

## **30 year Plan for Greater Adelaide submission from the AILA, SA Group.**

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The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) SA Group welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *30-year Plan for Greater Adelaide* and congratulates the Department of Planning and Local Government (DPLG) on the Governments' re-engagement with the planning process after a long absence. The Plan appears to be a comprehensive document, however, the AILA believes there are a number of topics that have not been reviewed or adequately discussed in such a visionary document and is keen to engage in a broader dialogue with the DPLG regarding the elements necessary for inclusion to ensure that the Plan is, as it suggests, "planning the Adelaide we all want."

In particular, the AILA would like to raise a number of topics embracing the public realm for discussion and review in relation to landscape architecture and the environment. These topics include; open space, green infrastructure, biodiversity, landscape character, urban design and planning and the importance of structure plans to achieve the vision of the *30-year Plan for Greater Adelaide*.

The AILA's responses below are intended to start the discussion rather than critique each policy and action.

### **Public Realm**

The *Public Realm*, through effective landscape planning and design, is able to bring together the many 'parts' of a sustainable neighbourhood or city.

It is essential that the development of the *Public Realm*, including existing and proposed open spaces, greenways and streetscapes reflect the same high standards required for transport infrastructure and the built form, including urban infill and future residential development.

Sufficient investment should be made in the *Public Realm* and other open space networks (including streetscapes and pedestrian/cycle networks) to achieve the same high expectations as those that are placed on buildings, in regards to amenity and sustainability including water usage and energy conservation.

The report should also consider the role of the built form in affecting the microclimate within the city and mitigating the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, especially the public realm. The UHI effect is the difference in temperature between parklands or greenways to the built form; however, it does not appear to be fully understood in this document. Greenways and other parkland plantings will not reduce the UHI effect but greening the built form will reduce the UHI effect.

An increase in high density living and smaller residential allotments noticeably reduces the amount of private open space (backyards/ front yards), requiring residents to seek alternatives for socializing and recreation, placing greater demands upon the role of public open space. As a result, direction is required on how to best integrate hard and soft elements to maximise the functional aspects of the *Public Realm*, especially in the design of the proposed Transit Oriented Developments and other higher density precincts.

## Open Space

A key focus of the Plan is the need to increase Adelaide's population and develop a denser urban fabric. Unfortunately, the progressive approach to the built form has not been applied to the provision of *Multi Functional Open Space*. Map D21 provides a record of open space 'today'. New or future open space is not identified.

The report demonstrates a preference to increase densities within existing neighborhoods rather than continue the expansion of the outer lying areas which we support; however, the demands on the existing public realm will increase if the targets of the plan to increase densities and reducing dwelling sizes are achieved. This demand will have impacts on existing *Open Space* and additional public open space will need to be provided to accommodate, not only these increased demands, but also to provide future social and environmental functions for Greater Adelaide and its community.

Added to this, the current 12.5% contribution of open space required of residential developers remains unchanged and it would appear that the opportunity to explore funding options and enforce the development and maintenance of this *Open Space* as part of the Development Act has also been missed. This omission inhibits the ability of the Plan to provide sustainable landscapes that could generate a network of green infrastructure and provide services for urban development, social connectivity, habitat value and amenity.

According to the plan, parks and opens space require 'inputs to maintain', however through appropriate planning and design, the ability for these areas to be more sustainable and in some cases self-sustaining could be greatly expanded.

The important multi-functional role that public *Open Space* plays in providing opportunities for community building, passive and active recreation activities, healthy lifestyles and other social activities is not reflected in the report along with discussions of the critical role that open space may play in stormwater management, maintaining biodiversity, bush fire management and providing opportunities for carbon sequestration.

## Green Infrastructure

The term *Green Infrastructure* is widely used to highlight the importance of the natural environment in providing eco-systems services to increase the capacity of the built environment to adapt and respond to the demands of changing climates. In particular, there is an emphasis on the 'life support' functions provided by a network of landscapes, open space and natural ecosystems, with an emphasis on connectivity to support long term sustainability<sup>1</sup>.

The Plan contains little detail on how urban development will embrace issues of sustainability, low energy/water requirements and future community needs. The Plan aims to "create a robust urban ecology by providing open spaces, greenways and green spaces in and around or on buildings...."

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_infrastructure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_infrastructure) (accessed 21 September 2009)

without specific mention in the Draft Policies or Draft Targets or a direct reference to *Green Infrastructure* or *Multi-function Open Space*. These topics are interlinked and specific reference will need to be made to each if a 'robust urban ecology' is to be created.

It will be essential that the strategic potential of the report is not restricted by a silo approach to infrastructure provision. A discussion of the term *Green Infrastructure* should be an essential part of any future plans for urban environments. Traditional forms of (Grey) Infrastructure such as transport energy and water can, and must, integrate with Green Infrastructure principles of environmental sustainability at every opportunity.

"Green Infrastructure is fundamentally different from other aspects of built infrastructure, in that it has the unique, inherent capacity to enhance and regenerate natural resources, rather than simply minimise the damage to environmental systems."<sup>2</sup>

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- The promotion of *Greenways*, a 1980's concept for system of open spaces, should be encouraged to accommodate or be adjacent to transport corridors but they should not replace the important role that dedicated open space such as local and regional parks has within the community.
- Although the Plan seeks to strengthen the connection between the Hills and the ocean (key Adelaide lifestyle characteristic), it makes no mention of the potential for creation of linear parks along the five creeks of the Adelaide Plains, generating a network of vegetated and riverine corridors to provide 'free' eco-systems services to cleanse the air and water in urban environments
- There is strong support for Draft Targets to achieve independence from potable water supplies for new public open spaces through WSUD techniques by 2015. However, we would question why delay until 2015 when it is known how to do this now (refer <http://www.planning.sa.gov.au/go/wsud>).
- We would encourage the Plan to promote landscape design as an important element to reduce the water consumption currently required for the maintenance of recreational open space
- The report should also consider the role of the built form in contributing to the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect and explore opportunities to control the micro climate within the city, especially the public realm.
- The provision of urban agricultural land as *Green Infrastructure* should be explored to develop future food security for Adelaide as the development of productive land within Greater Adelaide could significantly increase Adelaide's future sustainability.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.aila.org.au/greeninfrastructure/>

## **Biodiversity**

Although the Plan provides direction on biodiversity, it appears to lack an appreciation of the opportunities possible through the appropriate design of public open spaces, streetscapes and private open space. Urban ecology occurs in the city as well as the suburbs not just in the open space as suggested. The construction of green roofs for example may play a significant role in mitigating the UHI effect and along with green walls provide for increased biodiversity and associated social amenity.

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Policy 3 - Is there potential that any "offset" be at a greater rate than 1:1 to expedite biodiversity projects elsewhere?
- Policy 6 - suggest the addition of "and provide walking / cycling connections" after the word biodiversity.

## **Landscape Character**

With the progressive expansion of Greater Adelaide north and south, an understanding of the unique landscape characteristics that form individual regions will need to be achieved. Planning and urban design responses will need to consider the existing context of the land including its visual and physical aspects.

Future planning will need to respond to issues such as preserving 'view-sheds' particularly in the south where this is important due to the undulating topography and the importance of avoiding potential future views of oceans of tiled roofs. Furthermore, the response of built forms to the natural landform must be better managed and considered, without continuing reliance on hard engineering. New developments should seek to work with, and better respond to, the natural landform and character of the site.

Similar consideration will need to be given to the agrarian landscapes of the Gawler, Angle Vale and Virginia areas. Vistas, views and the maintenance of an open spatial character will form important aspects in protecting the *Landscape Character*. Just as the Development Plan discusses 'desired characters', so too must the existing and future character of Greater Adelaide's landscape be considered.

## **Urban Design and Planning**

In order to generate world-class design and vibrancy (Principle 5) it is essential that high quality urban design and planning be incorporated in the construction of all built form, both urban (CBD) and suburban and in the development of the public realm – the essential space in between the buildings.

Effective, high quality urban design and planning occurs when an integrated design approach across multiple disciplines is employed, involving the direct collaboration of design professionals in the fields of public art, urban design, landscape architecture, architecture, social planning, civil engineering and transport planning.

As William McDonough, world-renowned architect and designer said, “design is the first signal of human intention” and in relation to the 30 year plan, it is suggested that Urban Design and Planning in its many forms be used to implement and articulate the vision of the Greater Adelaide Plan.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Generous widths for residential road verges to allow street tree planting. This is particularly important in small lot divisions where the space for tree planting is severely restricted on private land.
- Set design targets and benchmarks in relation to the quality of the built-form and construction and implementation of the public realm.
- Ensure that public art is integrated into the public realm rather than added as an afterthought or ‘space filler’.

**Structure Plans**

Mentioned throughout the Draft Policies in the Plan is the requirement to develop and implement *Structure Plans* to guide and control future development and these will be essential to the delivery of the Plan and to ensure that targets are met. While some definition and scope of *Structure Plans* is contained on page 187 of the Plan, the importance of these documents is not discussed or illustrated. For the Plan to be successful, future Structure Plans must be well considered, visionary and aligned to the social, environmental and economic needs of Greater Adelaide.

To this end, the AILA suggests that additional information on the form and content of these plans be provided in order to determine how they will deliver the Planning of Greater Adelaide that we all want.

**Summary**

In a compact, well connected city such as Adelaide there is a demonstrated potential for effective collaboration<sup>3</sup> between locally based design professions engaged in the development of sustainable built environments. This collaborative energy could be effectively harnessed with design representatives forming an advisory panel to the Department of Planning and Local Government, if requested.

The AILA welcomes the opportunity to develop and broaden the thinking and debate behind the 30-year Plan of Greater Adelaide and looks forward to greater involvement and input into the final incarnation of this critically important and forward thinking document.

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<sup>3</sup> The Collaborations Forum was an initiative of the RAIA and included representatives from Arts SA, Planning SA, DIA, Craft South and the AILA engaging in collaborative events from 2004 to 2006.