

25 January 2013

Ministerial Advisory Committee
Metropolitan Planning Strategy for Melbourne
Department of Planning and Community Development
1 Spring Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Metropolitan Planning Strategy – Melbourne, let's talk about the future

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Metropolitan Planning Strategy discussion paper, *Melbourne, let's talk about the future*. The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) believes that an integrated approach to planning for our buildings, infrastructure, transport networks and communities is essential if Melbourne is to be more productive, prosperous, liveable and sustainable well into the future.

The GBCA applauds the Victorian Government's planning reform agenda. As part of a considered reform agenda, it will be important to integrate the Metropolitan Planning Strategy and the eight Regional Growth Plans along with relevant land use and transport planning initiatives, and use this integrated approach to inform state budget priorities. We believe that use of an holistic approach and 'joined-up thinking' is essential in order to achieve the best outcomes whether for a building, community, city or state.

The discussion paper identifies five outcome principles around Melbourne having a distinct character, being a globally connected and competitive city with social and economic participation, as well as fostering strong, environmentally resilient communities. These principles are worthy outcomes to be pursued and the stakeholder engagement process thus far is commendable as a first step; the ultimate success of the strategy will be determined by the degree of successful implementation of reform over the next decade.

The opportunity for Melbourne to attract the best minds and the right skills to support its position as an education and knowledge hub will be reflected in its urban form. To this effect, the GBCA recommends that future iterations of the planning strategy consider sustainability benchmarks that can provide a useful method of measurement and support best-practice outcomes within the built environment. The GBCA believes it is vital that sustainability principles are considered during the earliest stages of planning in order to achieve the best long-term outcomes for communities. The GBCA's work around sustainable communities can provide the framework within which better planned and designed communities can be delivered and measured, based on holistic, triple bottom line best-practice principles and benchmarks.

About the GBCA

The GBCA is Australia's leading authority on green buildings and communities, established in 2002 to develop a sustainable property industry in Australia and drive the adoption of green building practices. The GBCA promotes green building programs, technologies, design practices and processes, and operates Australia's only national voluntary comprehensive sustainability rating system for buildings and communities - Green Star.

The GBCA has more than 750 member organisations, including government departments, which work together to support the Council and its activities. The GBCA is also a founding member of the World Green Building Council (WorldGBC), which was established to provide a federated 'union' of national green building councils with a common goal to support the sustainable transformation of the global property industry; there are now 92 such councils worldwide.

Green Star rating tools

Green Star is a voluntary tool that encourages, recognises and rewards best practice and innovation. The first Green Star rating tool was released in 2003 in response to market demand for a rating tool that would evaluate the environmental design and construction of buildings as well as establishing a common language for green buildings.

There are currently nine Green Star rating tools which address a range of building types and over 535 projects have achieved Green Star certification across Australia, with a further 500 projects registered. The Green Star rating system is designed to take an holistic approach within each class and building sector, addressing nine categories in total: Management, Indoor Environment Quality (IEQ), Energy, Transport, Water, Materials, Land Use and Ecology, Emissions and Innovation. With over 535 projects delivered and certified, Green Star has a proven track record when it comes to implementation of efficient, healthy and productive green buildings.

World-leading Green Star-certified projects (6 Star Green Star) within Victoria include:

- The Pixel Building, Carlton
- The Gauge, Docklands
- ANZ Building, Docklands
- Council House 2 (CH2)
- 200 Victoria Street, Carlton
- Melbourne Convention Centre
- Szencorp Building, South Melbourne.

Green Star – Communities

In 2009, the GBCA commenced work, in consultation with industry and all levels of government including Places Victoria, the City of Melbourne, Sustainability Victoria and the University of Melbourne, on the development of a rating tool for sustainable development projects on a community scale; examining issues of economic, social and environmental importance. The first step in developing the Green Star – Communities rating tool was to develop a national framework consisting of five best practice principles, plus Innovation:

- Enhance liveability
- Create opportunities for economic prosperity

- Foster environmental responsibility
- Embrace design excellence
- Demonstrate visionary leadership and strong governance.

Stage 2 of the project involved establishing best practice benchmarks and metrics for assessing and certifying sustainable communities. A set of 38 credits was then developed and tested on a number of projects across Australia. The Green Star – Communities PILOT rating tool was launched in June 2012 and we have accepted expressions of interest from projects interested in taking part in the pilot phase. A copy of the Green Star – Communities National Framework and a guide to the credits can be found on the GBCA website: <http://www.gbca.org.au/green-star/green-star-communities/>

The GBCA believes that Green Star – Communities can assist the Victorian Government achieve its vision for a new metropolitan planning strategy for Melbourne in two key ways. Firstly, the Green Star – Communities Framework and the credits within the rating tool can inform the development of the new planning strategy and act as the delivery mechanism to help bring about change and, perhaps more importantly, measure the desired outcomes.

A central element of the Metropolitan Planning Strategy, as identified within the discussion paper, is the need to ‘set targets, measure progress and publish indicators’. Green Star – Communities can help Melbourne move to an integrated place-based approach that considers the long-term needs of a particular community. The five overarching principles of Green Star – Communities provide practical, high-level planning direction. Additionally, the credits in the rating tool provide guidance and best practice benchmarks that have been developed with extensive industry and government collaboration and tested on a number of projects. Good governance is key, which is also identified within the discussion paper, and once again the Green Star – Communities national framework and rating tool has built-in benchmarks around establishing good governance structures and effective partnerships.

Mixed uses and densities within urban and peri-urban growth boundaries should also be considered, which contribute to the objectives outlined within the discussion paper around achieving a ‘20 minute’ city and living locally within an expanded central city. While greater connectivity between urban and suburban areas is needed, the extent to which the ‘grandeur’ of suburbs should be extended is questionable as this principle perpetuates other social, economic and environmental issues identified within the discussion paper. Encouraging urban sprawl will bring with it a whole new set of challenges. The more appropriate approach may be to work within Melbourne’s existing urban and suburban areas and focus on shaping these areas towards the outcomes principles outlined within the discussion paper.

To this end, the GBCA is pleased that the Metropolitan Planning Strategy considers the need to deliver urban renewal precincts and projects at a greater scale to keep up with the growing demand for more sustainable and connected community lifestyles. Utilising existing infrastructure will help mitigate the cost burden associated with new infrastructure. Additionally, by increasing density in some areas, re-zoning existing lots for a mix of uses, as well as providing greater amenity and infrastructure within established areas, an expanded central city can be realised. As always implementation is key, and Green Star – Communities provides the benchmarks that will need to be targeted for this to be realised.

Secondly, the Victorian Government can reference Green Star – Communities in its planning protocols and encourage use of the tool for development projects across Melbourne. Referencing Green Star – Communities will enable ‘joined-up’ thinking and will help align the Metropolitan Planning Strategy with Regional Growth Plans as well as infrastructure and transport strategies at federal and local level. A number of local governments and state agencies are already realising the potential of the Green Star – Communities rating tool to assist them with planning in their local area. In particular, City of Melbourne has demonstrated remarkable commitment to Green Star – Communities as a sponsor and contributor. Places Victoria and Sustainability Victoria have also played a key role in the development of the Green Star – Communities rating tool, and it is vital that the Victorian Government capitalises on the investment of knowledge and resources made by these state agencies and takes the opportunity to integrate the outcomes of the rating tool development process into the metropolitan planning strategy.

One of the roles of government is to provide visionary leadership, in particular by setting contemporary benchmarks and rigorous standards. Government has a responsibility to embed sustainability principles in its policies and has a significant opportunity to encourage industry and the broader community to adopt more sustainable practices through implementing a range of incentives. This framework and complementary rating tool will provide a consistent, common language around sustainable, productive communities and would be a way to measure successful implementation. To support this outcome, the Victorian Government has a significant opportunity to encourage industry and the broader community to adopt more sustainable planning practices through implementing a range of financial and non-financial incentives, such as expedited planning procedures, greater height or size allowances, tax breaks, fee reductions or waivers, grants, and even technical and marketing assistance.

Several credits from the Green Star – Communities rating tool are outlined below to demonstrate how they can inform and provide benchmarks for Melbourne’s planning reform agenda.

Best practice by design

The purpose of the *Design* category within this PILOT rating tool is to encourage sustainable urbanism through best practice planning and design practices. It seeks to create places for people by encouraging ‘smart’ growth which is compact, connected and people-focused and, where possible, located on previously developed land. Moreover, the Green Star – Communities PILOT *Des-2 Site and Context Analysis* credit encourages comprehensive analysis of the geographic context and characteristics of the site at different levels during the planning and design phase. This category also recognises projects that undertake site planning processes designed to facilitate sustainable urbanism.

Community engagement

Effective engagement is necessary for the development of a vision that is shared by stakeholders across the community, industry, and government. To progress successfully towards such a vision, a project must build community capacity, assess performance, and encourage ownership and leadership in the realisation of goals and objectives. The *Gov-4 Engagement* credit rewards projects that can demonstrate the preparation, implementation and ongoing review of a stakeholder engagement strategy. Projects are further rewarded

when evidence can be provided that a project's vision has been developed through engagement with the community.

Longer term return on investment

The Green Star – Communities PILOT rating tool recognises that affordability encompasses a range of factors. As such, it rewards projects that integrate mass transit options - so that people aren't stuck in their cars for hours each day. It rewards connections to employment and education facilities - so that people may work and learn locally. And it rewards access to local amenities – so that people have a vibrant, liveable and ultimately affordable community at their doorsteps.

For example, the Econ-3 credit encourages a holistic cost-benefit analysis that addresses indirect and intangible costs and benefits to the developer and community to ensure long term productivity, health and social and environmental issues are captured as well as core costs and benefits.

Housing our growing population

The Green Star – Communities rating tool encourages an integrated approach to providing housing that also takes into account a range of issues such as access to amenities, access to education and employment opportunities, and energy efficiency. Housing affordability strategies available under the *Econ-5 Affordability* credit include:

- Providing a diversity of lot sizes to support housing diversity, and a mix of densities with increased density near activity centres;
- Providing a proportion of housing lots and dwellings to the market at an affordable price purchase price for low to moderate income households;
- Provision of key worker housing;
- Provision of a program for guaranteeing the supply of shared equity and/or social housing within the development; and
- Establishing partnerships between organisations to ensure allocation and delivery of affordable housing stock.

Providing jobs and economic opportunities

The economic resilience of a community can be achieved through creating diverse employment opportunities that meet the needs and demands of local and regional communities and facilitating access to them. The *Econ-1 Employment and Economic Resilience* credit requires a project to demonstrate that it is likely to have a net gain on existing employment opportunities in the local area.

Providing efficient transport networks

Cities and communities are economic hubs of activity and opportunity. This is certainly reflected in parts of Melbourne. However, some parts of Melbourne are at risk of becoming increasingly isolated with long commuting times for its residents. Connectivity between parts of Melbourne is crucially important for the flow of information, ideas, goods and services. Just as important is the health of residents living within new and growing or existing communities, and access to public transport within walking distance is essential.

The *Env-11 Transport* credit requires an Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) to be developed for each project which sets out how various forms of transport will be integrated with land use. An ITP should encourage sustainable transport outcomes, particularly the existing and future public transport network and planning and provisions for active transport.

There are a number of other considerations captured under Green Star – Communities that will contribute to more efficient provision of transport. As well as smart planning and design of precincts and communities, demand-side factors can help to ease pressure on transport networks at peak times and contribute to greater efficiencies. All of the Green Star rating tools aim to highlight the relationships between our built environment and transport solutions.

The *Econ-7 Digital Economy* credit encourages developments to deliver infrastructure that will enable efficient remote working facilities, best practice enterprise connectivity and the highest standards of wireless connectivity. These sorts of technologies will assist Victoria to start on a long-term shift towards more flexible working arrangements.

Providing equitable access to a great lifestyle

Green Star – Communities includes credits such as *Liv-3 Healthy and Active Living*, *Liv-5 Safe Places* and *Liv-7 Accessibility and Adaptability* which provide a range of benchmarks for equitable access. The GBCA recognises that there are many factors that need to be considered if equitable access to a great lifestyle can be achieved for everyone in our community. The Green Star – Communities PILOT tool can further support this aim through a number of the credits previously outlined which focus on affordability and improving access to transport as well as economic and education opportunities.

Protecting our environment and building resilience to natural hazards

Australia is increasingly exposed to extreme weather events and natural disasters. It is important that we do all we can to protect and restore our natural environment as well as ensuring that our built environment is more adaptable to a changing climate and more resilient to natural hazards. The *Gov-6 Adaptation and Resilience* credit specifies the development of a Climate Adaptation Plan and a Community Resilience Plan to identify threats and facilitate faster recovery, when or if disaster strikes.

Strong leadership is essential if we are to tackle challenges such as economic growth, health and productivity at work, sustainable population growth, climate change, affordable housing and infrastructure planning. Governments should be considering a whole-of-communities and a whole-of-cities approach to sustainability and ‘living local’, with greater access to information, resources, and livelihoods through better connectivity and environmental performance considered as a priority. The Green Star – Communities rating tool has been developed to rate the long-term success of community design, delivery and operation and will provide the Victorian Government with a strategic measure to which they can link streamlined approvals. In summary, Green Star – Communities can add value to the Victorian Government’s planning reform agenda in the following ways:

- Deliver more sustainable, liveable and prosperous communities and demonstrate long term commitment to their success.
- Achieve more effective planning outcomes through the plan-making process
- Reduce costs to infrastructure delivery and asset maintenance

- Raise confidence in project outcomes delivered by the private sector
- Assure credibility through independent, third party verification of sustainability performance
- Gain a framework for engaging community stakeholders around sustainable growth.

The GBCA believes the next two years will be instrumental in determining whether green building and sustainable community practices become 'normal practice', rather than just 'best practice'. In response to this, the GBCA has released a 'green building agenda' with five priorities which we believe will place Australia on a clear, long-term pathway to sustainability. These priorities are to:

1. Provide visionary government leadership
2. Retrofit and improve existing buildings
3. Green education and healthcare facilities
4. Move beyond buildings to communities and cities
5. Embed green skills across all industry training.

The release of the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Strategy discussion paper is in line with the GBCA's advocacy priorities 1 and 4, namely to *provide visionary government leadership* and *encourage the change in thinking from building level to community level*. We look forward to seeing the Victorian Government's final strategy once released and anticipate contributing further to the discussion.

The GBCA applauds the Victorian Government's planning reform agenda and would welcome the opportunity to discuss further how Green Star – Communities can help to inform the new Metropolitan Planning Strategy for Melbourne and contribute to better outcomes for the Victorian community. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or to arrange further consultation.

Yours sincerely,



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