

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Auckland, New Zealand, showing a dense urban grid, a harbor with numerous boats, and a prominent skyscraper. The image is rotated 90 degrees clockwise.

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The Parklands' Concept Plan at Mobbs Lane, Epping.

# HIGH DEFINITION MAJOR PROJECTS

**Re-development of a strategic 9ha site at the Seven Network's Epping headquarters is one of the first plans of its type approved under recently revised Ministry of Planning powers. The Architectus/PTW concept plan for Sydney Broadcast Property Pty Ltd has been awarded approval from Planning Minister Frank Sartor under the new Part 3A of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act that will allow up to 650 apartments in a parkland setting.**

The Part 3A planning process in NSW provides a new framework for major projects of State and regional significance. Architectus has successfully negotiated projects through the new Part 3A process from inception and confirmation of their major project status, through the issuing of Director General's requirements, preparation of environmental assessments and their approval.

In a related project and another first, Architectus and PTW have also prepared a combined concept plan/project application/early works application under Part 3A for the new Channel 7 television studio and media centre at Australia Technology Park, Redfern. This is the first time that a Concept Plan and Project Application have been approved together resulting in substantial savings in time and money to the applicant – evidence that the new system is working. Architectus is particularly pleased to be involved in the relocation of Channel 7 to Redfern because the television studios will provide the economic boost that the area needs. Architectus was involved in master planning Australia Technology Park for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and undertook the recently released built form guidelines for the Redfern-Waterloo area.

Other important Part 3A projects include:

- The NSW Planning Minister's approval of the Master Plan (prepared with SJB Architects and Site Image Landscape Architects) for the former Union Carbide site at Rhodes Peninsula. Architectus is progressing Part 3A Project Applications for Billbergia Developments and Renewing Homebush Bay (Multiplex/Trafalgar) for 1,250-1,400 dwellings.
- Architectus recently provided independent urban design advice to the development assessment by the NSW Department of Planning of Becton's North Byron Resort a Part 3A project.
- Expansion of St. Vincent's Hospital in Darlinghurst is an Australian first, the project will bring together mental health services, drug and alcohol services and community health services into one facility. Funding assistance for the project includes the Architectus assisted divestment of the nearby property 'Caritas'. The combined project approved by the Minister under Part 3A includes a concept plan and re-zoning for a mixed residential and commercial development with adaptive re-use of existing heritage buildings. This integration of mixed uses will contribute to a vibrant part of Darlinghurst and provide a vital upgrade and centralisation of key medical services.

→ [michael.harrison@architectus.com.au](mailto:michael.harrison@architectus.com.au)



Keyline indicates Australia Technology Park. Filled area indicates Channel 7 Site.

Cover Inspiration: Architectus has had a primary role in the planning and urban design of the following projects: Central Sydney Plan, Ultimo/Pyrmont Precinct Plan, Green Square Built Form Review, Redfern/Waterloo Built Form, Walsh Bay Development Plan, Woolloomooloo Wharf Development Plan, Oxford Street Streetscape Study, Australian Technology Park Master Plan, Sydney Airport Environs Study, Sydney Airport to City Rail Link Route Options Study, Eastern Distributor EIS Urban Design Study, Botany Bay Port Expansion EIS Visual Assessment, Glebe Island/White Bay Port Master Plan, East Darling Harbour Port Master Plan, and review of The Rocks Urban Form Study



Quay St, Auckland along the harbour front upgraded to the Architectus design.

# STREET WISE DESIGN

**Quality of space and authenticity of place are among the challenges facing bigger, denser cities. Auckland's cultural and business heart is realising the benefits of sweeping planning improvement with a series of urban design initiatives helping to revitalise its CBD.**

Under the city's 'Into The Future' program – a series of projects with a combined value of \$100 million – Architectus is playing a key role in realising the project objectives of improved pedestrian amenity and priority, establishing a high quality environment and an updated 'identity' for the city.

Started in 2005 and due for completion in 2009, the program represents one of New Zealand's largest ever commitments to the re-modelling of a CBD. Architectus initially undertook a series of urban design studies of the CBD and identified key opportunities for intervention. These higher level projects then lead into specific open space and streetscape designs for Lorne, Quay and Queen Streets.

Lorne Street runs through the city's cultural quarter and is adjacent both the city and art dealer galleries. It continues the character of the city's 'old town' precinct and includes a series of environmental art interventions developed in collaboration with text artist Mary-Louise Browne.

Quay Street runs along the waterfront and provides the front door to the city and its interface between land and sea. The design reinforces the archetypal Auckland waterfront condition by extending an avenue

of Pohutakawa trees between the working wharfs in the east and the recreational waterfront to the west of the CBD. In between the street establishes a new level of pedestrian priority and amenity around the city's key water based public transport facilities.

Queen Street, the largest of the projects, is Auckland's retail and commercial focus. The upgrade reinstates the street's prominence within the CBD as the main pedestrian route and organising element which links cultural, retail and commercial zones.

These combined projects provide a vital framework for existing and proposed civic buildings, retail, business and cultural activity.

"Key principles behind the work" says Patrick Clifford of Architectus Auckland, "include creating high quality streetscapes that are safe, robust and sustainable and that express Auckland's sense of place. It's a city that deserves to better realise its unique identity. It's an investment," he argues, "that will create a benchmark and catalyst for future urban design projects."

Proposals covered by the design strategy include provision of new public spaces to support retail and commercial activity, improved pedestrian way finding, widened footpaths, and rationalised traffic and parking to create more intimately scaled streets.

Key nodal areas defined by historical and topographical significance will be marked by specially commissioned collaborative projects involving artists and other designers.



Queen St, the main street of Auckland.

One of the overarching characteristics of the three projects is their cohesion – they work together to simplify and unify the disparate, often dysfunctional, nature of earlier/existing streetscapes. Detailed strategies that support the planning framework include a simplified paving palette, a new street furniture suite and co-ordinated lighting and signage strategies.

→ [patrick.clifford@architectus.co.nz](mailto:patrick.clifford@architectus.co.nz)

→ [henry.crothers@architectus.co.nz](mailto:henry.crothers@architectus.co.nz)



Landscaped eco medians provide open recreation space in the dry and help drain water from the site in the wet. Image Source: EDAAW

# SYDNEY'S GREEN WEST

**Sydney will receive a dramatic 'green' boost with the release of 5,500 hectares of parklands and bush in Western Sydney. The project stretches 27kms from Leppington to Quakers Hill. Master planning by Architectus of 144 hectares of interface lands for urban development will fund a major part of the landscape and rejuvenation works of the vast parkland project recently announced by the NSW government.**

Located in the heart of Western Sydney's population, the project is highly significant as the first precinct to be released to create the Western Sydney Parklands. "Rather than being exclusive to a particular community, the project is readily available for a large number of Sydney-siders' with at least 2 million people within a 25 minute drive," says Elisabeth Peet of Architectus' Sydney office urban design and planning group. "It's a revolutionary concept that will provide a cultural and recreational resource as well as bio-diversity and eco-conservation in Sydney's west."

"Essentially what will emerge is a giant necklace of lands that will be linked to form an evolving sequence of spaces to accommodate passive and active recreation and which will include existing resources such as Nurranginy Nature Reserve and Blacktown Olympic Park."

Managed by Landcom for the NSW Department of Planning, the first precinct at Bungaribee near Doonside (Blacktown), provides the opportunity to set a benchmark for future precincts within the parklands. The Bungaribee precinct comprises two interface sites and 200ha of park.

One of the interface sites is being developed for a 650 lot residential subdivision and the other at West Huntingwood for employment uses. Critical design issues are the interface between the parklands and development sites, treatment of the heritage significant Bungaribee homestead archaeological site on the residential parcel and addressing the isolation of interface sites from surrounding neighbourhoods.

Road networks have been designed on an east west axis so that vistas are focussed on parkland views. A new avenue type – 'the eco-median road' – has been developed to address isolation issues by bringing the parklands into and through the interface site. An open street vista via a median manages stormwater and is landscaped with Cumberland Woodland species and is linked to the parklands to serve better social ends. Water sensitive urban design techniques are utilised to manage stormwater, to maintain bio-diversity and create a pleasant environment.

Peet says the project will become an exemplar of urban design that addresses social, ecological and environmental issues to create a unique neighbourhood and help enhance perceptions of Sydney's western suburbs.

→ [elisabeth.peet@architectus.com.au](mailto:elisabeth.peet@architectus.com.au)

→ [michael.harrison@architectus.com.au](mailto:michael.harrison@architectus.com.au)



Bungaribee development with fingers of green interfacing with parkland.



Western Sydney Parklands' 27km corridor indicated in green.



De  
21st century city.



# MERRY-BOROUGH'S 'MOST CONTENTED' PLAN

**Three hundred kilometres north of Brisbane and far enough away to deter all but the most ardent weekenders, Maryborough survives as one of, if not the best, intact Victorian-era cities in Queensland. Unlike many other coastal towns and regional centres carried along by the growth boom of recent decades, Maryborough (population 26,000) has been spared the zealous excesses of hasty expansion.**

This one-time pivotal wool, timber, and cane-fields port has survived many of the mistakes made by neighbouring towns and resorts and has sought the planning assistance of Architectus as it prepares to realize the looming lifestyle change.

A recent Australia-wide survey discovered Maryborough and neighbouring Wide Bay, topped the 'locality contentment' poll according to Professor John Hockings, Design Director of Architectus Brisbane. "This is not entirely surprising," said Dr. Hockings, whose expertise has been sought to assist Maryborough's transition from heritage treasure trove into a vibrant 21st century city.

"There are constant pressures on coastal centres to achieve high densities, apartment tower blocks, megaplex shopping centres and a suburban sprawl similar in pattern to State capitals," he notes. "Maryborough at a small scale doesn't need to make the same planning mistakes Brisbane has made on a large scale. Many Queensland towns were ruined in the '70s '80s and '90s when their moment came.

"Even without our input, it's only a matter of time before Maryborough is re-discovered. Council wants to ensure that it avoids the errors of

neighbouring towns such as Hervey Bay and to really set a standard based on great care."

Prof. Hockings' appointment follows that of the late, and highly regarded, Trevor Redacliff, the Brisbane planner who drove many of the city and State's most important urban renewal programs. One of Redacliff's greatest legacy's was the strategy and direction that reinvigorated Brisbane's centre with residential occupancy.

"Trevor's first strategy was to improve the riverside open space amenity to help draw people back into the city. Getting people to move back into the city heart creates a flow-on effect of activities, but you need good amenity to entice them there in the first place. Maryborough central is very fortunate in that its big box shopping centre is still close to the centre of town rather than drawing people out into the suburbs. At the moment the centre also houses a regional theatre, swimming pool, library, bowling clubs, museums and open space so it's really set up to kick start an inner-city housing and associated development.

"Our approach," says Prof. Hockings, "has been to engage all the stakeholders and work with them to achieve good outcomes, rather than operating from a distance with some planning scheme rolled up in my hand. I've talked to a diverse group of land owners and developers along with council to try to negotiate solutions that are appropriate for Maryborough rather than replicating the coastal apartment tower block mentality.

"We've been broadly promoting the line that Maryborough is ideally placed to capitalise on the assets of a sophisticated rural centre, with

a strong cultural amenity and nearby coastal tourist attractions, rather than trying to become another holiday/retirement resort.

"The urban renewal challenge is that these towns were once success stories that rode on the back of a natural resources boom. Now we're trying to build a new success story based on a combination of the remaining viable resources and industries together with a vision of a new kind of sophisticated country city able to offer a stimulating, but slower paced alternative to the capital city lifestyle – a variation of the sea-change phenomenon with more culture and less sea-spray and sunburn.

"Unlike America and Europe where there's great choice in regional living, in Australia you leave the city and lifestyle opportunities at your peril. This is about another type of alternative that is simplified but retains an authenticity and sophistication. Finding appropriate precedents is always useful, so we've talked about lower level development such as Margaret River rather than the enclosure of apartment blocks.

"We're working towards a master plan that goes beyond the suggestions of a few catalyst projects. There's an interest in an overarching master plan from the city centre to the river and that is really why Architectus has been employed," observes Hockings who is quick to praise his predecessor Redacliff's visionary planning touch. "There is really only one chance to get this right. It's something we're very committed to."

→ [john.hockings@architectus.com.au](mailto:john.hockings@architectus.com.au)

# THE PLANNING DIVIDEND



Thornton Park, Penrith NSW – 50 hectare site rezoned to become an urban village with a site specific Development Control Plan.

**“With planning and urban design assistance, land earmarked for disposal can be upgraded to achieve greater value and planning certainty,” says John Riordan Associate Director, Urban Design and Planning, Sydney.**

As shown on the bar chart, with rezoning, subdivision and development approvals, the planning process can unlock a much greater land value than otherwise might be envisaged.

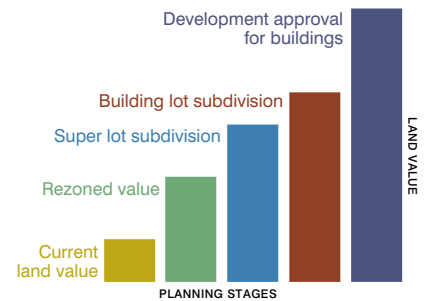
There are five principal types of value-adding through the planning process – land use zoning change, super lot subdivision, individual lot subdivision, development approval and finally building development. A suitably qualified urban planning consultant can provide advice to the client throughout each stage about strategies for each level of development risk including negotiations with planning authorities. At any point the property owner can divest themselves depending on the risk profile they're willing to take.

Architectus' strategic advice in property divestment includes large scale redundant land holdings in both metropolitan Sydney and Melbourne. The company is known

to fairly assess both private and public interests in the property divestment process, resulting in 'balanced' outcomes that deliver both community and commercial benefit. Architectus work in this area has been recognised by the Planning Institute of Australia with numerous awards for Planning and Urban Design Excellence, including the Rezoning, Master Plan and Development Control Plan for 50 hectares of former defence land at Penrith NSW (Thornton Park).

→ [john.riordan@architectus.com.au](mailto:john.riordan@architectus.com.au)

## PRINCIPAL TYPES OF VALUE-ADDING



# ‘AUTHENTICITY THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DESIGN’



Coolangatta ideas workshop.

**South-east Queensland can become an exemplar of sustainable sub-tropical design if key recommendations from a report by Architectus are implemented.**

The study, based on Coolangatta, calls for the implementation of 'Transit Oriented Development' (TOD) in urban design and planning to help create a more open relationship to landscape and climate to help achieve sustainable population growth patterns.

Key representatives from the Gold Coast City Council, Tweed Heads Council and the Queensland State Government joined eight Directors from three Architectus offices for a three day intensive workshop focused on Coolangatta.

The group investigated future development strategies for the State's booming, but fragile, south-east coastal fringe and believe Coolangatta has the potential to be transformed into a model of sustainable, intelligent, planning.

Key recommendations to emerge include appropriately placed medium density housing

to offset sprawling un-sustainable suburbs and a greater permeability of buildings, houses and streetscapes. Workshop leader and Architectus Brisbane Urban Design Director, Caroline Stalker, said that the group's findings were acutely relevant to the region's aspirations for sustainable growth and identity and supported the State Government's South East Queensland regional plan.

Chief Architect of the Gold Coast City Council Phillip Follent observed: "The workshop was really insightful... I was so impressed that I have decided that whatever planning our Council undertakes in the future, we must follow such a process. The result was not necessarily about 'wowing' people with slick, coloured drawings, but rather very thoughtful, sometimes modest ideas. But these were ideas with great longevity and the basis upon which you build great cities."

→ [caroline.stalker@architectus.com.au](mailto:caroline.stalker@architectus.com.au)

→ [michael.harrison@architectus.com.au](mailto:michael.harrison@architectus.com.au)

**architectus™**

**Auckland**  
Phone +64 9 307 5970  
Fax +64 9 307 5972  
[auckland@architectus.co.nz](mailto:auckland@architectus.co.nz)

**Brisbane**  
Phone +61 7 3221 6077  
Fax +61 7 3221 1645  
[brisbane@architectus.com.au](mailto:brisbane@architectus.com.au)

**Melbourne**  
Phone +61 3 9429 5733  
Fax +61 3 9429 8480  
[melbourne@architectus.com.au](mailto:melbourne@architectus.com.au)

**Sydney**  
Phone +61 2 9929 0522  
Fax +61 2 9959 5765  
[sydney@architectus.com.au](mailto:sydney@architectus.com.au)

**Shanghai**  
Phone +86 21 6255 7373  
Fax +86 21 6255 7575  
[shanghai@architectus.com.au](mailto:shanghai@architectus.com.au)

## Interview

# MICHAEL HARRISON

**Michael's training with architecture began in Perth followed by post graduate degrees in architecture and city planning in Philadelphia, where he studied urban design at the University of Pennsylvania. He has received numerous awards from the Planning Institute of Australia for urban design work and is a regular advisor to government. Michael is a Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia and Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.**

He believes the quality of the built environment directly affects the community's sense of well-being. "Urban design and town planning," he argues, "is critical to long term sustainability and prosperity as well as our collective legacy for future generations." He is based in the Sydney office of Architectus.

### **How would you describe your job in one sentence?**

I try to influence the quality of environments through well considered design.

### **What's the best part about being an urban planner?**

The sheer variety of the work. We work at all scales, from the specific architectural scale to the broad regional scale.

### **What would be the smallest scale?**

Well you do end up reviewing designs of individual apartments and terrace houses and assessing how they fit into a project and how the project fits into the urban context.

### **And the largest?**

At the moment we're doing master plans and strategic plans covering thousands of hectares.

### **If you were given a completely fresh slate, how would you have planned a city like Sydney differently?**

I don't know that I would have planned too much differently in the area around the harbour although I would like to see more design quality in its buildings. Sydney's built environment is relatively poor compared to the natural environment. As for the city's western suburbs I think I would have learnt something from how Melbourne designed their wonderful 65m wide boulevards where they have used trees to really add to the character of streets. Not only are there wide verges with trees but they also have two median strips with trees (eg. Royal Parade). These pleasant, shaded streets with four rows of trees can handle all sorts of traffic volumes including cycle lanes, transit and car lanes. It is a pity Melbourne didn't extend these streets into its outer suburbs.

### **Who are your heroes and villains?**

My two heroes really were people I studied under – Ed Bacon, chief planner of Philadelphia for about 40 years and Ian McHarg a pioneer in regional planning and ecology. As for villains I would say the real enemy is short-sightedness and expedience.

### **Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' was a compulsory text in the '60s. Did it influence you?**

Yes, and probably the foremost influences in terms of ecology and urban issues really were Rachel Carson and Jane Jacobs. In the planning

sense, Ed Bacon was a great designer of cities who understood how you get ideas to work in very complex urban environments. Ian McHarg was one of the first to comprehend the inter-relationship of environment, ecology and urban settlement and he showed how to analyse and balance the complexity with simple drawing overlays. I spent some time working in his office.

### **When did you realise that urban design was your calling?**

I did a thesis in architecture which considered urban space and building, partly because I had been on a European study tour. I really enjoyed it, and ended up studying urban design at the University of Pennsylvania. Through my architectural training I saw an opportunity to multiply the effect of good design in cities.

### **What city inspires you?**

I think I would say really a number of cities. One of the best I think, most authentic from a design point of view, is Aix-en-Provence in the South of France. Aix has one of the loveliest urban streets called Cor Mirabeau that includes fountains in the middle of the street that are fed from natural springs since Roman times. It is a very wide street lined with plane trees and carved stone buildings – one side faces the sun and is lined with cafes and restaurants with outdoor dining under the trees on a 12m wide footpath.

Many cities take inspiration from Colonial times like they did in Philadelphia which was planned under William Penn in 1682. This is a very similar plan adopted by Adelaide with its cross of main streets and a park in all quarters. The whole evolution of Philadelphia is very interesting because it responded with a Haussman-like boulevard that connected the city centre with a large park on the edge of the city centre. In the mid 20th Century Ed Bacon established the open space of Independence Mall on axis with Independence Hall. This was the catalyst for the renaissance of the city centre. The lesson is that public amenity can greatly influence private development and vice versa.

### **So where does Oscar Niemeyer rate in all of this for you with cities like Brasilia?**

When I first studied Brasilia I didn't like it at all. I thought it was far too regimented and bland. However on visiting the city I saw the constantly rolling clouds in a big sky which had the effect of the sun lighting up the sculptural buildings one after the other as if on a stage – it was surreal and inspiring.

### **And what of Canberra?**

Well I remember visiting Mitchell Giurgola's office in Canberra – the architects for Australia's Parliament House – and they had done a butter paper drawing where they had 'Manhattan-ised' Canberra and increased the vertical scale by about 10 or 20 times, and it looked like a great city. So the plan is pretty robust! I do think that as a community we can be too conservative on building size and height which can often be addressed by raising quality in design.

### **Do you lean more towards the rigorous, highly regulated planning, or the more free-market, laissez faire variety?**

I think planning should be rigorous and you must know what you're doing. If you've really



worked it out, considered the framework and done the site tests properly and have a good, fundamentally strong rationale, then be definite in the planning controls. Otherwise I like to give as much flexibility as possible to good designers.

When we worked on the Central Sydney Plan, we wanted to protect sunlight to the parks for the middle of winter so we restricted building heights to maintain that sunlight. That's an absolute rigorous control. On the other hand, you don't want to be so prescriptive that you ruin spontaneity. So where controls can be flexible they should be – arbitrary controls or controls that are not well founded occur too frequently in our planning system.

### **What makes cities magical?**

Cities that respond well to their place in the landscape and provide an intense variety of spaces for people seem to be the best. The word 'magical' means surprising or 'unexpected' to me. This quality seems to occur most when layers of history are evident as you walk around a place.

### **And Australia. Are you the optimist there?**

A lot of Australian towns have been suburbanised, especially along the coast, and tended to lose their character. I think the coastline, particularly of NSW, is one of the most beautiful anywhere in the world. Yet most urban development is a poor response to its extraordinarily beautiful coastal setting. We've just been involved in a wonderful development at Wallarah with Stockland. This is a stretch of land between Lake Macquarie and the Pacific Ocean. It's a highly sensitive location, wonderful bushland, and we've done quite detailed building design guidelines. We want people to have light-weight or light frame housing to catch breezes and to maintain the bush around their house. The first 10 houses have been built as demonstration houses and, if all goes according to plan, it really will be a model for sensitive coastal development with no more sweaty slab on ground houses.

→ [michael.harrison@architectus.com.au](mailto:michael.harrison@architectus.com.au)

# GREEN SQUARE'S NEW BALANCE

**Some 280ha of Sydney's inner south will benefit from a Built Form Review provided by Architectus Sydney. Titled 'Green Square', and named after a small triangular park by the new rail station between the airport and city, the project covers the entire suburbs of Zetland, Beaconsfield, parts of Alexandria, Waterloo and Rosebery.**

The overlay project will provide a higher degree of certainty and amenity to the area's burgeoning growth with vastly improved indicators for employment growth, office space and industrial use. With a projected population increase of 20,000 residents and 30,000 jobs, the Architectus review protects the area's heritage values and provides for a dynamic mix of residential, multi-use and light industrial.

Architectus was originally invited to provide an overview of the urban plan and check workability of the development controls, but when it was realised that the proposal contained structural anomalies, it was necessary to provide a higher level of input. Some of the originally planned street block depths, for instance, were planned at 42m – too narrow for building separation and amenity, while the usage pattern was formulated for residential and mixed use to the disadvantage of employment.

"It was a vision that wasn't fully working," says Architectus Sydney Planning Director Michael Harrison. There had been competitions and consultation but, in the end, lacked the framework that helps generate a lively, well organised and, hopefully, loved urban environment."

"The previous concept had all buildings, on over 100 street blocks, built hard to the street alignment. My view was that it produced a very uniform, two-dimensional, environment. Far better that new residential streets should have a landscape setback for better amenity and sufficient street space for tree canopies and daylight to apartments. It is unrealistic to expect new residents to come from the suburbs or other apartments into this new re-development and experience such hard-edged, severe containment."

The original plan also defined six mixed-use zones ultimately considered too complicated. Developments of 100% residential use were being approved with mixed use stagnating and consequently employment targets failing. Under the Built Form Review around 50% of land will be dedicated to mainly residential use, 30% industrial/employment and 20% for mixed-use.

Architectus' review has precisely defined employment areas for office, industry and mixed use for consideration by Council. Offices are principally located near the railway station, a significant area is set aside for industry and diversity of employment, and the rest set aside as mixed-use and residential. Also considered were issues of amenity, sunlight and space.

Harrison says that the planning innovations incorporating the area's high water table continues the ideas of previous studies. Historically water has been removed via open drainage channels feeding into Alexandra Canal and finally emptying into Botany Bay. "Water is such a precious resource that we want to see it incorporated into a green landscape rather than treating it as some form of waste. The water channels can be reinforced in a linear open space and path network, building on the intrinsic character of the area."

The City Council is currently reviewing Architectus' recommendations for inclusion in the new City Plan.

→ [michael.harrison@architectus.com.au](mailto:michael.harrison@architectus.com.au)



The keyline indicates the 280ha study area excluding the town centre. This area is subject to higher density re-urbanisation around the new Green Square Railway Station.



## Illustration showing some recommended changes to street blocks:

- A** Minimum street block depths of 60m to achieve building separation for amenity and privacy.
- B** Landscape setbacks in new streets for residential amenity and space for street tree canopy.
- C** Improved larger open space areas within street blocks for better sunlight access and amenity.
- D** Variety in building heights for sun access, breeze circulation and visual interest/outlook.
- E** Vertical breaks between buildings to improve ventilation and create visual connections at ground level between streets and courtyards.