
From: Bruce Duffield
Sent: Friday, 19 August 2011 14:15
To: Our Cities
Subject: Comments on draft framework of the Australian Urban Design Protocol

Hi,

The following is my assessment of the Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities. They are provided by me as an individual urban designer and not as a representative of Moreton Bay Regional Council.

Generally I was very impressed with the protocol especially the principles and believe it will be a welcome influence on providing better places in Australia. In partnership with the protocol at Queensland local government level the state (Charter for Queensland Spaces) and local Urban Design charters and principles, of good urban design are established on a robust foundation. However, there are some areas in the document as commented on below that I take serious issue with as an Urban Designer.

As context my background is originally in civil engineering design, heritage, strategic, contribution and development consent planning as well as building, urban and open space design. I have qualifications across these areas and have been working in built environment related fields for 38 years, both in Australia and internationally. I am presently working for one of the largest local governments in Australia.

The following are some concerns and thoughts I have of the document.

Page 5 first paragraph:

'A wider definition of architecture comprises all design activity, from the macro level (urban design) to the micro-level (construction details and materials).'

I think this sentence needs to be reconsidered and removed from the document completely. It's a considerable departure from the view and quality of the rest of the document. Not all Urban Designers are Architects, in fact the majority I meet are from the planning profession, but also include landscape architects and engineers.

- Urban design is not a subset of architecture, and for that matter of landscape architecture, planning or engineering. All have individual ways of looking and considering places. Urban design from a holistic approach and architecture and the other traditional approaches usually from an individual project basis. All are relevant and essential.
- Saying that, it would be better if more architects considered the context of their projects more, though it appears to be not an essential in many contemporary developments. This is also true of the other built environment disciplines of landscape architecture, engineering, and planning (not discussed in this document and just as relevant to urban design as architecture is). However, contextual analysis is embedded in urban design.
- Also Urban Design is not just to be considered at the macro level. The consideration of how a place is to be developed and its morphology are essential elements of urban design, just as the makeup of the region to the street and elements within it are.
- The understanding of place has a key relationship with the individual building as an influence upon the public realm, its context and visa versa. This does not stop at the buildings facade or the property boundary however, but enters any building both physically to the front desks of offices and the foyers of residential buildings and visually into and out of the windows and openings of the buildings that link with the public realm and have a relationship with the public space of places.
- I'm not sure why Architecture has been specifically included in this document. If architecture is included as an individual profession or element in an urban design protocol the other professions and elements that make up the built and natural aspects of place should also be considered. After all good urban design is a collaborative and inclusive approach.

Diagram

Not sure about the reverse pyramid on page 6 especially the words to the right side. Facades and detail are not just about appearance and the concepts in the centre are not just about social and economic fabric. The only correlation to the hierarchy I can see is one of scale. In an urban design view of this all are equally relevant, at different scales

equally complex and all are interrelated. The interrelationship between the materials used and the height and massing of a development is a relationship of the grain and structure of the place. I do believe however that the context and character of place is the overarching concept when considering place and therefore should be at the top of the pyramid.

Definitions

The grain of a place is not just about the underlying parcels but considers the grain of materials used and articulation of facade especially shop fronts and must be considered at all scales.

Further definition of mix may be appropriate with the consideration of horizontal and vertical mix and relationship.

I would consider adding into the streetscape definition thoughts on human scale and the consideration of people (pedestrians) at the ground level.

In the facade and interface definition openings are the most important interaction to the public realm with physical and visual activation of space, creating active edges and casual surveillance etc. Facades as the face of edges have a key role in the qualities of space.

In the definition of the Public Realm the inclusion and understanding of people and how they populate their realm needs more consideration.

The social and economic fabric above all needs to consider the level and opportunity for interaction, whether formal and/or accidental, between people and people, people and places and people and uses, as the main objective of public space.

Goals & Principles

I feel the need for Urban Sustainability is a primary goal and the others are subordinate to it and define it and are therefore sub goals.

The principles are excellent and provide a good grounding for sustainable urbanism through urban design.

Thankyou for the opportunity to have this input on this excellent document.

Regards,

Bruce

Bruce Duffield

Principal Urban Designer
