Structure planning for brownfield sites

Cherish Lee PIA (Affiliate) and Lloyd Anderson MPIA

The benefit of structure planning in brownfield sites cannot be under estimated. In Victoria, we are accustomed to the role of structure plans in directing development in the greenfield areas, however, with the recent release of Plan Melbourne Refresh and the shift in the Governments direction for residential growth to inner and middle ring, structure plans now have an even stronger role in guiding infill developments in these areas. The Glen Waverley Activity Centre Structure Plan (GWAC) and subsequent permit approvals reflect this shift in structure planning and infill development within local governments.

The GWAC, as prepared by Monash City Council, underwent a comprehensive local consultation process which ensured strong community support for development of the site. The process included an initial round of consultation on a broad-reaching masterplan for the Glen Waverley Activity Centre in September 2013. Feedback from the consultation drove preparation of a Draft GWAC Structure Plan.

At the time that Monash was considering the Draft GWAC Structure Plan, a mixed-use proposal was before Council for a 15-storey development within the Structure Plan boundary. The community strongly opposed this proposal on the basis that it was considered too high and would potentially impinge on the quality of life. This consequently led Council to make several changes to the structure plan in response to community concerns.

In 2015, Council underwent an Amendment process to include reference to the GWAC in the Scheme including standard, formal consultation and a Planning Panel process (C120). This detailed process enabled the local community to provide comment and be actively involved in the long term planning of their local area.

The application of a Structure Plan to guide infill development which has undertaken lengthy community consultation has proven to be beneficial to the planning process. This is particularly evident in a recent development progressed by the Niche Planning Studio team together with Facilit8 Solutions and Life Design Architecture for 54 Montclair Avenue, located within the GWAC Structure Plan boundary.

On 28 June 2016, Monash Council approved the development of an 11-storey mixed use building (10 storeys with mezzanine) at 54 Montclair Avenue, Glen Waverley. This site was identified within the GWAC Structure Plan as having the potential for 8-10 storeys. Council did not receive any objections to this multi-storey, infill proposal.

Council's Mayor noted that this was the first time in recent history that a 10 storey building has been approved in Victoria with no objections, attributing this to Council's careful approach to strategic planning and community consultation over many years in the preparation of the GWAC Structure Plan. *"Many years of strategic planning by Council and working with our community has resulted in a situation like this where such a significant building can be proposed, receive no community objection and be unanimously approved by council," she said.*

The GWAC Structure Plan has resulted in a direct increase in appropriate development opportunities within an established activity centre. As stated in the C120 Planning Panel report *"... the structure plan sets the appropriate balance between guiding growth and ensuring appropriate development outcomes"*. The GWAC has therefore provided a framework which balances these outcomes and provides a level of certainty for landowners and developers in the Structure Plan area.

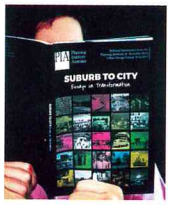
The Structure Planning process and detailed consultation undertaken by Monash City Council for the GWAC Structure Plan has resulted in a high number of planning permit applications supported by the local community. The process undertaken by Monash should be upheld as best practice in planning for the long-term future of our middle ring and infill areas, particularly if it results in reduced or no objections to development while acknowledging the support of the local community.

Cherish Lee and Lloyd Anderson, Town Planners at Niche Studio. For more information email cherish@nicheplanningstudio.com.au

A gripping new urban design read

'Suburb to city: essays on transformation'

Peter Ciemitis MPIA (Fellow) WA



The rising tide of enthusiasm in urban design on the West Coast has seen resurgence in the Planning Institute's Urban Design Chapter (now called the 'Urban Design Forum Western Australia' or UDFWA, after the dismantling of PIA Chapters).

This enthusiasm was manifest through the resurrection of conversational forums, culminating in the publishing of a short book of summaries of its programs of fora.

The book, 'Then, Now, Next', mapped out a potted journey of urban design evolution, from the Garden City Movement, through New Urbanism, Placemaking, Green Cities, and speculations of future directions.

The PIA UDFWA has continued its pace over the last two years, and has just published its follow-up tome; 'Suburb to City – Essays on Transformation'. This edition delves into some of the previous topics further:

- it examines some historical case studies on the planning of suburbia and postulates whether we are still a Suburban Nation
- it asks whether we are improving our design tools as a concrete means of doing things better (... are there new codes emerging that allow us to go beyond a blunt management of density?)
- it extends our thinking about Placemaking to look at culture as catalyst, and questions whether our next innovations may be enabled through collaboration with the cultural sector
- it speculates on our next tasks at hand; what's heading toward us, and how are we planners preparing for the future?

Being Western Australian, we also couldn't resist the temptation to share our love-affair with our capital city, with postcards and invitations to visit!

The success is due to the hard work of a tireless Committee and, even more so, a passionate working group and must be acknowledged: Anna Kelderman, Melanie Bradley, Anika Chhabra, with a particular spotlight on its editor Hans Oerlemans and designer Emma DeJager.

For your copy, contact Emma DeJager (PIA Executive Officer, Western Australia and South Australia) at emma.dejager@planning.org.au.

Peter Ciemitis is Convenor of Urban Design Forum Western Australia, and can be contacted at Peter.Ciemitis@robertsday.com.au