Design and the development assessment process

...the way City of Perth planners work with the City's Design Advisory Committee to achieve improved design outcomes in the absence of a design excellence framework and the challenges faced throughout the development assessment process.

Explain what planners need to be aware of when preparing policy and undertaking assessments.

City of **Perth**

History of the City's Design Advisory Committee (DAC)

The City first established a 'Bonus Plot Ratio Committee' under its 1985 City Planning Scheme. The membership of the Committee included members of the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA).

With the gazettal of City Planning Scheme No. 2 in 2004, the Committee became the Design Advisory Committee. Its membership expanded to include the Government Architect, the City's Director Planning and Development and members of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects in addition to members of the AIA and PIA.

Members of the Committee must be suitably qualified and experienced professionals with a good standing in the professional community.

Design Advisory Committee

City of **Perth**

Operation of the Design Advisory Committee

- Established under Section 5.8 of the Local Government Act 1995.

- The DAC usually only considers submitted applications and is not utilised to provide preliminary design advice.

- The DAC meetings are not open to the public.

- Applicants can make a presentation to the DAC and respond to questions from Committee members. Applicants then leave the meeting and the DAC's discussions and formal advice is provided behind closed doors.

- Applications are usually required to be presented only once to the DAC for consideration/advice.

City of **Perth**

City Architect role

How the City Architect assists Planners in the assessment of building design.
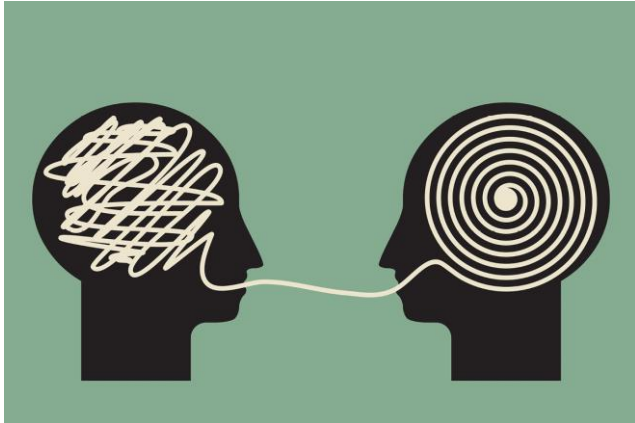
Pre-lodgement Advice

Pre-lodgement discussions with developers, architects and owners are critical in setting the path for a good design outcome.

- Encourage customers to bring sketches or massing diagrams to start the conversation, no matter how basic or preliminary.

- Discuss what it possible, and what is not, early in the design process. Identify problem areas and 'red flags' before clients become wedded to any particular design.
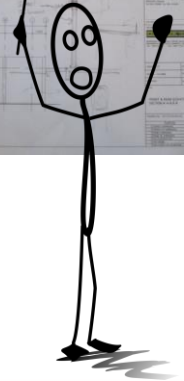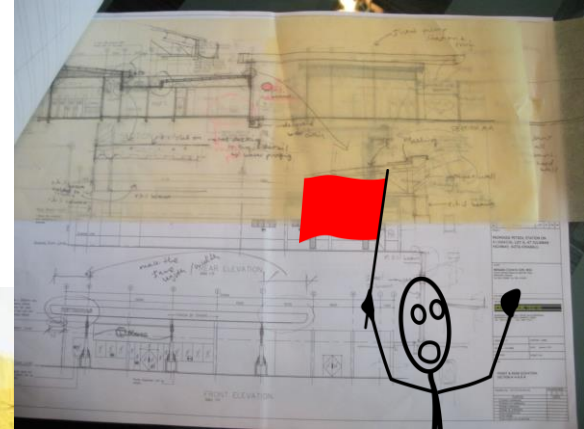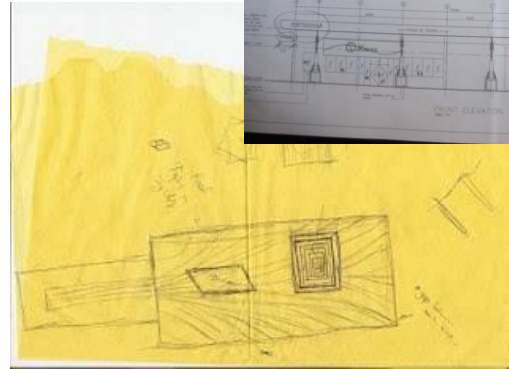
Assessment of applications

Internal review group

The City has a weekly Design Review Group meeting that involves officers from across Business Units.

This is an opportunity to provide technical input into DAs relating to waste management, environmental health, street tree preservation and impact on other City assets, interface with the public realm, landscaping, economic development and so forth.

Aspects of the design that might need to be reviewed to satisfy the City's regulatory and other requirements is then sent to the applicant for their consideration and response.

City of **Perth**

Assessment of applications

Design Advisory Committee Advice

Applications are usually presented to the DAC when any critical design or planning matters that have been identified by the Planners have already been addressed by the applicant.

Once the DAC meeting minutes are finalised, applicants are provided with the DAC advice and given the opportunity to respond to the advice and/or submit revised plans prior to the officer's report and recommendations being finalised and the application being determined by Council/LDAP.

This often results in a further meeting of the Planners and City Architect with the applicant to work through the DAC advice and design responses.

City of **Perth**

Assessment of applications

Response to Design Advisory Committee Advice

Before

After

Assessment of applications

Response to Design Advisory Committee Advice

Before

After

City of **Perth**

Assessment of applications

Response to Design Advisory Committee Advice

Before

After

Assessment of applications

Report and recommendation to Council/DAP

Reports to Council/DAP include the DAC advice in full, followed by an explanation as to how the applicant has responded to the advice through the submission of revised plans.

The adequacy of any building design is not solely reliant on advice from the DAC, but must also be assessed against any relevant design guidelines and planning policies.

Any recommended condition of development approval relating to the design of the building must pass the test of validity for planning conditions, importantly it must have a planning purpose, it must be reasonable and should be certain and final.

City of **Perth**

Clearance of Planning conditions

Maintaining design quality and integrity at the construction stage.

The design details for most new buildings will continue to be refined as documentation is prepared for a building permit. Planning approval is a design concept and the final detail isn't determined until the construction drawings are finalised.

To avoid the 'dumbing down' of design quality you need robust and clear conditions of development approval.

The City of Perth requires final design details to be submitted, including samples of materials that we approve prior to an application for a building permit being submitted. We utilise the knowledge and expertise of the City Architect to verify if the proposed materials and any design 'tweaks' are acceptable.

City of **Perth**

Preparation of Design Guidelines – key things to consider

Developers will always want to get the most floorspace they can in a given site. It's up to planners to set the appropriate controls to make sure architects have room to design in a way that promotes human health and happiness.

Design Guidelines are required to control the 'lowest denominator' – we'll accept better but we really don't want anything less.

Do they address the 10 key principles of design excellence (as stated in draft SPP7)?

- Context and character
- Landscape quality
- Built form and scale
- Functionality and build quality
- Sustainability
- Amenity
- Legibility
- Safety
- Community
- Aesthetics

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Preparation of Design Guidelines – key things to consider (cont.)

Where there are performance criteria, are they sufficiently clear or robust to be able to determine whether or not they have been satisfied?

Are the guidelines full of well-meaning statements that can be used to support good developments but prove to be too broad or fluffy to use to provide reasons for refusing a bad development?

The future challenge is to target more innovative, sensitive and friendly designs to improve usability and liveability for everyone beyond minimum requirements and without compromising aesthetics. Design Excellence holds the key to creating an environment allowing people with different levels of physical and/or cognitive capabilities to integrate as fully as possible into the mainstream of daily life.

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Thank you for listening.