DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM
2019–2030

CITY OF MELBOURNE

CONTENTS

A CITY PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Melbourne will be a leader in planning for growth and technological advancement. We will guide and influence the future development of the city for the benefit of all city users and in a way that values and celebrates its historical and cultural identity.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) people of the Kulin Nation and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

melbourne.vic.gov.au

To find out how you can participate in the decision-making process for City of Melbourne's current and future initiatives, visit **melbourne.vic.gov.au/participate**

DESIGN EXCELLENCE IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE

The design of Melbourne's buildings, streets, and public spaces has a significant impact on the city's attractiveness to residents, businesses and visitors.

In recent decades Melbourne has developed a strong identity and reputation for high urban quality and design innovation. This period of consistent design investment has greatly improved the function, amenity and attractiveness of the city. As the city continues to transform in physical form and density, it is critical that we extend this high expectation of quality to all future projects within both emerging precincts and established areas.

To realise this ambition, new buildings and urban spaces should demonstrate innovation, creativity, and an authentic response to their time and place. They should aspire to be generous to the public realm and contribute to what in time will become our future heritage.

A culture of design excellence cannot be created overnight. It requires design champions across the community, industry, academia and various levels of government who understand the value of design and will advocate for and demand its achievement.

What is design excellence?

'Design excellence' is a multi-faceted accolade used to describe projects that demonstrate exceptional standards of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design.

Design excellence is measured by the function, liveability, sustainability and public contribution of our buildings and urban spaces. Design excellence can be achieved in projects of any scale and value and is not limited to high cost or iconic buildings.

The measurement of excellence requires careful evaluation by multi-disciplinary teams comprising industry experts. Independent juries and review panels are well placed to provide this role. Platforms such as awards, design competitions and design review panels empower this peer-to-peer evaluation and are critical to the feedback loop of design excellence.

Design Excellence is a concept that represents a broader aspiration to enhance the quality of the built environment, but is also introduced within this Program as a specific planning tool or policy threshold, in order to enable the realisation of best practice.

City of Melbourne Design Excellence Program 2019-2030

The Design Excellence Program 2019-2029 comprises short, medium and long term initiatives to foster a culture of excellence in the built environment. The program is intended to be implemented through internal process improvements along with new development planning processes.

The program proposes new approaches alongside a re-affirmed commitment to existing initiatives to support the procurement and delivery of the highest quality outcomes in private and public projects.

Fostering design excellence

The City of Melbourne has an important leadership role, as demonstrated through the following key areas of influence:

• Investment in public projects to demonstrate best practice;

• Advocacy for best practice process; and

• Policy to enable design iteration and testing

While the city can lead with its own public projects, up to 80% of investment in the municipality occurs through private development. To influence a broader spectrum of development, a co-ordinated effort is required across government, community and the design and development industry.

The community has a strong role to play as the primary users and custodians of the urban realm. Cities with a strong design culture are underpinned by an engaged and demanding public with high expectations for design quality. Through design education and engagement there is significant opportunity to further empower the community as vocal advocates.

The design and development industry are the primary producers of the built environment and recognise the value of design quality to attract investment. At its best the industry demonstrates innovation and creativity in responding to complex development challenges. Platforms that promote healthy competition, reward and incentivise innovation can support the achievement of design excellence and lead to improved financial returns.

"Design Excellence is both a process and an outcome, a way of thinking and a result of making. Good design outcomes result from good processes."

Better placed (2017)
Government Architects New South Wales

Barangaroo House, Sydney by Collins and Turner for LendLease. Built by Lend Lease. Awarded the AIA NSW Commercial Award in 2018, and commendation at the AIA National Awards 2018. Photo: Rory Gardiner

THE VALUE OF DESIGN TO MELBOURNE

Good design is integral to the attractiveness, liveability and prosperity of Melbourne. As an internationally renowned design capital, Melbourne is a significant exporter of design services, reinforcing the importance of the city as a design laboratory. Promoting design excellence benefits social, physical and environmental outcomes in the city and supports a thriving creative economy.

Enhancing liveability

The quality of our urban environment, including the spaces between buildings, landscapes, and public space has a profound impact on the liveability of a city for people of all ages and incomes. Investment in a high quality public realm can improve the attractiveness of active transport modes such as walking and cycling, and contribute substantially to our physical health and well being.

Attracting and retaining talent

Numerous studies demonstrate the quality of a city's buildings and public realm is a key determinant in choosing which city to live, work, study, or visit. With increasing competition between global cities for talent in the knowledge economy, the quality of our urban environment is critical to our desirability as a destination.

Supporting creative industries

A successful Design Excellence Program can empower designers by elevating the value of design for potential clients, customers and investors. A strong design culture recognises and promotes good designers, and provides emerging talent with a platform to showcase new and fresh ideas.
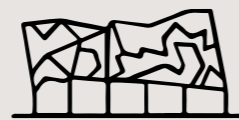
Building city brand and identity

Buildings of outstanding quality and character have an enduring legacy, and influence the image and culture of a city. Buildings such as the Sydney Opera House or Federation Square contribute significant cultural and economic value, and provide a strong sense of place and belonging. Their preservation and value garners significant public interest.

$87

million annual economic benefit from active transport public realm investment in the Hoddle Grid[1]

85%

of participants in a European study identified **"Quality of Living Environment"** as most important in choosing where to live [2]

85,000

designers employed in Victoria's creative industries generating **5 billion** in annual revenue[3]

2.8

million people visited Federation Square in 2018[4]

1 Transport Strategy 2030 (2019) - City of Melbourne
2 Spot On (2018) - Vereniging Deltametropool TU Delft
3 Premier Design Awards Victoria (2018)
4 Melbourne's Top Attractions (2018) - Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

Whitlam Place by Freadman White and Anon Studio for Marcelo Donati. Built by Visioneer. Awarded the AIA VIC Multiple Residential Award in 2019. Photo: Tom Ross

SHAPING THE WORLD'S MOST LIVEABLE CITY

What are we currently doing to elevate design?

The City of Melbourne is committed to investing in the design of high quality streets and open spaces, as well as flagship civic buildings such as Council House 2 or Docklands Library. It is important that the city continues to lead by demonstrating best practice as both designer and client. However in the context of a rapidly growing population there is an increasing need for policy and processes to better influence the design quality of private development.

The primary methods to improve the quality of design outcomes in private development currently include:

- Expert urban design advice to assist applicants to achieve high quality outcomes in development proposals.

- A strong policy base, including a new Urban Design Policy in the Central City and Southbank and accompanying Central Melbourne Design Guide.

In addition, the City of Melbourne works closely with other key government stakeholders responsible for the assessment and delivery of major projects and precincts within the municipality including the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Development Victoria, the Victorian Planning Authority and the Office of the Victorian Government Architect. The City of Melbourne also collaborates with a range of Councils across Victoria to elevate discussions around design quality.

Design Review in the planning process

Through the development assessment process, the City of Melbourne works closely with design teams, planners, developers and the community to advocate for high quality development outcomes that enhance the public realm. Dedicated officers across the disciplines of Urban Design, Architecture and Landscape Architecture provide written referral advice as well as attend meetings and workshops to aid the decision making process. Significant improvements to developments can be achieved through this iterative process of design review. This program aims to further strengthen this process.

The Central Melbourne Design Guide

Urban Design in the Central City and Southbank (Amendment C308) was informed by a comprehensive review of the urban design provisions within the Planning Scheme for the first time since 1999. The new planning provisions aim to recalibrate the policy to provide stronger direction on the design of development with a particular focus on the experience of the city at eye level. The new provisions and associated Design Guide aim to influence urban design outcomes through raising minimum expectations of design quality, and visually communicating the city's design aspirations.

What key challenges influence private development in Melbourne?

Melbourne's Planning Scheme is predominantly performance based and relies on intensive project by project negotiation. This presents a number of challenges to ensuring high quality outcomes on a consistent basis. Some of these challenges include:

- The absence of an overarching Urban Design or Architecture Policy at a State level

- Fragmentation of decision making across a number of government agencies

- Lack of certainty and consistency in decision making where the planning scheme is unclear

- Inconsistent definition of design expectations and subsequent erosion through legal interpretation

- Lack of specific resources and skills to administer design excellence processes such as competitions

For each of these challenges, there are a range of opportunities to both improve existing processes and implement new methods to elevate design excellence as a key policy expectation in Victoria.

How can the Program build upon existing initiatives?

While Amendment C308 is expected to raise the bar on minimum design standards and enable more successful outcomes through design review processes, it does not currently include mechanisms to trigger or incentivise design excellence. The Design Excellence Program is intended to complement and extend the policy objectives of Amendment C308. This will be achieved by establishing policies and processes that support the innovation and creativity required to achieve design excellence.

Council House 2 by Design Inc and City of Melbourne for the City of Melbourne. Built by Hansen Yuncken. Awarded the AIA National Sustainable Architecture Award in 2007. Photo: Diana Snape

DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM

The City of Melbourne's Design Excellence Program consists of four key components: **Leadership, Awards, Design Review** and **Competitive Design**.

Leadership

Design leadership sets clear policy expectations and provides encouragement to industry and the public through direct engagement along with consistent advocacy and messaging through media and communications.

Awards

Design awards judged by esteemed jurors recognise the achievement of design excellence. This inspires the industry to aspire to achieve the highest standards of design and provides a positive feedback loop for clients and design teams.

Design review

Design review panels elevate the consideration of design within planning and procurement processes. Design review enables peer-to-peer assessment by design experts whose knowledge, experience and industry credibility provide leverage to support high quality outcomes.

Competitive design

Design competitions enable the testing of new ideas and promote innovative solutions. Competitions can provide a platform for the emergence of new talent through younger practices, while generating public interest in a wide array of project types.

Integrated approach

The Design Excellence Program is informed by extensive research. This includes analysis of best practice, targeted stakeholder consultation, and testing a series of early initiatives. This is summarised in a series of discussion papers including:

- Appendix A: Design Review Processes Discussion Paper (City of Melbourne)

- Appendix B: Design Advocacy Discussion Paper (City of Melbourne)

- Appendix C: Competitive Design Policy Research (Ethos Urban)

The research also highlights the importance of an integrated program which co-ordinates the four key components as part of a consistent program. Each component is less effective in isolation.

Best practice

The City of Melbourne's existing processes were benchmarked against best practice locally, nationally and internationally, with consideration for how initiatives have been integrated into an overall program and with a focus on how they might translate into Victoria's unique regulatory context.

From the analysis within each of the three discussion papers, the consistent theme of strong, effective and evident leadership at an organisational and Councillor level emerged as pivotal to a successful program.

Stakeholder consultation

The City of Melbourne's engagement and partnership with State Government agencies and industry stakeholders is critical to delivering a successful design excellence program. In the past year, the City of Melbourne has consulted the following agencies and organisations:

- State Government (Office of Victorian Government Architect and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Creative Victoria, Development Victoria)

- Design Industry leadership (Australian Institute of Architects, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, Planning Institute of Australia)

- Peak body organisations (Urban Development Institute of Australia, Property Council, Victorian Planning & Environmental Law Association)

- Government Agencies in New South Wales (City of Sydney, City of Parramatta, and Government Architect New South Wales).

Early initiatives

The following early initiatives were undertaken as part of the research phase:

- Establishment of an internal Design Review Panel, for a trial review of a major precinct development.

- Observation and documentation of a voluntary private design competition.

- The launch of a new Urban Design Award as part of the refresh of the Melbourne Awards

- Active engagement with the AIA Victorian Chapter Enduring Architecture Award including presentation of the award by the Lord Mayor.

QT Hotel Melbourne by Candalepas Associates for Event Hospitality and Entertainment. Built by Built. Shortlisted for the AIA Victoria Commercial Architecture Award in 2017. Photo: Brett Boardman

Alex Hotel, by Spaceagency for Cicero Management. Built by Built.
Awarded the AIA WA Awards for Commercial Architecture in 2016. Photo: Anson Smart

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Leadership   **Design Review**   **Competitive Design**   **Awards**

Key recommendations have been developed under each of the four program components. In addition to these recommendations, there are a series of more detailed short, medium and long term opportunities contained within the following pages, which are derived from the findings contained within the Discussion Papers.

Key recommendations

1   Establish a **Design Excellence Committee** to act as advocates for design in industry, academia, and public organisations.

2   Promote design excellence through a City of Melbourne **Urban Design Award.**

3   Engage more closely with **Industry Awards** to align with the Design Excellence Program.

4   Establish an **independent Design Review Panel** to review projects of local significance.

5   Prepare a City of Melbourne **competitive design policy and guidelines** for voluntary competitions.

6   Explore the pathways to integrating **mandatory design competitions** for strategic sites.

LEADERSHIP

"Dedicated and determined leadership is required to create places with consistently good design quality." - Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE)

The value of design leadership

Leadership leverages the City of Melbourne's prominent public voice as advocate, client and planning authority. Leadership can ensure:

• Increased public and industry **awareness** of the value and importance of design excellence.

• Consistent messaging through media and communications can raise the **design literacy** and expectations of the community and industry

• Demonstrated commitment to design excellence through the modelling of **best practice** through City of Melbourne projects.

How does the City of Melbourne show leadership in design?

The City of Melbourne advocates for high quality design outcomes through investment in demonstration projects, design strategies, design-led precinct plans, and the provision of design advice through the development assessment process.

Councillors are champions of high quality design through their participation in the media and at public events, including the presenting of industry design awards. This level of leadership has been critical in raising public awareness and interest.

Officers have established relationships with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) and State Government agencies through individual projects and working groups. However, there are no formalised and ongoing channels of engaging with government, industry, academia, and community on achieving design excellence.

Key Recommendation

How can the City of Melbourne show greater leadership in design?

To show great leadership, the City of Melbourne could establish a Design Excellence Committee, formalising relationships with professional design institutes (AIA, PIA, and AILA), government agencies, academia, peak bodies, and the community. This would function similarly to existing external committees advising on matters as diverse as accessibility and parks and gardens. This could also extend to advocacy for the establishment of design-focused committees within built environment industry organisations which do not currently have this function.

Design Excellence Committee

A Design Excellence Committee would provide a platform for the City of Melbourne to explore a range of design challenges and opportunities shared with key stakeholders and the community to promote the Design Excellence Program. In turn the Committee would be empowered as design champions to influence major city shaping projects led by the City of Melbourne and/or large State Government projects.

Training and upskilling

Further training in the value of design and design literacy will be undertaken with key decision makers across government in the areas of Planning, Transport, and Engineering. Potential to extend training to the broader community and industry will be explored. This can include workshop sessions, presentations and walking tours, which have proven to be successful and engaging training models.

Public Events

Opportunity exists for further engagement with and support for established Melbourne design calendar events including the National Gallery of Victoria Design Week, MPavilion, Melbourne Open House, Robyn Boyd Foundation. These industry organisations have a significant role to play in elevating design conversation in Melbourne.

---

1 **Design Excellence Committee**

Establish a Design Excellence Committee to act as advocates for design in industry, academia, and public organisations.

Short-term opportunities
• Plan steps to establish a Design Excellence Committee to include Councillors, design professionals (institutes, such as AIA, AILA, PIA), OVGA, and members of the general public.
• Commence meetings in second half of the 2019-2020 financial year.
• Advocate for a Victorian design and architecture policy integrated within the State planning framework.
• Establish a range of design training initiatives to enhance design literacy.
• Engage with design calendar events to raise awareness of the Program.

QVM Munro proposal by Six Degrees Architects and Bates Smart for PDG and the City of Melbourne. Artist's impression: Bates Smart.

AWARDS

Awards provide the opportunity to celebrate and reward design excellence and grow awareness of good design in a manner that supports Council's strategic ambitions.

The value of design awards

Design awards are a key advocacy tool for promoting the achievement of design excellence. They provide the opportunity to:

- Present a platform for **peer-to-peer endorsement** of excellence through an independent expert jury panel

- **Reward** completed projects that demonstrate the highest standards of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture

- **Recognise** the wide range of project members including designers, developer, and client for their role

- Increase **design awareness** and design literacy amongst the industry and general public

- Serve as best practice examples and **case studies** for design excellence to influence future projects

What are we currently doing?

The City of Melbourne has historically sponsored or financially contributed to the following industry awards:

- Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) Victorian Chapter Awards including the Melbourne Prize and Enduring Architecture Award.

- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Awards

Officers have contributed to these Awards as jurors over an extended period of time. The City of Melbourne also hosts a number of existing industry awards however none of these have a focus on the built environment.

What would a successful awards program for the City of Melbourne look like?

The research highlights that there is value in introducing new City of Melbourne design awards to complement the existing industry awards, however these would be best placed as part of an existing Awards program rather than as a stand-alone Design Awards. This approach offers a high impact and cost effective opportunity to leverage an existing well regarded Awards program.

A review of the City of Melbourne's current contribution to the industry awards is recommended to ensure that awards support the organisation's strategic interests. This would include the consideration of a building's contribution to the public realm in addition to other functional and aesthetic attributes.

The components of a successful awards program are:

- A well resourced program development including clear governance, and media engagement

- Limiting the number and breadth of award categories to maximise impact

- A clear framework to guide jury deliberation and project briefing/site visit process tied to strategic policy ambitions

- A transparent and consistent assessment process, including clarity in submission and assessment criteria

- The selection of prominent, industry recognised and independent expert jury

- High profile event promotion, marketing and media to maximise the industry and public presence of an awards program

- The publication and broad dissemination of winners, commendations or short-listed projects to serve as case studies that influence future projects

Case Study - City of Port Philip Design and Development Award

The City of Port Phillip has hosted an independent design award since 1998, which was refreshed in recent years. Some of the key components of the awards program include:

- Integration with Melbourne Design Week and hosted at the National Gallery of Victoria to attract industry and media interest.

- Strong alignment with the submission and judging methods of design industry award methods such as the AIA Victorian Chapter Awards.

- Engagement of high profile independent design experts alongside elected Councillors to form the jury panel.

- Increased focus on pre-event industry media as well as high quality printed media and information booklets in the form of case studies.

- Limited, dedicated administrative resources to manage the awards program.

A new Urban Design category will be added to the 2019 Melbourne Awards, which will be awarded at the high profile Gala event by a mixed jury of design industry, community and business representatives.

Key Recommendations

2 **City of Melbourne Design Awards**

Promote design excellence through a **City of Melbourne Urban Design Award**

3 **Institute Awards**

Engage more closely with **Industry Awards** to align with the **Design Excellence Program**

Completed actions
- Established a new category for Urban Design within the Melbourne Awards, including input on submission and assessment criteria along with recommendations for expert jurors from the design industry.
- Engagement with AIA Enduring Architecture Award including expert advice to the jury and presentation of the winner by the Lord Mayor.

Short-term opportunities
- Review award categories, assessment criteria and jury deliberation process.
- Solicit external media and promote award winners as exemplars of Design Excellence.

DESIGN REVIEW

"[Design Review] gives design intelligence a public airing, allowing the complexity and rigour of designing to be openly discussed and, as a result, better understood".
- Geoffrey London, former Victorian Government Architect

The value of design review

Design review is a process of critical review by multi-disciplinary design experts to elevate the design quality of projects before and during the planning approval process.

The Victorian Planning Provisions comprise complex discretionary provisions which require interpretation. Development planners work with design experts to assess whether projects have met the performance-based standards and objectives, as well as recommend improvements where possible.

An independent Design Review Panel offers value beyond in-house design expertise by providing access to independent cross-disciplinary design professionals to evaluate and advocate for design quality. Independent status removes any perception of conflict and ensures the integrity of the process.

Early engagement provides the best opportunity to increase the quality of a design proposal. Pro-active workshops at a pre-application stage can allow a more collaborative conversation and save developers time and money later in the process.

Design review panels provide the following benefits:

- **Review** of complex development proposals through a specialist design lens.
- Depth of **experience** and **breadth of knowledge** to complement in-house design skills.
- Opportunity to **challenge and improve** the design brief.

What are we currently doing?

The City of Melbourne currently undertakes design review across a range of scales with a primary focus on private development as part of the development approval process. Design review often begins at the pre-application stage and can involve a number of reviews over the life of the development assessment process. The design review process is iterative and collaborative, with urban designers working with project architects to achieve the best outcome.

The recent development of Amendment C308 and the Central Melbourne Design Guide has assisted the framing, consistency and clarity of design advice and enabled better design outcomes through negotiation. The design requirements contained within the Guide will carry even more weight once formally included in the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

Case Study - City of Sydney Design Advisory Panel (DAP)

Since 2007, the City of Sydney has utilised an expert design panel to provide independent expert advice on development projects, design competitions and policy proposals. Key components of DAP include:

- Clear integration with the development assessment process.

- A small pool of 9-12 design experts with membership refreshed every 2 years to ensure intimate knowledge of policies, design objectives and physical context.

- The Terms of Reference ensures the panel refers to relevant policies in formulating advice and recommendations.

- The DAP submit reports to the Planning and Development Committee and the Central Sydney Planning Committee, providing transparency for the public.

City of Melbourne urban designers provide design review for 'state significant' projects (over 25,000sqm in floor area) where the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) is the Responsible Authority. Officers also contribute to Major State Projects through the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) Design Quality Team review process.

The OVGA currently provides independent review of a limited number of state significant projects through the Victorian Design Review Panel. However there is a large amount of locally significant projects that don't benefit from independent, expert review.

What would a successful design review process for the City of Melbourne look like?

To complement the existing internal design review and Victorian Design Review Panel, it is recommended that an Independent Design Review Panel is established to review locally significant projects for the City of Melbourne.

Establishing an Independent Design Review Panel sends a strong message to the public and industry that design quality is important to the municipality and could strengthen achievement of design excellence in locally significant projects.

Considerations that are key to a successful design review process include:

'Triage' and referral - The Major Projects meeting within the City of Melbourne provides an opportunity for the development planner and technical experts to identify 'red flags' in proposals. This existing process can be used to resolve major planning issues in the first instance and if required refer a proposal for review to the Independent Design Review Panel or VDRP depending on scale and importance.

Establish clear thresholds to determine when projects of local significance require referral to a panel. Thresholds such as, scale, value, significant sites, project type (e.g. heritage, student accommodation) and strategic importance should be established and made public. Clear thresholds provide clarity and certainty as to where Independent Design Review is required, and ensures the type of review is tailored to the needs of the project.

Integrate design review with development approval processes - In the performance based Victorian planning context, design review has the most impact when integrated with the development assessment process. The review achieves impact through its leveraging of policy and guidelines.

The Terms of Reference for an Independent Design Review Panel should include the relevant planning provisions that the panel must have regard to (for example the Central Melbourne Design Guide or specific Design and Development Overlay requirements). This will ensure advice and recommendations from the panel are framed by the provisions of the planning scheme and can be drawn upon by planners in making a decision.

Key Recommendations

4 CoM Design Review Panel

Establish an independent Design Review Panel to review projects of local significance.

Short-term opportunities
- Establish panel infrastructure, including Terms of Reference and panel selection criteria.
- Select expert, independent panel members through a public tender and undertake a 6 month pilot.
- Work with the OVGA to strengthen the Victorian Design Review Panel process and ensure any new panel provides a complementary role.
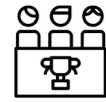
Medium-term opportunities
- Review lessons from pilot and assess options for a long term permanent Panel process.

COMPETITIVE DESIGN

Design competitions can facilitate design excellence through enabling the independent testing of alternative design ideas.

The value of design competitions

Design competitions are common for government procurement worldwide. However, they are less common for private development, with the notable exception of New South Wales where competitions are increasingly used as a key part of the planning assessment process to enable Design Excellence. Design competitions can:

- **Enhance global competitiveness** through high quality design outcomes within the private realm.

- **Disrupt the practice of templating** precedent of previous approvals and elevate contemporary ideas and innovation.

- Provide Council with more opportunity to **Influence the project brief** and shape the city in a pro-active manner.

- **Test assumptions,** broaden outlook and maximise opportunities prior to implementing built work.

- **Support emerging design practices** and increase the diversity of practices working in complex capital city scale projects.

- **Provide certainty** (cost and time) through the project delivery for both Council and proponent.

What are we currently doing?

In Victoria, design competitions are not common for private developments and the few that occur are voluntary. While Amendment C270 introduced a Floor Area Uplift provision for design competitions, this has not been utilised to date. In recent years, the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Office of Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) have published guidelines on competitions, articulating a set of principles for good practice in the conduct of design competitions in Victoria, however this has not led to an increase in AIA endorsed competitions.

What would a successful competitive design process for the City of Melbourne look like?

The introduction of officially sanctioned design competitions to Melbourne should be a staged process. The simplest place to start is the Capital City Zone (CCZ) where there is an established Floor Area Uplift system. These areas involve high development costs which justify expenditure on design competitions. Further, limited third party notice and review provisions could allow for a more streamlined process.

The research undertaken suggest three potential approaches for design competitions in Victoria. These include:

- **Voluntary Pathway Competitions** - Initiated and funded by the applicant for the purpose of exploring alternative ideas. The applicant would source their own jury and the outcome would have no official planning status. Guidelines are required to advocate for best practice.

- **Mandatory Competitions with Incentives -** Precinct planning controls with density limits such as Floor Area Ratio provisions (for example the Central City or Arden) could be amended to introduce a requirement for design excellence, triggering a formal competition. Competition costs would be born by the proponent and tied to a specific capped bonus. Independent jurors would consider proposals and make a recommendation to the Planning Authority.

- **Alternative Pathway Competitions -** Where a site specific amendment is proposed, a trigger could be introduced requiring a formal design competition. This format would be funded by the applicant seeking the amendment. The competition would not have a binding effect on the Planning decision.

The following elements are key to build trust and mitigate risk between the consent authority and proponent, to ensure a successful competition:

- **A Competitive Design Policy** is necessary to outline the purpose, status, trigger, timing, management, and cost of a competition. The policy should advocate for diverse practices, emphasising minimum requirements for local and emerging practices to avoid bias toward international practices. This should have a formal status in the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

- **Tailored incentives** are critical to the uptake and success of competitions. Competition costs include payment of architects, jurors, holding cost and administration fees associated with the length of the process. In order to offset the cost and time of the competition it is imperative that the uplift in development yield or height fairly exceeds the relative cost of the competition. A tailored approach could make competitions on smaller sites more viable and cost effective.

- **Brief formulation and approval** is necessary to guide the design responses by competing teams. A comprehensive model brief should be established by City of Melbourne, to be modified for each project by applicants, and endorsed by the consent authority to legitimise the process.

- **Public oversight and transparency** is necessary to ensure robustness and transparency of any competition. To ensure independence this should be separate from the consent authorities.

- **Competition manager** A formalised design competition process requires a clear and consistent competition framework, including negotiation of the brief and probity considerations. An independent manager funded by the proponent can bring expertise and rigour to administering of competitions, with adequate oversight from the City of Melbourne.

Case Study - City of Sydney Competitive Design Policy

The City of Sydney (CoS) has a systematic, mandatory requirement for design competitions for projects above a threshold scale, height or site area. The Sydney model comprises:

- Mandatory competitions for development over 55m in height in the central city (or 25m in height outside the central city), on a site over 1,500m2 or with a capital value over $100M. Uplift comprises a 10% increase in height or floor area, and can include a Heritage Floorspace discount.

- Mandated or elective competitions within the CoS typically progress through a two-stage planning approval process comprising the approval of an outline building envelope (or reference design), then the brief approval and design competition, followed by a second stage detailed development application.

Key Recommendations

5	**Competitive Design Policy**
	Prepare a City of Melbourne competitive design policy and guidelines for voluntary competitions

6	**Mandatory Competitions**
	Explore the pathways to integrating mandatory design competitions for strategic sites

Medium-term opportunities
- Undertake further research and engagement with key stakeholders.
- Prepare a draft Competitive Design Policy in consultation with the AIA.

Long-term opportunities
- Incorporate amendments to the Planning Scheme or update the Schedule of Floor Area Uplifts within the Capital City Zone to trigger design competitions above pre-determined thresholds.

IMPLEMENTING DESIGN EXCELLENCE

The City of Melbourne's Design Excellence Program 2019-2030 is a long term commitment to elevate design quality. Its implementation will be phased incrementally, beginning with a series of pilot initiatives over the short-term.

Next steps

In order to further understand the resource and cost implications of the Program, a Costing and Implementation Plan will be prepared for the ten year period from 2019 to 2030.

Engagement and partnerships will be critical to the success of a Design Excellence Program. The engagement process will be used to project champions across stakeholder groups within government, industry and the community. This will also include testing of implementation options and staging of initiatives including funding opportunities.

Pilot initiatives

The following pilot initiative is recommended in the short-term to test and evaluate key program components:

• The City of Melbourne Design Review Panel

Medium to long term implementation

Upon the completion of the pilot initiative, a full review will be conducted to evaluate its success, and identify areas for improvement. Further review will continue to be conducted on a regular basis to refine processes.

Incremental additions to staff and resourcing will be required to ensure long term success as the program grows. This resourcing need will increase following any introduction of a planning scheme trigger for competitive design, which will require an immediate commitment of resources proportionate to the number of competitive design processes anticipated across the city.

The long term vision is to establish an on-going team of at least four full-time staff who will manage a robust Design Excellence Program that includes a Competitive Design Policy and Independent Design Review Panel that is integrated within the Planning Scheme. This team will both administer the Design Review and Competitive Design components but also lead the Leadership and Advocacy aspects to ensure integration across the program.

Franklin Street Student Accommodation, by Bates Smart for Iglu. Built by Hacer. Awarded High Commendation ThinkBrick 2019. Photo: City of Melbourne

How to contact us

Online:
melbourne.vic.gov.au

In person:
Melbourne Town Hall - Administration Building
120 Swanston Street, Melbourne
7.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
(Public holidays excluded)

Telephone:
03 9658 9658
7.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday
(Public holidays excluded)

Fax:
03 9654 4854

In writing:
City of Melbourne
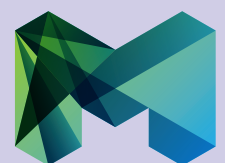GPO Box 1603
Melbourne VIC 3001
Australia

Interpreter services
We cater for people of all backgrounds
Please call 03 9280 0726

03 9280 0717	廣東話
03 9280 0719	Bahasa Indonesia
03 9280 0720	Italiano
03 9280 0721	普通话
03 9280 0722	Soomaali
03 9280 0723	Español
03 9280 0725	Việt Ngữ
03 9280 0726	عربي
03 9280 0726	한국어
03 9280 0726	हिंदी
03 9280 0726	All other languages

National Relay Service:
If you are deaf, hearing impaired or speech-impaired,
call us via the National Relay Service: Teletypewriter (TTY)
users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 03 9658 9658
9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (Public holidays excluded)

melbourne.vic.gov.au

CITY OF MELBOURNE