FuturePerth Comment


April 2010
Mr. Peter Monks  
Director Planning and Development  
City of Perth

9 April 2010

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Perth  
Western Australia 6839  
VIA EMAIL: peter.monks@cityofperth.wa.gov.au

Dear Peter,

Thank you for providing FuturePerth with a copy of the City’s Draft Urban Design Framework and providing us with an opportunity to offer comment.

Overall, FuturePerth is supportive of the City’s desire to have an overarching strategy that can inform its decision-making processes. Our group commends the City of Perth for being one of the few local governments in the metropolitan area actively and unashamedly seeking to find new opportunities for and facilitating increased development of an urban nature. The Perth Urban Design Framework generally contains the right provisions and ideas to ensure the successful evolution of Perth.

Please find enclosed our comments of support and suggested improvements to the framework.

Kind Regards

Sean Morrison  
Chairman  
FuturePerth Inc.

Enc. FuturePerth Draft Urban Design Framework Comment
Who are we?
FuturePerth is an incorporated association devoted to supporting development and action that enhances the vibrancy and livability of Perth.

We are a pro–good–development group consisting of a variety of professionals and students from a wide range of fields including planning, law, architecture, health and hospitality.

We have been incorporated since early 2007 and operate as a non–profit, non–partisan organisation.

FuturePerth looks forward to providing comment on future City of Perth projects and undertakings.

Vision
To provide a voice of progressive thinking to ensure that development in Perth is livable, vibrant, integrated, connected and of a high amenity.

Objectives
To promote the economic and social development of Western Australia and to lend support to similarly minded organisations where appropriate.

To promote the Perth central area as the primary area in the State for entertainment, retail, office, residential and recreational purposes.

To promote the densification and growth of suburban development nodes.

To promote the investment in and expansion of the public transportation system in Perth and Western Australia and the discouragement of policies which further motor vehicle dependence.

To promote the diversification and growth of metropolitan regional centres

To promote urban regeneration projects.

To provide a voice for pro–development, progressive, forward thinking people and to dispel unfounded arguments by anti–development groups or individuals.

To generally support a reduction in the growth of urban sprawl and encourage the consolidation of development within the existing Perth urban area.
Intent and Vision

We support the Urban Design Framework’s role as a decision making tool for the City – offering objectives and themes while leaving specificities to other, more localised documents. In saying that, it is important that the given the frameworks likely large role in Council’s activities and determinations in the future that the document set’s out a correct course for the city.

The document’s vision statements for Perth provide good guidance, particularly;

- The desire to place Perth as a city of significance in the Pacific Asian Region
- Support for ongoing events and performances in the city – particularly identifying the need for a 2,500 seat lyric theatre as part of Perth’s venue offering
- Ongoing support for the CAT system and presumably the FTZ
- Recognition of the need to provide community facilities and intra-city public transport for inner-city residents
- Continued support for better integrating the different suburbs within the municipality and identifying the need for the City of Perth to expand its boundaries to properly carry out it’s role as the steward of the state’s capital city
- A recognition that a good working relationship with the State is required and
- Acknowledgement of the importance of the city’s built and cultural heritage.

FuturePerth would like to see, however, additional emphasis on the following matters in terms of the overall vision of the city;

- Placing Perth as the optimal place for living, business, recreation and entertainment in the Perth Metropolitan Region.
- A Council with an approach to minimising restrictions on businesses, residents and visitors in order to encourage versatility in the functions of the city
- Emphasis on alternative modes of travel, including light rail to add to the city’s current transport offering
- The availability of a range of housing typologies with specific acknowledgement of the need to provide more affordable housing options in the inner city to allow for a diversity of residents and
- High quality architecture should not only be recognised and encouraged but actively rewarded by the Council through development incentives.

Activity and People

In this section the framework provides good emphasis on the need to focus the city around people and spaces. The identified need for intensive development and the need to compete with surrounding areas for residents are particularly supported.
FuturePerth believes that this section could be enhanced by;

- Informing potential future residents of the different noise, activity and built form contexts that the city does and will operate under in the future and
- Noting that the emphasis of various areas in the city may change over time and that complementary land uses (such as residential towers in the ‘primary office core’ or an office tower in the ‘primary retail core’) should be encouraged to increase land uses and activity diversity.

**Urban Structure**

The only comment in regard to this section concerns the need to celebrate the sense of arrival into the city. This notion is supported, however it is suggested that the City, presumably in conjunction with Main Roads WA, seeks to visually enhance the vehicle interchange at the junction of the Mitchell Freeway and Charles Street and the Graham Farmer Freeway. The current mass of grey concrete and sparse vegetation creates an underwhelming sense of arrival into the city. It may be possible to provide different colouring and texturing to the various bridge structures and enhance the landscaping component. It is also suggested that any gateway features on the northern periphery of the city do not seek to suggest an entrance to the ‘City of Perth’ given that it seems natural that the City will expand north over time.

**Built Form**

The City Shape component of this section is one that FuturePerth believes is not in the interests of Perth.

We believe that the shape of the city skyline should be dynamic and constantly evolving. In general we believe that any height restrictions in the city should be kept to an absolute minimum, with all proposals assessed on their merits and potential contributions to other benefits such as increased resident populations or the provision of additional community or commercial facilities. The emphasis on the St Georges Terrace ‘ridgeline’ is particularly undesirable, creating a 2D image of Perth and creating an unbalanced and arbitrary restriction on the growth of our city.

The indicative height patterns run contrary to the City’s desire for increased development and seek to reinforce lopsided development that is contributing to stunted growth in East Perth and north of St Georges Terrace. We feel the city is sophisticated enough to accept that all apartments in the city will not be view-based, and indeed this create opportunities for more affordable development and may provide activity to those areas most in need.

While many other urban centres around the world are able to leverage off significantly dense surrounding residential areas, residential development outside the central city quickly becomes suburban. While this is largely not the City’s doing,
the onus on the central city increases to provide for significant population growth and demand for housing close to major employment and transport nodes.

**Heritage**

FuturePerth support the provisions of this section. It is suggested, however, that it be noted that respecting and enhancing heritage buildings in the city can include a strong juxtaposition between new and old architecture.