

# CREATING PLACES FOR PEOPLE

AN **URBAN DESIGN PROTOCOL** FOR **AUSTRALIAN CITIES**





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## Who should read this document?

The Urban Design Protocol is intended for anybody who has an interest in our built environment. Broadly, there are two audiences for this Protocol:

1. Decision makers and professionals whose actions affect the urban environment, including:
  - Elected representatives and officers in Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local government
  - Consultants and practitioners whose work has an impact on urban design, including planning, development, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, law and finance.

This audience should make particular reference to the model processes for creating high quality urban environments, and the outcomes that these processes are seeking to achieve.

2. The general public (individuals and community groups) who have an interest in urban design or may be affected by decisions about the built environment. This audience should make specific reference to the outcomes – that is, the aims and principles – described in this document and how this might affect them.

# CREATING PLACES FOR PEOPLE

## AN **URBAN DESIGN PROTOCOL** FOR **AUSTRALIAN CITIES**

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## FOREWORD

*Creating Places for People* is a collective commitment to best practice urban design in Australia. The protocol is the result of two years of collaboration between peak community and industry organisations, and governments at all levels.

The quality of our neighbourhoods, towns and cities has a significant impact on our daily lives. Quality urban design makes a valuable contribution to our economy, our natural and built environments, and the liveability of our cities. It helps local businesses thrive. It attracts people to visit, live and work in a location. It considers the landscape, encourages biodiversity and incorporates natural ecosystems. It has an important influence on our physical and mental health and wellbeing. It provides opportunities for healthy lifestyles and community interaction.

*Creating Places for People* does not take a one size fits all approach. Instead, it provides broad principles that take into account the unique characteristics of a location and its community, and encourages excellence in the design and custodianship of urban places.

The following organisations were involved in the creation of the Urban Design Protocol. We encourage others to embrace and adopt the Urban Design Protocol.

Australian Government	Planning Officials Group (State and Territory Planning Departments)	New South Wales Government Government Architect's Office	Office of the Victorian Government Architect
Queensland Government Office of the Government Architect	Western Australia Government Office of the Government Architect	South Australia Government Office of the Government Architect	Integrated Design Commission South Australia
Tasmanian Government Office of the State Architect	Australian Capital Territory Office of the Government Architect	Australian Local Government Association	Council of Capital City Lord Mayors
National Growth Areas Alliance	National Heart Foundation of Australia	Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council	Planning Institute of Australia
Australian Institute of Landscape Architects	Australian Institute of Architects	Green Building Council of Australia	Australian Green Infrastructure Council
Property Council of Australia	Consult Australia	Water Services Association of Australia	



*First life, then spaces, then buildings:  
the other way around never works*

Jan Gehl





# INTRODUCTION

Urban design occurs across all parts of a city, from the inner city to the suburbs and outer metropolitan fringe. Urban design is relevant to developments, whatever their nature and size. City-wide transport and infrastructure networks, urban infill projects, regional towns, new suburban developments, shopping malls, streets, office blocks, university campuses and hospitals are all the result of urban design.

High quality urban design becomes even more important as we increase the density of our cities and cater for a growing and changing population. It requires excellent planning, design and management of our built environment and the supporting social and economic infrastructure.

*Creating Places for People: an urban design protocol for Australian cities* (the Protocol) establishes 12 broadly agreed principles for quality urban places in Australia. These principles can be applied to any project or location – whether it is in a large capital city, regional centre or rural town.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

### NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

*Our Cities, Our Future: a national urban policy for a productive, sustainable and liveable future* (National Urban Policy) is the Australian Government's strategic policy framework for the 18 major cities of Australia. It articulates the role of the Australian Government in helping our cities work better, whether through direct investment or in partnership with key stakeholders. Appendix B summarises the National Urban Policy goals and objectives. One of the actions arising from the National Urban Policy was a commitment to develop an urban design protocol.

### COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

The purpose of the Urban Design Protocol is to encourage the highest standard of urban design. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to undertake reforms in capital city strategic planning systems 'to ensure Australian cities are globally competitive, productive, sustainable, liveable and socially inclusive and are well placed to meet future challenges and growth'<sup>1</sup>.

There are nine criteria listed in the COAG agreement. Among these is: 'To encourage world-class urban design and architecture'. The Protocol responds to this by providing a framework to identify, implement, measure and improve best practice in urban design.

### STATE, TERRITORY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Many jurisdictions already have in place guidelines and protocols relating to urban design. Figure 1 illustrates a 'line of sight' from the National Urban Policy down to neighbourhood and street level.

### NATIONAL GUIDELINES AND TOOLS

*Creating Places for People* complements other national guidelines and tools that currently exist including *Healthy Spaces and Places – a national guide to designing places for healthy living*<sup>2</sup>. The Green Building Council of Australia and the Australian Green Infrastructure Council will shortly be releasing a set of sustainability rating tools.

<sup>1</sup> [www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/agenda/cities.cfm](http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/agenda/cities.cfm)

<sup>2</sup> Developed through a partnership between the Heart Foundation, Australian Local Government Association and the Planning Institute of Australia, and initially supported by funding from the Department of Health and Ageing

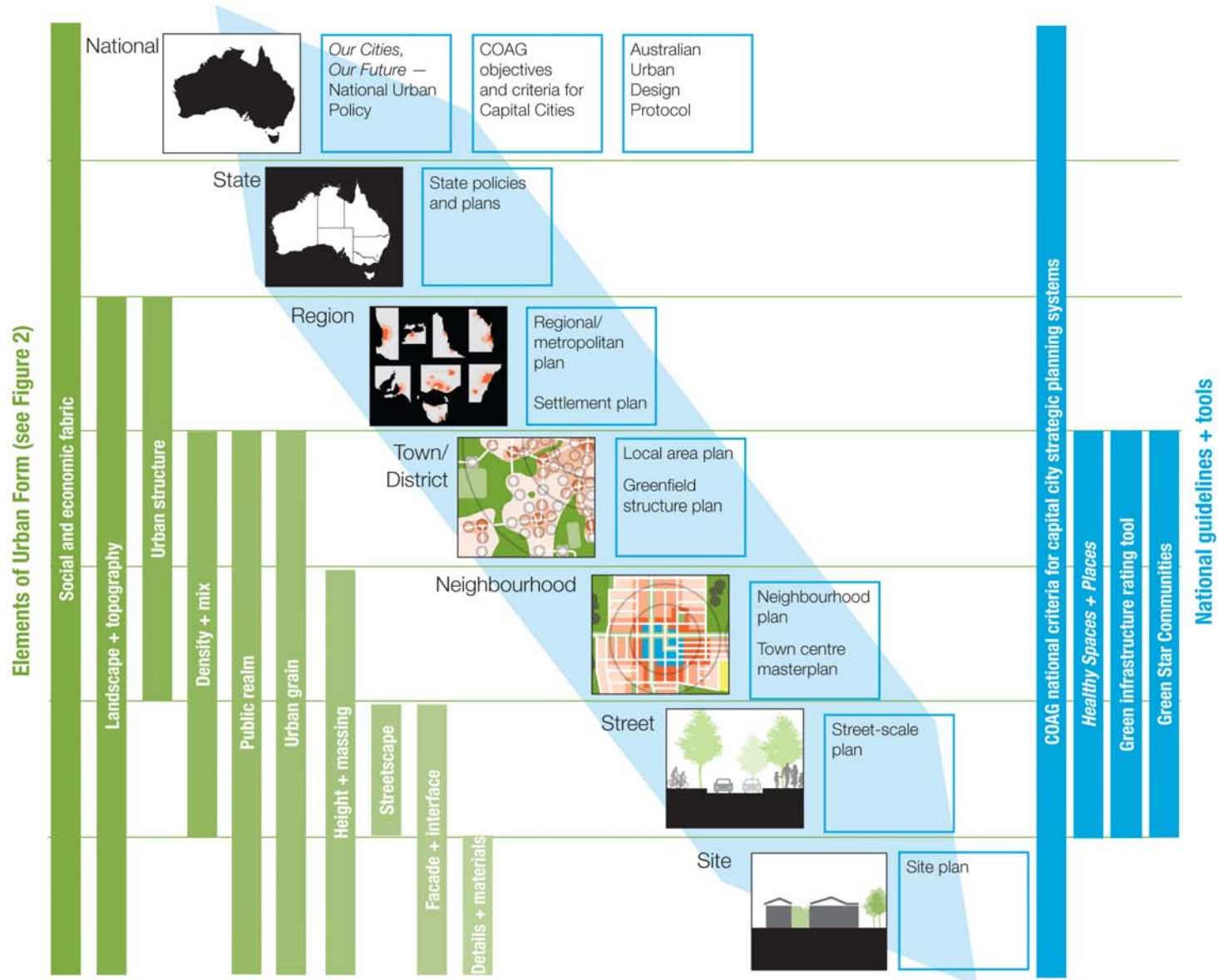


**PADDINGTON RESERVOIR GARDENS,**  
JOINT WINNER OF THE 2009 AUSTRALIA AWARD FOR URBAN  
DESIGN. BY TONKIN ZULAIKHA GREER ARCHITECTS AND JAMES  
MAHER DELANEY DESIGN. IMAGE COURTESY OF CITY OF SYDNEY





Figure 1: Line of sight from national to site level



Thinking about urban design, strategic and statutory planning at different scales helps put them in context. The elements of urban design are illustrated next to the scale of planning at which they are commonly addressed. Concept adopted from *Next Generation Planning*, published by the Council of Mayors (SEQ), 2011

## WHAT IS GOOD URBAN DESIGN?

Urban design is concerned with the arrangement, appearance and function of our suburbs, towns and cities. It is both a process and an outcome of creating localities in which people live, engage with each other, and the physical place around them.

Urban design involves many different disciplines including planning, development, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, law and finance.

Urban design operates from the macro scale of the urban structure (planning, zoning, transport and infrastructure networks) to the micro scale of street furniture and lighting. When fully integrated into policy and planning systems, urban design can inform land use planning, infrastructure, built form and even the socio-demographic mix of a place.

Urban design can significantly influence:

- the economic success and socio-economic composition of a locality – whether it encourages local businesses and entrepreneurship; whether it attracts people to live there; whether the costs of housing and travel are affordable; and whether access to job opportunities, facilities and services are equitable;
- the physical scale, space and ambience of a place. As such, it affects the balance between natural ecosystems and built environments, and their sustainability;
- the social and cultural nature of a locality: how people interact with each other, how they move around, and how they use a place.

Although urban design is often delivered as a specific ‘project’, it is in fact a long-term process that continues to evolve over time. It is this layering of building and infrastructure types, natural ecosystems, communities and cultures that gives places their unique characteristics and identities.

Refer to **Elements of Urban Design** for further definitions relating to urban design in the Australian context.

The Council of Australian Governments has agreed to encourage urban design of the highest international standard. This should include design, performance, quality, satisfaction and value when benchmarked against the best developments, products or processes in the world.

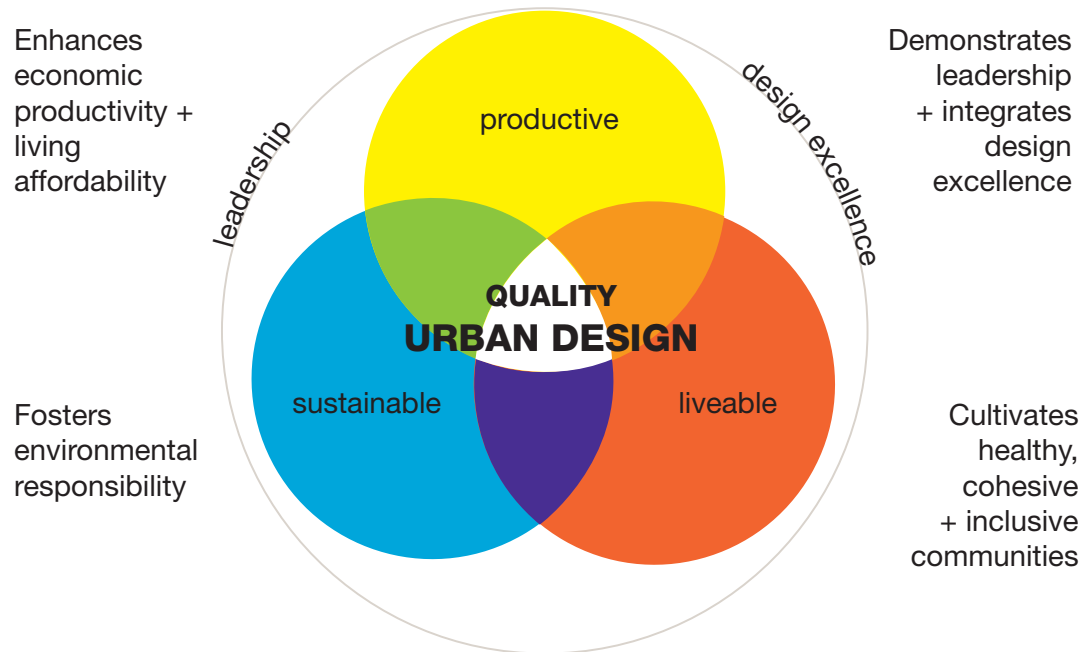
The objective of the urban design protocol is to encourage the highest standard of urban design across all parts of our suburbs, towns and cities.















## AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

The Urban Design Protocol is founded on five pillars: productivity, sustainability, liveability, leadership and design excellence. When integrated together, these pillars form the aim of the Protocol:

**To create productive, sustainable and liveable places for people through leadership and the integration of design excellence**

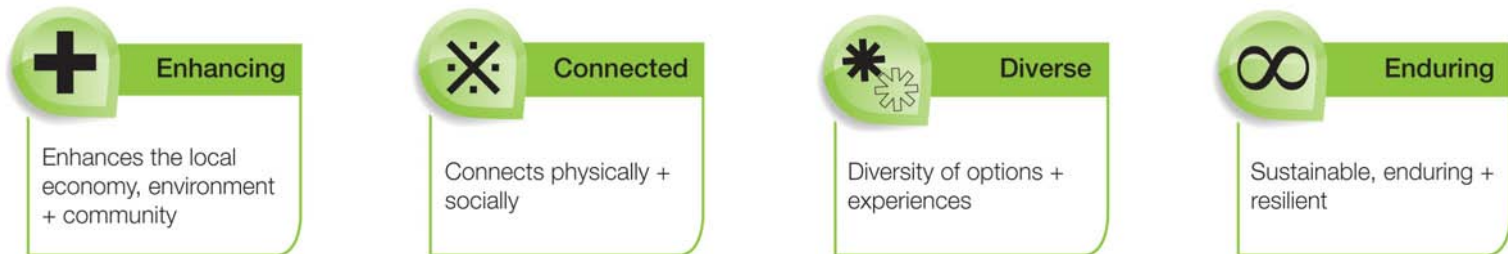


Twelve basic principles underpin the Protocol based on design, leadership and governance. These principles are interrelated with the five foundation pillars of the Protocol.

Aim		What is being achieved (outcome)		Liveability	How it's achieved (process)	
		Productivity	Sustainability		Leadership	Design
Creates productive, sustainable + liveable places for people through leadership + the integration of design excellence		Enhances economic productivity + living affordability	Fosters environmental responsibility	Cultivates healthy, cohesive + inclusive communities	Demonstrates visionary leadership + governance	Integrates design excellence
<b>Design principles about place: productivity + sustainability</b>						
<b>Enhancing</b> Enhances local economy, environment + community		✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Connected</b> Connects physically + socially		✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Diverse</b> Diversity of options + experiences		✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Enduring</b> Sustainable, enduring + resilient		✓	✓			✓
<b>Design principles about people: liveability</b>						
<b>Comfortable</b> Comfortable + welcoming				✓		✓
<b>Vibrant</b> Vibrant, with people around		✓		✓		✓
<b>Safe</b> Feels safe				✓		✓
<b>Walkable</b> Enjoyable + easy to walk + bicycle around			✓	✓		✓
<b>Principles about leadership and governance</b>						
<b>Context</b> Works within the planning, physical + social context					✓	✓
<b>Engagement</b> Engages with relevant stakeholders				✓	✓	✓
<b>Excellence</b> Excellence, innovation + leadership		✓			✓	✓
<b>Custodianship</b> Considers custodianship + maintenance over time			✓		✓	✓

## PLACE: PRODUCTIVITY + SUSTAINABILITY

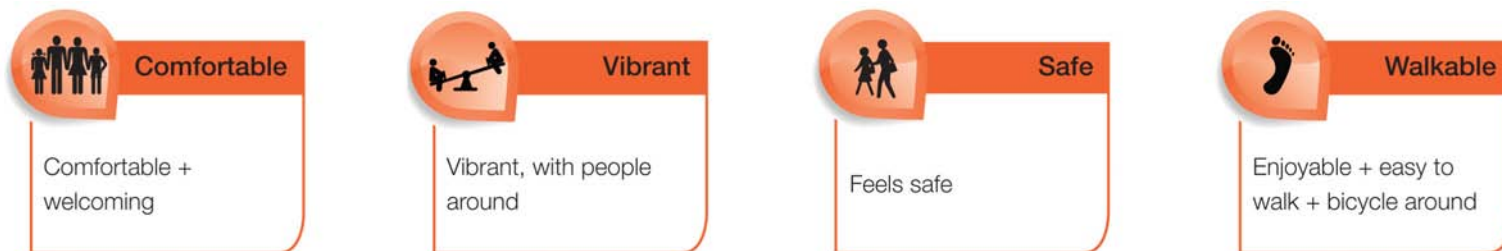
Creates the context for people to engage with the place



Principles	Outcomes	Attributes—How it helps to achieve world-class urban design
Enhancing	Enhances the local economy, environment + community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It respects the needs and aspirations of the community that lives and works there</li> <li>It creates opportunities for people to prosper and local businesses to thrive</li> <li>It sustains and enhances the natural environment</li> <li>It enhances the built environment visually, physically and functionally</li> <li>It celebrates unique characteristics—heritage, culture and community—that create a sense of place and identity</li> </ul>
Connected	Connects physically + socially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is well connected to surrounding areas</li> <li>You can see where you are and where you are going</li> <li>There is a range of transport options, including public transport, walking and bicycling</li> <li>It is connected to places with jobs, schools, shops, facilities and services</li> <li>It is connected with the past—the heritage of a place—and with the community and its culture</li> <li>It feels connected with the natural environment</li> </ul>
Diverse	Diversity of options + experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each locality has its own character and qualities</li> <li>There is a rich range of experiences—how you move around and interact with others, what buildings and spaces look and feel like, and what things you can do</li> <li>There is a range of facilities, services and activities</li> <li>Despite the diversity, there is an overall harmonious blend</li> <li>You can take different routes depending on your mood, or if you're visiting different places on your way</li> <li>It meets different people's needs, including a diversity of housing options</li> <li>There is biodiversity in the flora and fauna</li> </ul>
Enduring	Sustainable, enduring + resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is resilient to extreme weather events, natural disasters and a changing climate</li> <li>Things are built to last, where appropriate – they're made of robust materials, are designed well and there's a sense of quality</li> <li>It is visually and aesthetically pleasing as well as practical</li> <li>It is well maintained and cared for</li> <li>It is designed to save resources like water, energy and materials, and minimises its impact on the environment</li> <li>It considers current and future activities and can evolve and adapt over time</li> </ul>

## PEOPLE: LIVEABILITY

Creates the context for people to engage with each other



Principles	Outcomes	Attributes – How it helps to achieve world-class urban design
Comfortable	Comfortable + welcoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It feels comfortable to walk through, sit, stand, play, talk, read, or just relax and contemplate</li> <li>• It is not too exposed to unpleasant noise, wind, heat, rain, traffic or pollution</li> <li>• You can freely use the place, or at least part of it, without having to pay</li> <li>• You can be yourself and feel included as part of the community</li> <li>• It caters for people with various physical capabilities, the old and the young</li> </ul>
Vibrant	Vibrant, with people around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can see that there are other people around</li> <li>• People are enjoying themselves and each other's company</li> <li>• There are places to meet and interact, play, explore, recreate and unwind</li> <li>• It is a place you want to visit, experience, or live in</li> </ul>
Safe	Feels safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It feels safe and secure, even at night or on your own</li> <li>• There aren't signs of decay such as graffiti, rubbish, weeds or derelict buildings and places</li> <li>• Roads and paths are safe for adults and children to walk or ride their bikes</li> </ul>
Walkable	Enjoyable + easy to walk + bicycle around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It prioritises people walking or riding before vehicles</li> <li>• It is easy to get around on foot, bike, wheelchair, pushing a pram or wheeling luggage</li> <li>• Buildings and streets feel like they're the right size and type for that place</li> <li>• It encourages physical activity and social interaction, and promotes a healthy lifestyle</li> </ul>

## LEADERSHIP + GOVERNANCE



Principles	Processes	Attributes – How it helps achieve world-class urban design
Context	Works within the planning, physical + social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It sets, or works within the strategic planning framework</li> <li>• It integrates with the physical environment, including its topography, biodiversity, landscape and views, existing streets and buildings, and infrastructure</li> <li>• It incorporates the heritage, culture and historical context of surrounding communities and places</li> <li>• It is compatible with the surrounding social and economic activities</li> </ul>
Engagement	Engages with relevant stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It acknowledges that urban design is primarily about creating places for people</li> <li>• It engages people in the development of their community</li> <li>• It adopts a multi-disciplinary and collaborative approach to planning and design</li> </ul>
Excellence	Fosters excellence, innovation + leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It prioritises best practice planning, design, engineering, procurement and maintenance</li> <li>• It champions universal design and accessibility</li> <li>• It integrates design, and design expertise, from the earliest stages of a plan or project through to completion</li> <li>• It engages competent, skilled professionals to design and deliver on projects</li> </ul>
Custodianship	Considers custodianship + maintenance over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It recognises that communities, environments and cities are continually evolving and adapting</li> <li>• It considers the wider environmental, social and economic costs and benefits of development, operations, maintenance and disposal</li> <li>• It ensures that the design of a place is appropriate for its ongoing maintenance, operations and upkeep</li> <li>• It incorporates strategies to reduce and adapt to climate change</li> </ul>

## MODEL PROCESSES

Well-designed urban places can only be achieved by adopting an integrated design approach where multi-disciplinary teams work collaboratively at all stages of a project, from design through to procurement, implementation, operation and maintenance. Good model processes prioritise design excellence through leadership, teamwork and integrated processes.

The following is an indicative process for delivering high quality urban design projects. It provides a broad description of the considerations required.

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### CONTEXT

- Strategic planning

A good strategic planning framework analyses and decides what economic, environmental and social outcomes need to be achieved, and prioritises actions to achieve these outcomes. Strategic policies are then implemented through a variety of means, including statutory plans, infrastructure plans and service delivery plans. COAG's review of capital city strategic planning systems sets nine criteria that should be embodied in city strategic planning systems.

A project should work within the context of the strategic planning framework. It should respond to the National Urban Policy objectives and the principles outlined in the Urban Design Protocol. It also needs to work within the strategic policies and statutory plans of the relevant State / Territory and local authorities (see Figure 1).

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### ENGAGEMENT

Relevant stakeholders, including the broader community, should provide input and feedback at key stages of process. They can help to develop the vision, review design options and provide feedback during public exhibition.

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### EXCELLENCE through:

- Leadership
- Collaboration and teamwork

A process that embraces design excellence requires visionary leadership. One way of encouraging this is to appoint a client-side project leader and ensure that delivering high quality urban design outcomes is a key accountability. For larger projects, consider a 'design champion' within the project team, capability based selection, design competition and/or an independent design review.

Urban design excellence is achieved by multidisciplinary teams with appropriate skills and experience. Ensure the project team includes competent, skilled design professionals including land use planners, urban designers, landscape architects, architects and engineers as appropriate.



- Integrated processes
 

Invest up front in quality, integrated processes:

  - Consult relevant stakeholders and communities at appropriate stages
  - Develop a vision for, and specify, the outcomes that the project seeks to achieve
  - Write a detailed and balanced brief, setting out performance criteria
  - Undertake thorough analysis of site and context
  - Develop a variety of realistic and varied options (potentially through an enquiry by design process) that meet the brief
  - Evaluate options against performance criteria and Urban Design Protocol principles and attributes
  - Develop the preferred option through an iterative design process, and document decision making
  - Document the preferred option
  - Select the procurement method, ensuring that procurement processes do not reduce design quality and monitor throughout the implementation of the project to ensure outcomes are achieved
  - Evaluate outcomes with reference to the Urban Design Protocol principles, and document areas for improvement or future rectification
- Design culture
 

Foster a culture which critically assesses urban design, celebrates its best examples and builds design literacy. Reward design excellence.

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## CUSTODIANSHIP

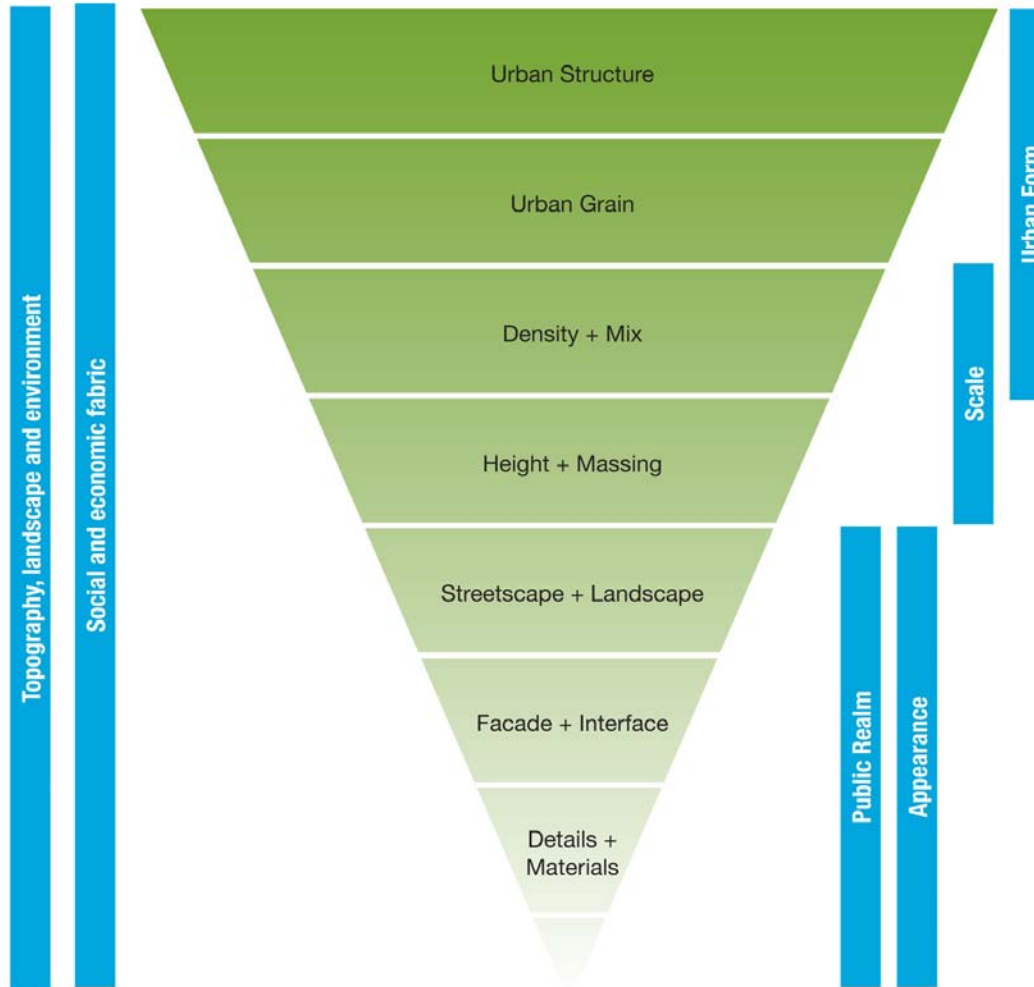
Ensure that systems are in place for ongoing operations, management and upkeep so that the place is well-maintained and sustainable over the long term.

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## ELEMENTS OF URBAN DESIGN

This section provides basic explanations for terms that are commonly used for urban design in the Australian context. Figure 2 shows the approximate hierarchical relationship between the elements of urban form, followed by a brief definition of the elements.

Figure 2: Elements of urban form – macro to micro scale



<b>Urban structure</b>	The overall framework of a region, town or precinct, showing relationships between zones of built forms, land forms, natural environments, activities and open spaces. It encompasses broader systems including transport and infrastructure networks.
<b>Urban grain</b>	The balance of open space to built form, and the nature and extent of subdividing an area into smaller parcels or blocks. For example a 'fine urban grain' might constitute a network of small or detailed streetscapes. It takes into consideration the hierarchy of street types, the physical linkages and movement between locations, and modes of transport.
<b>Density + mix</b>	The intensity of development and the range of different uses (such as residential, commercial, institutional or recreational uses).
<b>Height + massing</b>	The scale of buildings in relation to height and floor area, and how they relate to surrounding land forms, buildings and streets. It also incorporates the building envelope, site coverage and solar orientation. Height and massing create the sense of openness or enclosure, and affect the amenity of streets, spaces and other buildings.
<b>Streetscape + landscape</b>	The design of public spaces such as streets, open spaces and pathways, and includes landscaping, microclimate, shading and planting.
<b>Facade + interface</b>	The relationship of buildings to the site, street and neighbouring buildings (alignment, setbacks, boundary treatment) and the architectural expression of their facades (projections, openings, patterns and materials).
<b>Details + materials</b>	The close-up appearance of objects and surfaces and the selection of materials in terms of detail, craftsmanship, texture, colour, durability, sustainability and treatment. It includes public and private structures and space, street furniture, paving, lighting and signage. It contributes to human comfort, safety and enjoyment of the public or private domain.
<b>Public Realm</b>	Much of urban design is concerned with the design and management of publicly used space (also referred to as the public realm or public domain) and the way this is experienced and used. The public realm includes the natural and built environment used by the general public on a day-to-day basis such as streets, plazas, parks, and public infrastructure. Some aspects of privately owned space such as the bulk and scale of buildings, courtyards and entries that are traversed by the public or gardens that are visible from the public realm, can also contribute to the overall result. At times, there is a blurring of public and private realms, particularly where privately owned space is publicly used.
<b>Topography, landscape</b>	The natural environment includes the topography of landforms, water and environment
<b>Social + economic fabric</b>	The non-physical aspects of the urban form include social factors (culture, participation, health and well-being) as well as the productive capacity and economic productivity of a community. It incorporates aspects such as demographics and life stages, social interaction and support networks.





GEELONG YOUTH ACTIVITY AREA, WINNER OF THE 2010 AUSTRALIA AWARD FOR URBAN DESIGN. BY CITY OF GREATER GEELONG, CONVIC DESIGN PTY LTD, CANTERI BROS. CONSTRUCTIONS PTY LTD, CARDO GROGAN RICHARDS, CIVIL ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS, WEBB AUSTRALIA GROUP (VIC) AND LIGHTING AND ELECTRICAL DESIGN CONSULTANTS.



## APPENDIX A: URBAN DESIGN PROTOCOL ON A PAGE

**AIM:** to create productive, sustainable and liveable places through leadership and the integration of design excellence

Urban design incorporates:

- Outcomes – described in the eight design principles
- Processes – described in the four principles about leadership and governance.



### PLACE: PRODUCTIVITY + SUSTAINABILITY



#### Enhancing

Enhances the local economy, environment + community



#### Connected

Connects physically + socially



#### Diverse

Diversity of options + experiences



#### Enduring

Sustainable, enduring + resilient

### PEOPLE: LIVEABILITY



#### Comfortable

Comfortable + welcoming



#### Vibrant

Vibrant, with people around



#### Safe

Feels safe



#### Walkable

Enjoyable + easy to walk + cycle around

### LEADERSHIP + GOVERNANCE



#### Context

Works within the planning, physical + social context



#### Engagement

Engages with relevant stakeholders



#### Excellence

Fosters excellence, innovation + leadership



#### Custodianship

Considers custodianship + maintenance over time

Outcomes

Processes

## APPENDIX B: NATIONAL URBAN POLICY ON A PAGE

*Our Cities, Our Future: a national urban policy for a productive sustainable and liveable future* presents a national framework to guide policy development and public and private investment in cities. It articulates a set of goals, objectives and underlying principles to guide decision making. See [www.majorcities.gov.au](http://www.majorcities.gov.au) for further information.

Goals	Objectives	Principles
Productivity	To harness the productivity of Australia's people and industry, by better managing our use of labour, creativity and knowledge, land and infrastructure	Efficiency
	1. Improve labour and capital productivity	Value for money
	2. Integrate land use and infrastructure	
Sustainability	3. Improve the efficiency of urban infrastructure	Innovation
	To advance the sustainability of Australia's natural and built environment, including through better resource and risk management	
	4. Protect and sustain our natural and built environments	Adaptability
	5. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality	
	6. Manage our resources sustainably	Resilience
Liveability	7. Increase resilience to climate change, emergency events and natural hazards	
	To enhance the liveability of our cities by promoting better urban design, planning and affordable access to recreational, cultural and community facilities	Equity
	8. Facilitate the supply of appropriate mixed income housing	Affordability
	9. Support affordable living choices	
	10. Improve accessibility and reduce dependence on private vehicles	Subsidiarity
Governance	11. Support community wellbeing	
	To progress the goals of productivity, sustainability and liveability through better governance, planning and management	Integration
	12. Improve the planning and management of our cities	
	13. Streamline administrative processes	Engagement
	14. Evaluate progress	





