Living Cities Summit NSW

Tuesday 16th August 2016
The Mint, Sydney

REPORT

Contents

Green infrastructure is defined as 'natural vegetation and vegetative technologies – like urban forests, greenways, restored and constructed wetlands, green roofs, green walls, bio-swales, and more that provide society with benefits like enhanced liveability, health and wellbeing, improved energy efficiency, improved air and water quality, reduced flooding and increased recreational opportunities'.

Canberra Living Cities Summit

Introduction

An alliance of partners gathered for the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture (AILA) National Living Cities Summit in Canberra in February 2016. They provided input into what has been framed as a National Five Point Living Infrastructure Plan.

1. **National Living Cities Fund** – establishing an investment fund for the implementation of green infrastructure projects across Australia.

2. **Living Infrastructure as an Asset Class (or equivalent)** – aimed at having green infrastructure formally recognised by Treasury as an asset class to be valued during business case development for major federally funded projects.

3. **Local Government Green Infrastructure Package** – a national incentives package would be created and delivered through local government to elevate the priority of green infrastructure strategies.

4. **National Green Streets and 'Grey to Green' Pilot Program** – seeking to redefine the role and design of road corridors that express the full potential of environmental, social and economic benefits from green infrastructure strategies, as well as the active retrofit of grey infrastructure to green infrastructure.

5. **Minimum SITES Ratings for Federally Funded Projects** – building a culture of comprehensive landscape assessment and strategy development in all federally funded infrastructure projects.

Each state division of AILA is further developing this plan through workshops, alliances and actions to deliver the five point plan. This report summarises the NSW Summit at the Mint on 16 August 2016.

"The green open space; tree groves, woodlands and avenues; water courses; green ways; green roofs; national, regional, local and pocket parks; sports grounds, golf courses and ovals; street trees; nature strips and gardens are as important to a successful city as any other type of infrastructure."

AILA NSW President, Gareth Collins

NSW Living Cities Summit

The NSW Living Cities Summit held in Sydney brought a range of experts and stakeholders together to envisage a new future for our cities underpinned by green infrastructure.

Speakers included Minister for Planning Rob Stokes; David Borger, Western Sydney Director of the Sydney Business Chamber; Tom Grosskopf from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage; Dr Caroline Butler-Bowden, Acting Executive Director, Sydney Living Museums; Michelle Cramer from Lend Lease; Committee for Sydney Chairman Tim Williams; James Rosenwax and Roger Swinbourne from AECOM; Tract associate Georgia Sedgemen; and AILA NSW president Gareth Collins.

The discussions built on a five point plan developed at the inaugural Living Cities Summit held jointly by AILA and Engineers Australia in Canberra in February this year, focusing on how the plan can be implemented in New South Wales.

The plan covers the recognition, funding, implementation, improvement and assessment of green infrastructure initiatives with the ultimate aim of improving the liveability, productivity and sustainability of Australian cities.

The key topics of the Sydney event revolved around funding green infrastructure, recognising it as an asset class and removing barriers for local government and district plans to implement it. AILA members are assuming an increasingly central role in relation to the liveability and sustainability of our rapidly growing cities. Green Infrastructure is recognised as a key component in achieving these objectives

In his speech, David Borger asked attendees to focus on street trees as a way of generating significant positive change in our less leafy suburbs and under-privileged areas. Tom Grosskopf drew the link between green infrastructure and the urban wildlife that enriches our lives.

Gareth Collins NSW AILA President said "We need to learn from the systems, alliances and processes so effective in delivering transport infrastructure,"

Dr Caroline Butler-Bowden pointed out the social dimension, telling the audience that our cultural and natural heritage is a building block for unique context sensitive cities.

Tim Williams said the best cities "start with a park", and David Raison of Lawn Solutions Australia pointed out that "no one lies down on concrete".

Michelle Cramer presented on "turning the grey to green", and showed how an organisation and a project like Darling Quarter can contribute to green Infrastructure.

Roger Swinbourne spoke on the techniques and tools that will enable stakeholders to evaluate green infrastructure.

Georgia Sedgemen discussed the relevant indicators of Liveable Sydney 2016, including open space and tree cover, noting the importance of street tree planting, as lot sizes reduce and densities increase, leaving large areas of Sydney with little tree cover.

"We live in the landscape, and no longer can we use land unconsciously. We need to value our natural systems and ensure they are resilient enough to cope with the significant changes and growth ahead of us."

Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes

Priority Actions

The Summit included a panel discussion and 'speed workshop'. The following are the key suggestions and recommendations from the workshop under each of the five Green Infrastructure principles:

1. Financing the Living City

Priority actions:

- **Implement Sydney Green Grid and city green infrastructure plans through 'other' infrastructure projects where they align.**

- **Engage with 'NSW Lotteries' regarding the potential for Green Infrastructure project funding.**

- **Collate research and guidance that demonstrates the economic value of Green Infrastructure. Promulgate to government and the private sector.**

2. Recognising Green Infrastructure in Government

Priority actions:

- **Develop an alliance of design institutes to champion a Green Infrastructure approach to planning and design.**

- **Develop GI awareness training program for state government and industry leaders to deliver e.g. NSW OEH *Urban Green-Cover Technical Guidelines* 2015*.**

- **Seek support from the Greater Sydney Commission to coordinate delivery of metropolitan wide green infrastructure ('Green Grid') strategy integrated with each 'District Plan' working with local government partners.**

3. Incentivising Local Government on Green Infrastructure Projects

Priority actions:

- Develop GI awareness training program for local government leaders based on capacity building to deliver e.g. NSW OEH *Urban Green-Cover Technical Guidelines* 2015.

- Local Government to develop and share Green Infrastructure best practice examples working with state level agencies such as the Greater Sydney Commission.

4. Turning the Grey to Green

Priority actions:

- Develop pilot programs demonstrating the Grey to Green, accompanied with clear metrics on the benefits of Green Infrastructure.

- Facilitate the development and dissemination of Green Infrastructure best practice examples by Local Government in partnership with State and Federal Government agencies.

- Street tree planting programs co-funded across all levels of government.

5. Integrating and Assessing Green Infrastructure in Projects

Priority actions:

I. GOVERNANCE AND PROCESS
    a) Shift from 'business as usual' in planning, approval processes, and project implementation to achieve high quality, sustainable and equitable green infrastructure throughout Sydney;
    b) Encourage the NSW Minister for Planning to engage with Treasury to adopt a broader economic cost / benefit analysis approach to green infrastructure projects that factors in more than just the financial benefits;
    c) Define a clear process for determining the quantity, quality and connectivity of open space at a Precinct level to meet requirements of existing and projected communities;

d) Develop a new management and funding model, e.g. a Green Grid Open Space Trust for conserving and managing areas of high biodiversity value; and

e) Encourage vertical integration between three layers of government—local, State and Federal—in relation to policy implementation that impacts local environments, e.g. Tree lopping by power companies mandated by the Federal Communications Act.

II. KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT, SHARING AND COLLABORATION

a) Ensure GI is clearly defined and understood—no longer 'hiding in plain sight'—by supporting and disseminating case study investigations of exemplary projects;

b) Work with the Australian Property Institute to develop a framework for assessing the quantifiable and quantifiable benefits of GI in new development and urban renewal projects;

c) Collaborate with other organisations and professional institutes, e.g. Planning Institute Australia (PIA), Consult Australia, Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA), HIA and 202020, to ensure cross-disciplinary understanding and support for GI project implementation;

d) Standardise data across local and state government so there's a consistent way of applying and interpreting information about GI, including open space;

e) Engage with university and research centres to ensure research findings are disseminated to policy makers, practitioners and communities; and

f) Develop and deliver education and training to elected officials and department officers on the benefits and implementation of GI.

III. TOOL DEVELOPMENT FOR MEASUREMENT AND PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

a) Identify and promote tools that measure multiple benefits of green infrastructure and balance quantity, quality and accessibility;

b) Promote the use of analysis tools to measure the value of existing assets, e.g. iTree, to determine the need and location for new green infrastructure; and

c) Work with GBCA to introduce SITES evaluation tool for green infrastructure projects.

The Living Cities Alliance NSW

The Living Cities Alliance seeks to affect positive change, nationally, in our cities and regions as they pursue a quest to become more sustainable, resilient and productive. The Alliance seeks to promote green infrastructure investment as a core strategy to achieve these outcomes.

The Living Cities Alliance will bring together a united voice of organisations, sectors and trades that collectively plan, design, build, maintain and steward green infrastructure in Australia. We represent the public, private and non-profit sectors.

The Alliance embraces the core principles of the 'collective impact' model for large-scale change:

- Embracing a common agenda;
- Encouraging shared measurement;
- Delivering mutually reinforcing activities;
- Providing continuous communication; and
- Resourced through backbone support.

NSW organisations represented on the Living Cities Alliance include:

202020 Vision	DPE	Penrith City Council
AECOM	Future City	RMS
Andreasons Green	Greening Australia	Republic of Everyone
ArchiKidz	Green Roofs Australia	Sydney Business Chamber
Aspect Studios	Green Building Council	Sydney Living Museums
Australian Bicycle Council	Australia (GBCA)	SOPA
Australian Institute of	HIA	SSSA
Horticulture Inc (AIH)	IACA	Standards Australia
AILA NSW	Infrastructure NSW	TRACT
Better Planning network	JOC Consulting	Think Brick Australia
Botanic Gardens and	JMD Design	UNSW
Centennial Parklands	LendLease	UrbanGrowth
City of Sydney	LNA	WSPT
Civic Associates	McGregor Coxall	
Committee for Sydney	Mirvac	
Consult Australia	NAB	
CRC Low Carbon Living	OEH	