

Draft Waterfront Design Guidelines

Committee for Perth Submission

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Perth Waterfront Design Guidelines.

As you are aware, the Committee for Perth is a strong supporter of and advocate for the Perth Waterfront Project.

This project is one of the most significant developments to be undertaken in the City of Perth in the past 50 years. It marks a critical juncture in the development of Perth into a more contemporary, vibrant and liveable city and region.

Therefore, while we believe that it is important that we collectively see this project through to completion, it is also essential that we get it right, and design will clearly play a major role in its ultimate success – or failure.

This submission provides input into the draft Design Guidelines with the intention of providing constructive comment about the future design of the project and we hope that our comments assist the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA) in the project process.

We also hope that the State Government, through the MRA, is responsive to comments received through this process and makes a significant effort to ensure that there is adequate opportunity for the business community and the public to have input into the design of the site. We believe that this is essential if we are to achieve an outcome that is embraced and welcomed by the community.

To assist in achieving this goal the Committee for Perth would also support the appointment of an independent design review panel of eminent design professionals and appropriate industry and community representatives to provide ongoing review and independent comment on the design and development of the project.

Comments

1.0 *Design Vision and Goals*

The document lacks an overriding vision or goals expressing the design intentions for the site in a clear and concise manner. We believe that providing an overriding set of design goals would assist in drawing the document together and provide some additional, clear, up front detail in regards to the intentions for the site.

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A complete list of current members is available at: www.committeeforperth.com.au

Goals such as:

- *Providing a direct connection between the City and the Swan River*
- *Connecting the waterfront with the community, heritage and culture through...*
- *Providing a diverse and rich range of public spaces and experiences including...*
- *Enabling a mix of land uses including...*
- *Ensuring the delivery of high quality architecture that exhibits active edges, a fine grain and human scale at street level...etc*

The document would also benefit from captions describing the images as well as larger, clearer images that directly illustrate the desired outcome of the guidelines rather than multiple small images.

As the potential investors in the site are likely to be national or international, the document should be sophisticated and of high quality, reflecting the importance and prestige of the site and the design excellence that it purports to mandate.

Land Use Mix

The Committee for Perth generally supports the mix of land uses outlined in the document however we also request the inclusion of text specifically referring to recreation, tourism and cultural uses. This is particularly important to the Committee for Perth given our view that the inclusion of an Indigenous Cultural Centre should be a central anchor and critical to the project. It also reflects the strategic importance of the site as a regional focal point for the community and visitors alike.

2.0 The Public Realm

We support the principles outlined for the public realm. We also support and are encouraged by the premise that the creation of a high quality, diverse public realm is the overriding objective for the design of the site.

In regard to the specific design elements of the public realm, we suggest that additional information and clarity is provided about the mechanics of each public space and to how development should relate to adjacent public realm.

It is also requested that additional information is provided on:

- The treatment of the river edge, access to the river and connections to the natural environment.
- The inclusion of a list of clear principles/objectives for the design and use of Station Park. The Park will be in shade and requires more detail in terms of activation.
- The identification of specific objectives for the design of William Street Landing which reflect the role of the location as the future forecourt of an Indigenous Cultural Centre, and which therefore strongly reflect Indigenous culture and the natural heritage of the site through native plantings and a strong sense of connection with the river itself (for example). There is an opportunity for this site to provide a strong reflection and celebration of Western Australia's Indigenous

heritage as the opposite Barrack Square provides in its reflection of the region's English heritage.

- Additional detail on how Barrack Square and the existing Bell Tower will be connected to and integrated with the project, including site lines to the tower from the inlet and promenade. Space between Sites 9 and 10 should be re-considered so as to properly engage with Barrack Street activities, and improve vista of westbound Riverside Drive.
- Reference to the intention to accommodate the student sign in tablets in Barrack/Union Square and the regional mosaics which were prepared by children in country regions to acknowledge the 2000 millennium.
- Some comment on the flora species to be planted on the island – including consideration of the inclusion of native species; and details on the level of access that will be provided to the river.

We also have concerns about the scale of the proposed lanes. While the guidelines suggest through both text and images that the aim of the laneways, particularly William Lane, is to create an intimate and vibrant space, we question whether the laneways are too wide and too short to effectively achieve this outcome.

3.0 Building Design

In regard to building design, the Committee for Perth supports the general philosophy outlined on Page 26. In particular:

- The continuation of the city grid with an aim to facilitate a relatively seamless transition between the existing urban fabric and the water's edge.
- The application of a flexible approach to heights, setback and design to encourage and enable innovation and best practice.
- The requirement for the design of individual sites to be responsive to neighbouring sites, the existing context and the public realm, and provide a positive contribution to the project area as a whole. For example, site 10 3D models make no reference to the neighbouring Barrack Square and the Bell Tower while sites 4 to 8 do not reflect the scale and grain of the opposite Esplanade Buildings.

Achieving active edges and a high level of pedestrian permeability is also strongly supported however our members have expressed some concern that it will be difficult to achieve activation of Sites 2 and 3.

The Committee also strongly supports the aim for buildings to demonstrate design excellence, including fine grain architectural detail. The Committee for Perth has long held the view that achieving fine grain architectural detail will be a very important component of achieving a high quality outcome for this project, and is essential to achieve a human scale from street level, providing visual interest, diversity and creating features that make the space unique and strengthen people's ties to it over time.

Site Size and Proposed Podium Style Architecture

Our members have expressed concern that both the large size of the sites and the proposed mandating of podium style architecture could limit the ability for the best design outcomes to be achieved.

The current scheme allows for the construction of buildings that are an equivalent size to QV1, and we are concerned that this may be too large for the current development environment especially when compared to the north side of the Esplanade.

The potential ability to amalgamate development sites five and six could exacerbate this problem, and our members have expressed a view that enabling amalgamation is not appropriate and that a series of smaller sites in the area designated sites 4 – 8 inclusive might better reflect the grain of the sites opposite on the Esplanade.

In regard to podium style architecture, we believe that every effort should be made to ensure that the best design outcome is encouraged rather than the enforcement of podiums (i.e. other forms of architecture should be allowed if design objectives are achieved) and that the guidelines must ensure that the use of podiums does not result in negative and repetitive design outcomes.

The potential negative effects of large scale podium style architecture are reflected in some of the images shown in the guidelines themselves, including large scale dominant buildings which lack human scale and diversity, exhibit a monotonous architectural form, and have inactive edges. It is our understanding that the guidelines seek to discourage this type of outcome.

Members of our Reshaping Working Group have also expressed concern that cross flow ventilation will be difficult to achieve with such large floor plates.

The Committee for Perth understands the need for government to consider its return on investment in the design and development of the site however we do not believe that this should compromise the ultimate urban design outcome of the waterfront. Therefore we would encourage increased flexibility to enable the lot sizes to be broken down to achieve the fine grain.

Impact of height and mass on view corridors and solar access

It is requested that issues of building mass, height and envelope are given additional consideration to ensure critical issues such as view corridors, solar access, wind effects, viable developments and feasible activation can be achieved through the proposed design.

Members of our Reshaping Working Group have also suggested that a detailed 3D model of likely building envelopes should be developed so as to confirm solar access to the public realm and wind mitigation issues.

The Committee also has concerns that the current scheme will be shaded for significant periods of the year which will impact negatively on alfresco and other public realm activities and that additional consideration is needed regarding the arrangement of building mass and bulk in terms of orientation etc. For example, it has been suggested by our members that a

larger gap between lots five, six and seven would dramatically improve solar penetration into the inlet. Possibly site 4 and Station Park could be exchanged thereby providing greater solar access to The Landing area as well as the Square.

Use of vacant sites and development timeframes

Our members have expressed concerns about the sites remaining vacant for long periods of time and suggest that guidance is provided in regard to the use of the sites prior to development and that mandatory development timeframes are provided.

Materials

Additional information is requested on how building materials can and should reflect the heritage values of the site and in particular how the Barrack Square solution reflects the previous naming of the square which was Union Jack Square.

Building Orientation and Layout

We understand and support the general objective to ensure that residential apartments achieve good solar access, however it is also noted that this may compromise the ability for apartments to access river views.

4.0 Transit Oriented Development and Car Parking

The Committee for Perth strongly supports the implementation of Transit Oriented Design Principles in the waterfront development. We have noted that there are some industry concerns about the impacts on commercial viability of the proposed restriction of residential car parking to one bay per apartment and suggest that additional detail is provided in regard to the justification for this decision.

5.0 Site Specific Guidelines

In regard to the site specific guidelines, we support the proposed 60% Tower Floor Plate, however we have some concerns about the control of spaces between the sites and particularly believe that spaces between sites five, six, seven and eight should be more strictly controlled and that the view corridor between sites nine and ten should be expanded to improve the vista from eastbound Riverside Drive.

It has also been requested that additional detail is provided regarding sound protection and reflection requirements for sites nine and ten which are adjacent to Barrack Square and the Bell Tower.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the draft Waterfront Design Guidelines and we look forward to providing further input on this project in the future.

Yours sincerely



Holly DeVaney
Acting CEO