FuturePerth Comment

Draft Perth Waterfront Design Guidelines

June 2012
Thank you for providing FuturePerth with a copy of the draft Perth Waterfront Design Guidelines and providing us with an opportunity to offer comment.

FuturePerth has and always will be a strong supporter of the Perth Waterfront Project. We fundamentally support the principle of connecting the city to the river and development of a CBD-scale within this precinct. We urge the MRA and the State Government to continue their support and progression of this important project, particularly in the face of recent efforts by detractors who do not have the future interests of Perth behind them.

Please find enclosed our comments in regards to the draft guidelines. We support the principles and content of the draft guidelines – however we have offered some comment on a limited number of issues where appropriate.

Kind Regards

The FuturePerth Committee
FuturePerth Inc.

Enc. Draft Perth Waterfront Design Guidelines Comments
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 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.

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 density and growth of suburban development nodes.

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

To promote the diversification and growth of strategic metropolitan centres.

To promote urban regeneration projects.

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

To advocate for the containment of urban sprawl and encourage consolidated development within Perth’s existing urban area.
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Design Excellence
FuturePerth notes and supports the notion of a Perth Waterfront design review committee. Our organisation believes that design excellence will be one of the core success drivers for this precinct – distinguishing the precinct and providing a fresh face for our city.

Within this context we support an independent, strong and eminent design review panel. It is our strong preference that the panel is comprised of forward thinking eminent design professionals with local, national and international experience. Additionally, measures to gather public comment on any proposed major developments within the Perth Waterfront are supported. We appreciate this is not the normal procedure given the MRA’s legal requirements, however given the high profile nature of this project, additional efforts to inform or seek input from the community for major developments are encouraged.

FuturePerth would appreciate more information on the proposed composition of this panel and measures to ensure its recommendations are followed through.

Design Changes
There have been some unfortunate instances in recent past in the City of Perth where design changes have been made post-planning approval. These changes have technically been conducted illegally or allowed to pass through the system with little design impact emphasis.

Any changes to major developments following planning approval require greater attention in the guidelines. A threshold should be set for a ‘major’ change that would require the approval of the design review panel.

Proposed Laneways
FuturePerth strongly supports the concept of laneways at the Perth Waterfront. We do, however, feel that the proposed location and scale of the proposed laneways may not produce the intended results. Incorporation of this objective within a development site may be a more desirable outcome.

FuturePerth also notes that in the previous indicative site plans there was a substantial amount of internal retail arcades etc. that would appear to run counter to the objectives of the whole project. We accept that some limited amount of internal activity will form part of this project, however any major emphasis on internal retail development is strongly discouraged - if this were to occur the emphasis should always be in providing links to the waterfront and feeding people into the waterfront.
**Sustainability**
The draft guidelines objectives of international excellence in sustainable design are supported.

This project is intended to represent the future of Perth and its commitment to great city building. To achieve this, the sustainability section of the guidelines requires further emphasis.

We encourage the MRA to set an non-negotiable floor of Green Stars (or another rating) for major developments on the waterfront.

**Heights**
FuturePerth has had an ongoing commitment to supporting CBD-scale development on the waterfront. Consequently we support the setting of minimum heights on the various development sites.

We encourage the MRA to apply its building height limits flexibly – with the emphasis to be always on design excellence, street level activation and a high quality public realm.

We also encourage the MRA to consider building height proposals in the context of other approvals within the precinct. To ensure design variation and integration with the existing CBD, the development of buildings all with similar heights should be highly discouraged.

**Amalgamation**
FuturePerth notes that some sites in the design guidelines are able to be amalgamated. It is appreciate that this concept would be highly appealing to some developers to achieve servicing efficiencies and maximise floorspace.

In contrast, the possible amalgamation of sites may present challenges in terms of design variations and an emphasis of wider, shorter towers over more visually appealing taller, slender towers.

In the event of a proposed amalgamation, it is suggested that in place of an as-of-right option, any amalgamation should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances in the event of design excellent. This should include a design of international significance or international leading examples of sustainable design.

**Public Realm**
We note the guidelines intents to integrate with the CBD through similar use of materials, however also encourage the use of high quality materials and street and public realm design excellence.
Despite some recent upgrades, the quality of streets and public realm within the existing CBD is lacking. Quality and distinctive design should take precedence over integration with the existing CBD materials. This will also assist in distinguishing the Perth Waterfront as an integrated yet different precinct within the CBD.

**Hotel**

It is noted that no specific site within the Perth Waterfront is designated for a Hotel use. The incorporation of a major, high quality hotel at the waterfront is considered crucial to the success of the precinct and important to maintaining activity on the water. A mechanism to ensure at least one major site is development for hotel uses is encouraged – or similarly one site (such as Site 2 or 10) should be aside with the specific purpose of a hotel.