



the South Australian Urban Design Charter



Government
of South Australia



Department of
Transport
and Urban
Planning

We commit South Australian Government agencies to the urban design-based principles of this Charter and recognise that the cooperation and collaboration of relevant agencies is needed to achieve good quality public places. Within 12 months, each agency with business relevant to urban design, or with the capacity to influence the quality of urban design outcomes, will indicate how it will satisfy the aims of this Charter.

Mike Rann MP
Premier of South Australia

Trish White MP
Minister for Urban Development & Planning

November 2004

Contents

The South Australian Government Urban Design Charter	3
Introduction to urban design	5
Urban design in South Australia	7
Committing Government to the Urban Design Charter	8
Using the Charter	11
Application of the Charter	13
Application of the Charter continued	15
Acknowledgements	16



Gouger Street, Adelaide

The South Australian Government Urban Design Charter

This Urban Design Charter records the recognition by the South Australian Government of the benefits of good urban design. It commits Government agencies to achieve good urban design when managing public places or creating the public buildings and infrastructure that contribute to the qualities of our streets, squares, parks and waterfronts.

Good urban design leads to quality public places that in turn have the capacity to revitalise neighbourhoods and reinforce a sense of place. Urban design provides a comprehensive approach to rebuilding the physical assets of communities and boosting community self-image. Designed improvement to urban fabric can positively impact on the extent of social networks, cooperation, trust and safety within communities to enhance social well-being. A public sector committed to good urban design can also support local businesses and economic activity.

The Charter calls upon agencies to ensure that the designs for public places and their interaction with private buildings and spaces reinforce the urban environment as liveable, efficient, creative, sustainable and socially inclusive.

The Urban Design Charter applies to relevant Government activity in all urban areas, including metropolitan Adelaide, regional centres and country towns.

The Charter aims to:

- focus the agencies' urban activities and design-related processes on the essential elements of partnership, integration, participation, equity and crime prevention, consistent with the Government's strategic framework for managing change
- promote the achievement of quality urban public places through a 'whole-of-Government' commitment to good urban design and leadership by Government agencies
- encourage Government agencies to achieve good design outcomes for public places through collaboration and co-operation and alliances with local government and the private sector to better meet people's needs
- emphasise the need to build design awareness and community consultation into project inception and planning phases and integrate project assessment and co-ordination across relevant agencies
- demonstrate (with case studies) the scope and standard of outcomes sought by application of the Charter as well as the creative processes used in their implementation
- motivate agencies to create the attitudes, priorities and responses conducive to quality urban place-making and to report on these achievements.



Rundle Mall, Adelaide

Introduction to urban design

Urban design is the combination of tailored processes and creative design responses aimed at enhancing the general appeal and functioning of towns, suburbs and centres. It is increasingly used to capitalise on the potential of public places to transform run-down areas. It is not an isolated process and should not be regarded as an 'add-on' or something associated with added cost but rather added value. It provides the tools with which the quality of our urban areas and community well-being can be consciously improved.

Urban design integrates the processes and expertise of many related disciplines including art, architecture, landscaping, the social sciences, economics, planning and transport. Good urban design is much more than a simple compilation of work from separate disciplines—it represents much more than street beautification or traffic calming, as important as these may be. The hallmarks of good urban design may be found in the rich public life associated with successful public places. Such vitality is a catalyst for neighbourhood activity and can be the difference between public places being successful or simply corridors to pass through.

Good urban design impacts positively on the vitality of communities, neighbourhood interactions and the appeal of public places. More broadly good urban design can enhance housing choice and diversity, public transport options and redistribute public resources to address locational inequality. Designs often utilise public art to engage users and visitors, responding to and reinforcing a 'sense of place' to encourage successful urban spaces. This in turn enhances the appreciation, safety and community ownership of such places as well as their

sustainability. Good urban design can also bring specific economic and environmental benefits. Urban design processes can contribute to reducing car dependence, while easier and safer provisions for cycling and walking can enhance the health and well-being of workers and residents.

Good urban design is increasingly important to the reinvestment in, and regeneration of, towns and regional centres. The creation and reinforcement of high quality, attractive environments underpins the value and security of public and private investment in these locations. Good urban design processes are most effective when all the relevant expertise and interest groups are integrated from day one to facilitate consultation at project inception phases. Integrated processes extend project evaluations beyond financial costs and benefits to include social, cultural and environmental costs and benefits.

The State Government has a special role in achieving quality urban places. Most projects with significant impact on the urban environment occur through the action, or support, of Government. The development and/or sale of Government land, the provision of public services and/or infrastructure and the management of public assets present major opportunities for improving the quality of urban places.

Application of the Urban Design Charter by Government agencies will contribute to the better design and management of public places. It will also contribute to creating a positive relationship between public areas and adjacent buildings and spaces in private ownership.



Designed urban legacy

Urban design in South Australia

South Australia has a long tradition of high quality planning and design of urban areas. There are instances, however, where the quality of urban places has suffered from diminished coordination between service providers and those responsible for public places. Government administration has become increasingly complex and the call on its resources has expanded, making the achievement of quality in the planning and design of urban public places more difficult.

This challenge was recognised in the 1992 State Planning Review. It recommended the need for more integrated approaches to urban quality and design. At a national level, the 1994 report of the Prime Minister's Urban Design Task Force led to significant design-related programs and policies such as the Australian Model Code for Residential Development (AMCORD) and initiatives such as Green Street and the Better Cities Program.

In 1996, the Adelaide 21 Project sought to redefine the future role of Adelaide's City centre. It celebrated Adelaide's existing qualities while shaping strategies to position the city in the new era of competition and global change. A review of governance led to the establishment of the Capital City Committee. It recognised the need for revitalisation of the city centre and identified projects to be pursued under the auspices of the Capital City Development Program.

Many councils have used urban design principles to transform their main streets and parks. Victor Harbor, the Parade at Norwood and Hutt Street in the city have all benefited from a strategic re-appraisal of the potential of main streets.

The completion of Jimmy Melrose Park at Glenelg, part of the Coast Park network, is a more recent example of the positive impacts of good urban design.

At a metropolitan level, the processes of good urban design can transform places critical to image and identity. At the intersection of Cross, Portrush and Glen Osmond Roads, a unique 'sense of arrival' into Adelaide has been created. The Glen Osmond Gateway to the city was achieved out of an extensive collaboration of interests and expertise.

The major cultural destination of North Terrace has been the subject of significant review and consultation, leading to its upgrading as well as reinforcement of its linkages both to the River Torrens and back into the commercial heart of the city. The Riverbank Precinct (on the banks of the Torrens) has been the subject of extensive master planning to celebrate this area as one of Adelaide's premier outdoor gathering places and to reinforce its links with North Terrace.

The Urban Design Charter is an important step by the State Government towards achieving better urban places in South Australia.

Committing Government to the Urban Design Charter

South Australia enjoys the significant legacy of a distinctive capital city and well-planned towns, regional centres and suburbs. State Governments have been traditionally involved in the reinforcement of this legacy as well as the creation of new urban places and the buildings that help to define them.

The impacts of 'corporatisation' and 'contracting out' have spread the resourcing of such activities beyond the previous limits of Government business. Additionally, demographic change and employment trends have resulted in the de-population of former industrial areas and a reduction in the physical condition and social well-being of numerous communities. Some urban areas have become intimidating and at times unsafe. These trends have sharply focussed the responsibility of particular agencies to act as facilitators in urban change management, gathering together project-specific teams to better manage urban public places.

Quality in public place-making requires greater integration and coordination of the varied skills and resources of Government agencies. Consideration of potential alliances with local government, the utilities and the private sector is also required if excellence in community service and urban place-making is to be achieved.

This Charter establishes a whole-of-Government position on the benefits of good urban design. It records the commitment of the State Government to the achievement of quality urban design and affirms its intention to embed the concept of 'good urban design' into Government processes.

Each of the following principles is an indicator of the importance of collaborative and customised processes, which are needed to establish urban design as integral to project inception and delivery:

- **Searching out community aspirations**

Invest project teams with effective consultation strategies responsive to the social well-being of the community and the needs of end users.

- **Nurturing cultural expression**

Recognise the importance of public places to all South Australians and support increasingly varied social, cultural and artistic activities through the enhanced physical condition of such places.

Charter

- **Reinforcing local character**

Forge positive connections with the 'urban grain' of the locality, its historical development and patterns of use and movement.

- **Integrating a diversity of interest and expertise**

Build the capacity of agencies to identify design potentials and establish alliances with local government, the private sector and utilities appropriate to good urban design.

- **Formulating concepts and testing ideas**

Integrate good processes and sound design principles to connect people with places and create viable, safe, efficient and adaptable places capable of long-term use and enjoyment.

- **Combining community interest, public property and private initiative.**

Harness community interest in public places and facilitate the interaction of market forces and the potential of places to balance social, cultural, environmental and economic values.

- **Being environmentally responsible**

Optimise resource use, energy and water conservation and biodiversity through the conscious design and good management of public places.

- **Investing in quality**

Raise agency awareness of the whole-of-government position on the benefits of good urban design and the role of urban design in agency business to contribute to 'whole-of-community' benefits.

We commit South Australian Government agencies to the urban design-based principles of this Charter and recognise that the cooperation and collaboration of relevant agencies is needed to achieve good quality public places.

Within 12 months, each agency with business relevant to urban design, or with the capacity to influence the quality of urban design outcomes, will indicate how it will satisfy the aims of this Charter. It is acknowledged that general processes of State Government procurement and acquittal will also be reviewed to complement the search by relevant agencies to better satisfy the aims of the Charter.

Mike Rann MP
Premier of South Australia

Trish White
Minister for Urban Development & Planning



people-focused public places

Using the Charter

Agencies will consider how relevant business operations can contribute to optimising urban design opportunities. During an initial 12 month implementation phase, agencies will particularise application of the Charter to their business and thereafter report annually on urban design-related achievements.

The following strategies test whether or not present agency processes are conducive to the practice of good urban design. They are generally seen as characteristic of the inception phases of designing successful urban places.

1. Are urban design opportunities appreciated and acted upon?

The capacity to identify urban design opportunities within agencies may need to be further developed. Cultivation of attitudes and priorities likely to promote good urban design within each agency is more likely to deploy the diverse skills and activities of Government to best effect.

2. Who are the likely stakeholders and what is the proposed process?

Provision of new public places and the associated infrastructure inevitably suggests Government responsibility beyond one agency, often involving local government. Shared success is more likely if project planning includes the preparation of urban design frameworks and concept plans that clearly communicate the design principles and objectives.

3. Have the strengths of an area or precinct, including the interests of its community, been harnessed?

Proactive consultative processes are more likely to sponsor community engagement, ownership and

sustainability than a process of 'design then defend'. Opportunities to enhance the appeal of places through public art and historical interpretation should be canvassed as part of the design process.

4. What should be the scope of study?

Good urban design processes depend on the depth and integration of initial studies. Richness and vitality are more likely to evolve through broad considerations of the locality. Early consideration of established movement patterns and linkages, mixed uses and the interaction of private and public realms are important in the search for transforming connections of old and new.

5. Do agencies have to become urban designers?

Collaboration across disciplines rather than independence and self-reliance is a pre-condition for good urban design. Additional training and the attribution of responsibility for urban design-related matters within relevant agencies may nevertheless be necessary to identify project opportunities and coordinate expertise across agencies.

6. Is there a standard brief or approach?

Recognition of the urban structure as well as the social and environmental opportunities of each project should be place-specific. A supportive attitude of 'going with the grain' is more likely to add value, reinforce community networks and historical identity and minimise adverse impacts on natural systems and resource use.

State Government leadership by way of this public demonstration of commitment to the achievement of high quality public places can encourage local government, the private sector and the utilities to emulate the Charter and further promote good design quality in urban places.



Rundle Street East, Adelaide

Application of the Charter

The following case studies illustrate the diversity of projects and the levels of quality of urban design that have been achieved through the application of principles and processes equivalent to those contained in the Urban Design Charter.

Glen Osmond Gateway

This impressive and high quality statement of arrival to Adelaide lends distinction and meaning to a 'place', the character of which would otherwise have been simply determined by the needs of road traffic. It is the result of a significant collaboration of artists, engineers, architects and landscape architects as well as local governments and private owners.

North Terrace Redevelopments

In a cohesive vision based on sound principles of urban design, this project is intended to reinforce the qualities of North Terrace over time. Reinforcement of its existing appeal will bring new activity to North Terrace and accelerate further investment. Better linkages between the commercial heart and the cultural hub of the city as well as the River Torrens are central to a new engagement of the public with North Terrace and greater visitation and enjoyment. The first stage complements major recent expansions of the cultural institutions and substantial private investment on the south side of North Terrace.

Mawson Lakes

This \$1 billion development is a joint venture between the State Government and Delfin Lend Lease Ltd. The project integrates the University of South Australia's Mawson Lakes campus and Technology Park with new residential, commercial and industry space. The anticipated population is some 10,000 residents, 5,000 students and

6,000 workers. An innovative set of objectives and conscious urban planning and design from day one have sponsored several key performance features. These include the recycling of stormwater runoff, provision of wetlands, savings in energy use and early IT connections.

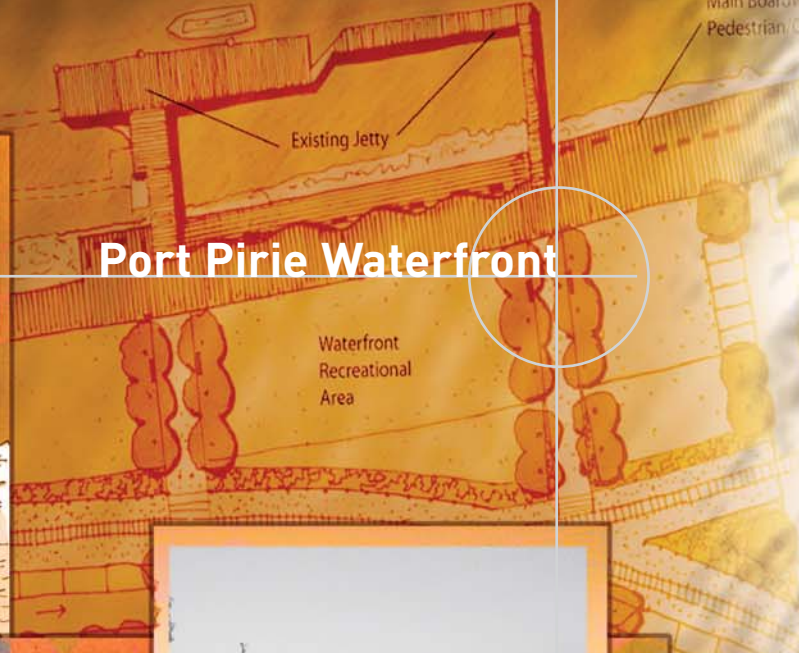
Regeneration of the West End

This award-winning collaboration of the State Government and City of Adelaide generated urban design-based objectives to revitalise the West End. The West End Strategy commenced with the Hindley Street safety accord and safety audits undertaken by the City Council and the Crime Prevention Unit of the Attorney-General's Department. Early indicators of positive change were the relocation of several galleries and professional tenants into Hindley Street. Significant support from, and re-investment by, the private sector increasingly underpins the new tenancy mix, that contributes strongly to the visible positive change. The effectiveness of this turnaround has been demonstrated by the change in the vacancy rate; 45% in 1998 but only 9% in 2002.

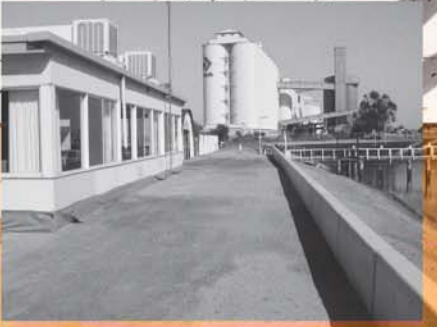
University of Adelaide lower campus redevelopment

By re-establishing the vista between Frome Road and the classically detailed Barr Smith Library portico, the public can again see the 'heart' of the university. The new buildings that frame the vista reclaim this important axis to realise far more than the provision of additional accommodation. The project was the result of a master plan that identified opportunities to restore part of the identity of the university while symbolically linking higher learning with the community more generally. Recognition of such opportunities and making the most of them are themes characteristic of good urban design outcomes.

Port Pirie Waterfront



Future Development



ELLEN

RYMAN STREET

Application of the Charter continued

Port Pirie waterfront development

The waterfront at Port Pirie is one of many regional and local centres and public places to receive funding from the Government's Places for People initiative. This place based program has been aimed specifically at local government to improve the quality and functioning of important community places and town centres. The program has been used to sponsor partnerships with councils to prepare urban design frameworks, and concept plans and more recently assist with the cost of capital works.

The Port Pirie Regional Council obtained funding to reconsider the potential of the waterfront, identified as a key priority for the town. Key outcomes have been concept plans to re-connect the town centre with the waterfront, better manage vehicular traffic and transform the landscape through the application of sound urban design principles. The project intends for the waterfront to become a hub of activity, with business operators, tourists and the local community all enjoying the benefits of a vibrant, safe waterfront setting both day and night.

Acknowledgements

Photographs by Alex Makeyev.

Mawson Lakes image by Milton Wordley courtesy of Delfin LendLease.

Cover photograph by Kevin O'Daly, Aspect Photographics Pty Ltd.

Artistic works illustrated

p2: Street pole embellishment Gerry Wedd, ceramic, 1997.

p6: Rundle Mall, "A day out", Marguerite Derricourt, bronze, 1999.

p12: Rundle Street mosaic couch, Annabelle Collett, ceramic tiles and grc, 1997.

p14: Port Pirie Waterfront proposals, Taylor Cullity Lethlean in association with QED, 2003.

Contributions from the following to the drafting of the Charter are gratefully acknowledged:

Nathan Alexander, Ruth Ambler, Trevor Argent, Greg Black, Rose Bowey, Leanne Burch, Judith Carr, David Crinion, John Damin, Jim Davidson, Bruce Harper, Denis Harrison, Rod Hook, Eugene Khor, Helga Kolbe, Andrew LaMartina, Jennifer Layther, Alan Merchant, Anthony Rowe, Claus Schonfeldt, Terry Tysoe, Christine Walter.

For more information please contact

Urban and Regional Projects

Planning SA

Department of Transport and Urban Planning

Level 4 136 North Terrace Adelaide

Peter Dungey tel 8303 0799

Paul Stark tel 8303 0703

June 2004

ISBN 1 876702 72 9

www.planning.sa.gov.au/urban_regional

Design and production

Planning SA

Planning Publications Unit

FIS 21934



