government and industry involved in project delivery at all stages - from project formation through to construction.

As the NSW Government's champion and key advisor for architecture and design, the GANSW has developed a draft Architecture and Design Policy for NSW for peer review and consultation with government, industry and the community. One

of the central tenets of this policy is the value and importance of design excellence to all aspects of the built environment. The document can be downloaded from <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/About-Us/Office-of-the-Government-Architect>

Further to today's symposium, an ongoing series of workshops will be held with key stakeholders and interested parties to inform the further development of the policy as well as strategies to implement its key principles.

As well as celebrating 200 years of the Government Architect in NSW, GA200+ is about finding more integrated ways of working across Government agencies. GA200+ aims to create opportunities for built environment industry leaders, as well as interested members of the public, to engage directly in discussions with Government on policy directions that address the global issues that impact us all.

GA200+ is presented in partnership with the NSW Architect's Registration Board.

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