



Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, ACT Chapter (AILA ACT)

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**City and Gateway Draft Urban Design Framework
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
National Capital Authority**

AILA ACT thanks the National Capital Authority (NAC) for considering this late submission.

The redevelopment of Northourne Avenue and rejuvenation of City can make a substantial 'step change', improving Canberra's capacity to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045. Along with this, the redevelopment and renewal processes, present the opportunity to trial new land development and management models that will deliver, along with economic return improved outcomes in the four themes espoused in the Urban Design Framework – Urban Built Form, Access and Movement, Better Places and Active Streets, Sustainable Communities and Urban Culture.

There is much in the City and Gateway Draft Urban Design Framework document (the Document) that is commendable, including the:

- comprehensive planning approach and emphasis on good urban design;
- broad principles and guidelines that reflect contemporary best practise;
- continued significance placed on the arrival sequence to the National Capital and how this created by the character of the landscape, from the woodlands to the urban settings; and
- refinement of the strategies and plans in response to community and professional feedback, most notably the rethinking of the 'urban villages' to establish connections to other centres.

However, because of the enormous potential for the redevelopment and renewal to catalyse change and make innovation 'mainstream', AILA ACT considers that it would be beneficial for the Document to:

- ***Identify 'Living Infrastructure' as a key theme in the Framework***

A commitment to the investment of developing and managing the 'Living Infrastructure' should be made and highlighted in a separate heading under the section of "Proposed Steps to Implementation. Such a commitment would demonstrate the integration of the ACT Government's platform polices and more



especially, to achieving the Draft Climate Change Strategy's target of the zero carbon emissions target by 2045.

AILA refers to Living Infrastructure as Green Infrastructure. Infrastructure is considered by AILA to be a network of natural landscape assets which underpin the economic, socio-cultural and environment functionality of our cities and towns—ie the green spaces and water systems which intersperse, connect, and provide vital life support for humans and other species within our urban environments.

Aligning the discussion of the public realm and landscape design under one section of “Living Infrastructure” ensures that this is given the due consideration, similar to the Urban Built Form, Access and Movement etc. Even though the document highlights the importance of the public realm and the quality of its **landscape architecture**¹ to establish public amenity and more sustainable urban living, the separate discussion under each of the themes fails to deal with what is essential to achieve these outcomes; namely the

- connectivity of the public realm and its treatment;
- integration of the design of activities, planting and drainage;
- ensuring diversity;
- and consideration of appropriate management regimes.

Raising the “Living Infrastructure” to a key theme allows the Document to more clearly set out the:

- crucial public realm connections;
- diversity in function and treatment of the the public realm in response to the land uses and built form: and
- ‘performance criteria’ for environmental amenity (e.g shading of streets)

- ***Include Time Frames for reviews and/or audit.***

Incorporating these would provide feedback on the merit of the policies as well monitoring any shift in the baseline conditions. As the redevelopment and renewal will be over several generations, building in a process of regular review to update the polices and guidelines as values, technology and he environment change should prolong the ‘life’ of the Document.

¹ In the Document the Landscape Design section does predominantly refer to the the treatment of private open spaces and addresses the planting that is envisaged. The emphasis made here is to highlight that this should be about *Landscape Architecture* which is concerned with all aspects – not just planting – of the external environment. And including the discussion of the landscape architecture of private open space in a section on “Living Infrastructure” further underscores the importance of addressing the contiguity of the external environment to delivering the stated outcomes.)



Audits and reviews are of course valuable to informing and reporting back to the community on progress and success.

- ***Nominate and commit to undertaking trial installations and projects***

Because innovation is critical to getting a step change and because this redevelopment should be exemplary, AILA ACT recommends that consideration be given to undertaking projects that will raise the awareness and expectations of all stakeholders. Projects like the AILA *Future Street* (see below) are invaluable to exploring alternative design and delivery options.

Future Street

Future Street was a public activation, demonstrating the design concepts and technology for our future public spaces. Transforming a prominent Sydney street and reclaiming it for the people of the city, Future Street sparked ideas about how these spaces could be different and what that means for the community.

Future Street reinvigorated Alfred Street in Circular Quay for a four-day activation, changing the way people used the street and educating them on the technologies of the future.

Showcasing the latest developments in technology, the importance of a greener and more inclusive street, Future Street engaged members of the public as well as members of industry.



Image: Before and after shots of *Future Street*, Alfred St, Circular Quay



AILA advocates for NAC:

1. to embrace our streets as important public spaces that can generate and produce opportunity for our communities, and not just harm and pollute them
2. to design and the build of streets to be greener, more complete and smarter
3. amend policy and regulatory requirements to facilitate the design and management of streets in accordance with the Future Street approach.

Canberra is renowned for its planning heritage and, for being the Capital in the 'Bush'. It is also the legacy of some big ideas and risky moves from architects, planners, its political founders and sponsors. The AILA ACT encourages the ACT Government (and the National Capital Authority) to continue building on this reputation and legacy, maximising what it might gain by experimenting with new administrative and economic models to deliver a 'step change' in Canberra's urban form with the redevelopment of Northbourne Avenue and City.

About AILA

AILA ACT members have an important role to play as Accredited Professionals participating in the ongoing develop of the Urban Design Framework in the ACT. Landscape Architects provide expert knowledge to support an informed assessment process and would complement the knowledge of other allied planning and design professionals. Landscape Architects conceive, reimagine and transform the outside world from streetscapes to parks and playgrounds, transport solutions to tourism strategies, new suburbs and even cities.

Landscape architects shape project outcomes in a variety of ways by bringing a critical eye to the potential opportunities and constraints of a place, site, or landscape. The vegetation, soils, watercourses often navigated by infrastructure projects are but some of the technical issues we bring expertise to.

Landscape Architects bring together other disciplines, in an integrated way to generate improved confidence in decision making relating to the built environment and planning. Landscape Architects are active on infrastructure development teams of all types, often leading, connecting, facilitating and navigating to help achieve shared outcomes. Landscape Architects lead design for the environment and people of all ages and cultures.

Your Sincerely

Gay Williamson
AILA ACT Chapter President. 7 May 2018