API 8.13 Design Excellence Program

Design Advocacy Discussion Paper

August 2019

API 8.13: Extend City of Melbourne's commitment to high quality urban design through advocacy, internal design review and investigation of design competitions on significant sites.

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Figure 1: The Melbourne Awards, a high profile business and community event hosted by the City of Melbourne, represents a unique opportunity to integrate design awards to a broader community forum.

Executive summary

Design awards are a key advocacy tool for promoting design excellence. They provide an opportunity to reward completed projects that industry leaders (the judges) deem to have demonstrated the highest standards of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture. Awards provide an opportunity for public advocacy which can capture the attention of a broad audience including the design and development industry as well as the community. They offer the opportunity to grow design awareness and the design culture of the City in a way that supports Council's strategic ambitions to promote design excellence. A more design-literate community will lead to an elevated expectation of quality of our developers and designers.

The design awards process offers Council an opportunity free from the procedural constraints of the planning process to draw attention to projects that demonstrate design excellence. If paired with case study publications and a communication strategy this can provide prestige and support for the project. This also translates to a commercial benefit in the form of free marketing which can assist in elevating the reputation of the development, designer and client and assist in attracting investors and building occupants. A successful awards program can enable Councils to leverage their public profile as supporters of Design Excellence and potentially achieve a high impact relative to the level of investment required.

The following paper builds upon research into options for Design Advocacy undertaken in the *Synthesis Report* as part of Amendment C308 in 2018. The research explores the potential to use design awards to position the City of Melbourne as a leader or 'design champion' and elevate the quality of private development in the City. The City of Melbourne does not presently host an independent urban design awards program. Therefore the research has focused upon the lessons from the content, logistics and relative success of comparable design award programs in addition to a rating or points system for design review. The paper is structured as follows:

- Investigation of a broad range of peak design industry awards to understand how they operate, including the composition of the jury, the assessment criteria and recent winners. This has also included a survey of City of Melbourne's contribution to these awards through individual officer contributions or donations;

- Investigation of the opportunities that might exist within the City of Melbourne's existing awards programs to integrate a new urban design category;

- Benchmarking of local, interstate and international municipal awards, using a comparative methodology to understand the scope, jury composition, and relative media exposure.

- Evaluation of a series of point score or self-assist checklists to understand their effectiveness and potential application in the City of Melbourne.

The findings on other awards programs have been structured in the form of discussion and recommendations. The recommendations provide particular guidance about an optimal form and content of an awards program.

The research concludes that creating new design awards as part of the existing Melbourne Awards program, as well as a revamped engagement with the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) Victorian Chapter Awards offers a significant opportunity for advocacy with limited financial or resource implications. However, another key finding is the need for any program to be part of a feedback loop between design policy and current design review practice to ensure that an awards program can lead to a raising of the bar on subsequent development proposals submitted to the City. In this sense it is advantageous that the awards program can be linked to the Central Melbourne Design Guide but also situated within an integrated, long term Design Excellence Program.

In the short term, recommendations have been implemented as a 'pilot' phase comprising the following:

- A new award in the 2019 Melbourne Awards for Urban Design Excellence, with a view to expanding this to an optimal form with two to three categories in subsequent years.
- A more active engagement with the Enduring Architecture Award through the 2019 (AIA) Victorian Chapter Awards, which is to be presented by the Lord Mayor in July 2019 and capitalised upon with media and communications around the event.

Evaluation of the success of the pilot phase will be used to inform and improve future awards programs.

Industry Design Awards

The Victorian AIA Victorian Awards and AILA Awards are the key industry awards for the architecture and landscape architecture professions. The City historically sponsored the Melbourne Prize and currently contributes financially to the Enduring Architecture Award within the Victorian AIA Victorian Awards and also sponsors the AILA Awards. The City also historically played host to the RVIA Victorian Street Architecture Medal between 1929 and 1954.

Individual officers have contributed to the Victorian Architecture or Landscape Architecture Awards as jurors over an extended period of time providing direct advocacy for good design and exposure to the industry of the City's design agenda. Current Officers who have contributed include Emma Appleton (National Jury, AILA Awards), Rob Adams (AIA Victorian Awards – The Melbourne Prize & Urban Design), Meredith Gould and Roger Beeston (AIA Victorian Awards – Heritage) and Mark Allan (AIA Victorian Awards – The Melbourne Prize). Additional officers who have contributed to the AIA Victorian Awards over time include Shelley Penn, David Pryor, Stephen Thorne, Pru Sanderson, Ralf Pfleiderer and Jane Homewood.

AIA Victorian Chapter Awards – The Melbourne Prize

The Melbourne Prize was initiated by the City of Melbourne as an advocacy measure to embody the ambitions of the 1985 Strategy Plan to enliven the city centre with a mix of uses and high quality design. The refurbishment and activation of the Meyers Place Bar by Six Degrees in 1993 was the first recipient, as an example of activating a service lane outside of business hours. The City of Melbourne both financially supported, presented and provided jurors to the award. The City's involvement in the award was discontinued after 2001. Subsequently the award was supported by the Victorian Government and requires a $20,000 per annum investment, reflecting its prestige. The award remains a highly important 'named' prize which honours projects of metropolitan significance. Since the City of Melbourne's relationship with the award finished, the award is no longer limited to projects within the City of Melbourne. Recent winners have been largely limited to public and institutional work, with no representation from private development.

Recent winners within the City of Melbourne include:

- (joint winner) New Academic Street, RMIT University | Lyons with NMBW Architecture Studio, Harrison and White, MvS Architects and Maddison Architects (within City of Moreland and City of Melbourne respectively)
- 2016 NGV ARCHITECTURE COMMISSION: Haven't you always wanted…? | M@ STUDIO Architects jointly with Tanderrum Bridge | John Wardle Architects and NADAAA in collaboration (both within City of Melbourne)
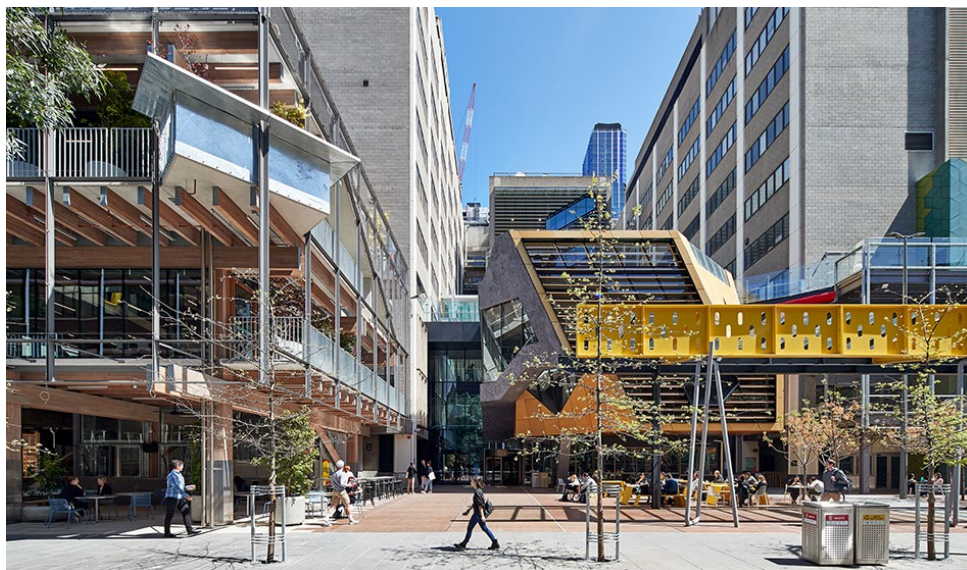

Figure 2: RMIT New Academic Street – the 2018 joint winner of the Melbourne Prize.

It is noted that projects which win The Melbourne Prize or any other award in the State level AIA awards are automatically considered for the National Awards along with other State level awards around the country, providing additional exposure and a higher platform for acknowledging design excellence beyond what could be achieved at a municipal level.

<u>AIA Victorian Chapter Awards – The Enduring Architecture Award</u>

The Enduring Architecture Award recognises structures over 25 years old that remain important in a contemporary context. This recognises projects for contributing to the civic legacy of the City, preferencing long term investment in design quality over architectural fashion. This specifically rewards projects with ambitions which exceed the time cycles of speculative development. The City of Melbourne has contributed around $10,000 each year to the award in 2012, and between 2014 and 2019. The City does not currently contribute jury members to the award selection process, nor publicise the contribution to the award through media channels. Enduring Architecture was selected as the sponsored category as it supports the delivery of buildings and public spaces which are most likely to 'sustain a city into the future, due to their ongoing aesthetic, functional and cultural relevance'. Recent award winners in the City of Melbourne are limited to public or institutional works, with no representation from private development.

Recent winners within the City of Melbourne include:

- Yarra Footbridge at Southbank | Cocks Carmichael Whitford
- University South Lawn Underground Car Park by Loder and Bayly in association with Harris, Lange and Associates

Figure 2: The Yarra Footbridge or 'Evan Walker Bridge' demonstrates an example of a structure completed in 1992 which was considered to have stood the test of time as an enduring design contribution to the City.

RVIA Street Architecture Medal - Victorian Architecture Medal

The Victorian Street Architecture Medal was introduced in 1926 by The Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) as an award for the design of a building of exceptional merit and ran until 1954. At that time, buildings were judged on their 'urban propriety and architectural etiquette'; the building had to front a street, road, square or court to which the public had access and it was expected to have a civic character, offering its architectural qualities to the greater public realm of the city. The discontinuation of the award in 1954 reflected a shift in industry direction.

Of interest is the composition of the Jury for the RVIA Street Architecture Medal which would comprise of 11 members, including representation from the public works authority and art community in addition to architects appointed by the RAIA. This broader engagement outside of the Architectural profession demonstrates the importance placed on the medal and emphasis on broader public engagement. The display of the medal on a property was and remains a very visible accolade for primarily commercial buildings.

Today's Victorian Architecture Medal is awarded annually and is selected by the Jury Chairs from the field of Named Award winners, the top award in each category. The criteria for selection of the Victorian Architecture Medal reflects the sentiment expressed by the original Victorian Street Architecture Medal for which a buildings relationship and contribution to the public realm was a strong consideration. The Victorian Architecture Medal is a descendant of the Street Architecture Medal, and is selected from the recipient of 'named awards' within each of the categories. The specific relationship to 'street architecture' has reduced, however the award is still concerned both with the private and public realm.
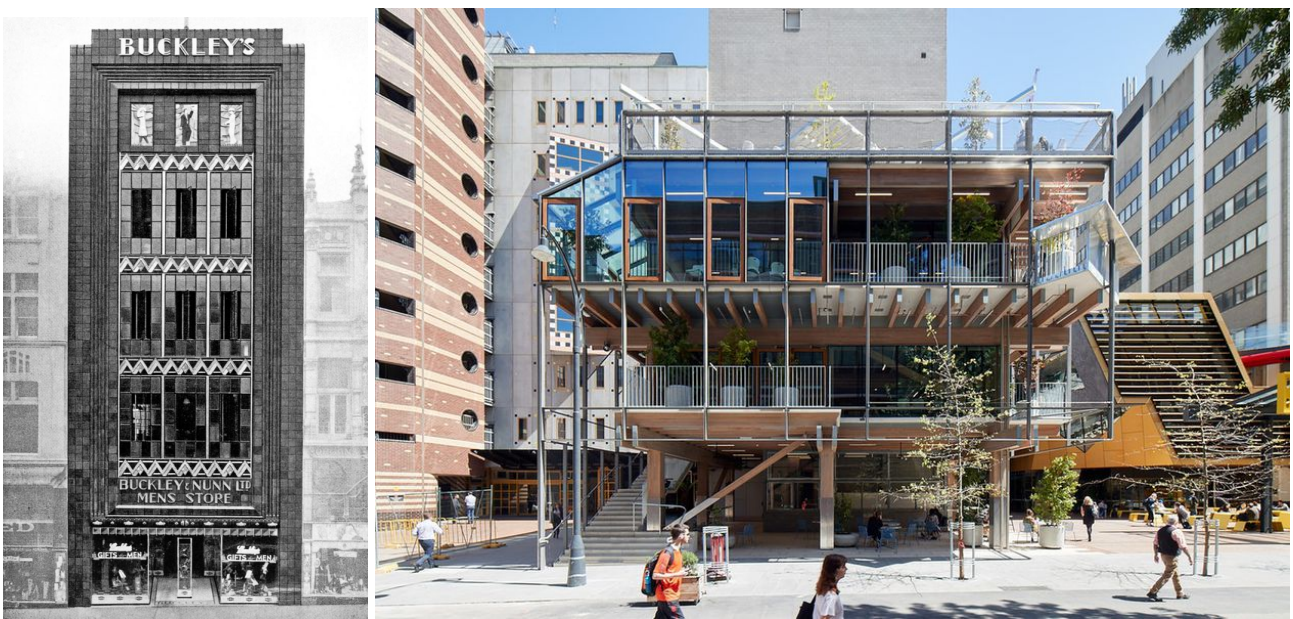

Figure 3: Buckley and Nunns Store in Bourke Street, The Victorian Street Architecture Medal Winner of 1934 (left) and the 2018 joint Victorian Architecture Medal Winner – RMIT New Academic Street (right)

AIA New South Wales Chapter Awards – City of Sydney Lord Mayor's Prize for Design Excellence

The City of Sydney sponsors an annual Lord Mayor's Prize as part of the AIA New South Wales Chapter Awards and is unique in the Australian context. The Award was established in 2013 as an initiative led by the City of Sydney, and developed in collaboration between the Institute and City of Sydney staff. The Prize was incorporated in the same year the Competitive Design Policy (2013) was adopted, as part of the broader Design Excellent Strategy and can be entered only by projects within the municipal boundaries which have been entered into the main NSW Architecture Award program. The Prize was established to award a built project that "improves the quality of the public domain through architectural or urban design excellence', emphasising the possibility for architecture as a form of place making in the City. The prize is focused on development projects but may also be for, or include large scale public art.

As an award which is not formally part of the AIA awards process, the Prize is distinct in that the City of Sydney Lord Mayor selects the winner from a shortlist of relevant entries. The shortlist is prepared by the City of Sydney Director of City Planning, Development and Transport, Graham Jahn AM. The shortlist or 'finalists' are published in the lead up to the award ceremony concurrently with the AIA awards. One prize is granted by the Lord Mayor at the ceremony, and the remaining finalists receive a Commendation. The award is highly regarded within the Industry, and is considered comparable to a category winner or 'named' award, such as the Melbourne Prize in the Victorian context.

Recent winners include:

- 2018 Barangaroo Ferry Wharf | Cox Architecture
- 2017 (joint winners) Tramsehds Harold Park | Mirvac Design, and Kensington Street Precinct | Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects.

Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture (AILA) Awards

The City of Melbourne contributes $5000 per year to the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture as part of a corporate partner sponsorship. While this is not specifically tied to the Awards, it provides a corporate presence at the awards through promotional material associated with sponsors. The AILA Awards jury unusually comprises a single panel across all categories, in contrast to the AIA format. The City of Melbourne has a high number of public realm projects delivered in-house by the City Design Studio which are frequently submitted for awards. This limits the ability to contribute jurors as it would constitute a conflict.

Noting the City Design Studio model, most, if not all public realm projects in the City of Melbourne are procured and designed as part of the Capital Works Program. If private firms are engaged, these tend to be limited to documentation assistance. Consequently, it would not be strategically advantageous to further emphasise a Landscape Awards program unless this incentivises or encourages design investment and innovation from the private development sector.

While the City of Melbourne contribution to AILA is positive and should continue, it is clear that there is a need to increase the advocacy and incentives for innovation in private landscapes internal to developments consistent with the ambition of the Greening our City Action Plan (GOCAP) project. This is where the primary gap in quality and submissions is most obvious. Accordingly it will be important for any awards program within the City of Melbourne to incorporate a component relating to private landscape elements or green infrastructure more broadly, but to limit this to non-City of Melbourne assets.

Premiers Design Awards

The Victorian Premier's Design Awards were established in 2012, and continues the legacy of the *Victorian Design Awards*, which had been running since 1996. The Premier's Design Awards recognise and reward Victorian design businesses that display excellence in using design to enhance productivity, business outcomes and to shape a better environment and society. The Design Awards cover a broad base of design including products, spaces and experience, which includes Architecture, and Urban Design.

The awards are administered by an independent organisation Good Design Australia, and adopt a two stage process, with a shortlisting process followed by further detailed evaluation. Jurors include independent designers across a range of disciplines, including business strategy, business owners and respected local and international designers. A number of built environment panellists were included in the 2018 jury including Mike Horne of Turf Design Studio, Fred Holt of 3XN, Elaine Lu from Lim and Lu and Stephanie Little from Chenchow Little Architects.

One specific category focuses on Architectural Design, however a winner of any thematic category is also eligible for the Victorian Premier's Design Award of the Year.

The 2018 winner was not in the City of Melbourne, however the 2018 finalists within the City of Melbourne with an urban design component include:

- Banksia Tower New Quay | McBride Charles Ryan Architects
- The Stables VCA Faculty of Fine Arts and Music | Kerstin Thompson Architects

Discussion

From a survey of recent AIA Victorian and National Chapter Awards, it is clear that private development within the City of Melbourne is underrepresented in commendations or winners. Despite the boom in construction (70 towers completing or commencing works between 2013-2017 in the Hoddle Grid and Southbank) there has been a comparably limited number of awarded projects. Recent winners have been limited to public realm projects or large scale institutional projects with strong representation from Melbourne University and RMIT. This contrasts strongly to the City of Sydney, where a high proportion of awarded projects have come from within the municipal boundaries, with a strong representation from private development in addition to public works. A key driver here is the Competitive Design Process, with compelling data from UNSW that 75% of projects that have been through a City of Sydney competition since 2007 have won industry awards. In the 2018 NSW Chapter Awards, 13 private projects and 4 public projects received awards or commendations.

The City of Melbourne is the only municipality in Victoria which currently contributes financial support to the AIA and AILA Awards programs. The contribution to these award programs offers an opportunity for the City of Melbourne to support design excellence in a public forum, and provide visible support for the peak industry bodies for Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design.

The current support for the Emerging Architecture Award is positive with a particular focus on the City's 'future heritage', and rewarding buildings which have proven themselves to be of enduring value to the City. However it is challenging that the award is not limited to the City of Melbourne municipal boundaries. It is felt however that the Enduring Architecture Award does not maximise the strategic ambitions of the Design Excellence Program to reflect contemporary development occurring within the municipality.

Discussions with AIA around additional awards categories reveals a strategic focus to restrict the total number of awards within the program, so that each award has a higher level of prestige. It is felt that a Lord Mayor's Prize for Design Excellence is a strong idea which is clearly integrated with the City of Sydney's strategic objectives, and positions the Lord Mayor as a leader and advocate for high quality design. The limitation of the award to the municipal boundary is also advantageous.

While there is little strategic advantage in extending financial support to a specific AILA Award category beyond the current sponsorship commitment for the Ceremony, City of Melbourne could play a stronger role in using the awards to publicly promote desirable outcomes for private realm landscape. Additionally a new award focused on private realm landscape could form part of a future Municipal awards program.

Contribution of jurors and stronger association with any awards program supported by the City is an important opportunity to demonstrate leadership. While the City has a strong history of jury contribution and presentation of awards through the Melbourne Prize, this appears to have dropped off in recent years. The lack of consistent contribution of Jury members reduces the opportunity for the City to publicly engage with industry debate around design and be 'visible' in design discourse.

<u>Recommendation</u>

- In the short term, investigate the opportunities to work with the AIA Victorian Chapter Award to ensure a greater alignment between the Enduring Architecture Award and the strategic interests of the City.

- Investigate opportunities in the short term to focus the Enduring Architecture Award to projects within the municipal boundaries of the City of Melbourne.

- Engage with the AIA Victorian Chapter in the medium term to determine if an Award could be tailored to an area of specific strategic interest to the City with an equivalent City of Melbourne Lord Mayor's Prize, as a contemporary incarnation of the RVIA Street Medal. To avoid creating additional award categories, this could replace and refine the Melbourne Prize, and be focused within the municipal boundaries. Seek to redirect sponsorship towards this Award to reflect the City's strategic interests.

- In conjunction with DELWP, seek to influence award criteria for Residential or Commercial Awards which reflect urban design excellence, in particular at the interface with the public realm.

- Advocate for further information in the Enduring Architecture Award (and any subsequent sponsored award) citation and media around 'good clients' and the total design team contribution, rather than simply the architects. This is particularly imperative given the factors that result in a durable building include both the investment in quality of the original construction but also the ongoing management of maintenance.

- Advocate for the City of Melbourne's contribution of sessional jury members to AIA Victorian Chapter Jury panels for a number of categories of strategic interest to increase industry visibility and a positive voice outside of a regulatory role.

- Engage closely with Media and Communications to further broadcast the City of Melbourne's contribution and commitment to acknowledgement of Design Excellence through the AIA Victorian Chapter Awards.

- Continue to support AILA with corporate sponsorship, however focus on an initiative rewarding private landscape within developments to incentivise / encourage innovation and investment in greening the City consistent with the objectives of GOCAP.

Other Awards Programs in the City of Melbourne

A number of awards programs exist within the City of Melbourne which reward innovation across sustainability, business, non profit and other sectors. A number of the more high profile award events in the City of Melbourne calendar include:

- The Melbourne Awards
- Cityswitch Awards
- Women in Business Awards
- Lord Mayor's Small Business Commendations
- Key to the City
- Honorary Freeman or Freewoman
- Melbourne Roll of Honour
- Freedom of Entry

The majority of these awards programs focus on the achievements of individuals and businesses, and do not have a focus on design or development. The Cityswitch Awards however have implications for the design industry as they encourage innovation in building performance and sustainability, while the Melbourne Awards are worth further exploration due to their high profile and opportunity for integration of design categories into the future.

Cityswitch Awards

The Cityswitch Awards are supported and hosted by the City of Sydney, City of Melbourne, North Sydney Council, City of Adelaide, City of Perth, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and the City of Unley. Cityswitch is both an advocacy forum and awards event, offering a repository for business information, cases studies and resources. Signatories to Cityswitch benefit from being included on a register of businesses, which enables peer to peer sharing as well as 'green' marketing. Award recipients are typically building owners or tenants who invest in a 'switch' in energy and waste management, as well as evidence of investment in social sustainability, and subsequent behavioural change.

Cityswitch has direct spatial and architectural implications, particularly in workspace and office design, due to the relationship between design and environmental performance. The City of Melbourne's contribution to Cityswitch is positive, and the focus on the design and environmental performance of workplaces is an important contribution which sits outside of the influence of the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

The Melbourne Awards

A Melbourne Award is the City of Melbourne's highest accolade and most prominent awards event. For over a decade, these awards have provided the City of Melbourne with a platform to celebrate the achievements of people and organisations whose passion and commitment have helped make Melbourne one of the most liveable cities in the world. The awards celebrate significant contributions in the areas of sustainability, community, multiculturalism and strengthening Melbourne's profile. The Awards are hosted in the form of a Gala Event with a black tie dinner, significant media attention and broad attendance from the Melbourne community. Attendees can vary from 300-600 people per year. The 2018 award categories within the Melbourne Awards include:

- Sustainability Award - Corporation

- Profile Award – Corporation / Community

- Multiculturalism Award – Corporation / Community

- Community Award - Corporation / Community

- Melbournian of the Year

Award partners beyond the City of Melbourne in 2018 included Spotless Catering, Channel Seven, Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 3AW, Finsbury Green, Ernst and Young, Epicure, Lifestyle Melbourne and Macquarie Sports Radio. The event costs approximately $500,000 to run, befitting of it's high profile.

External jurors are selected from across prominent Melbourne institutions and engaged in a voluntary capacity. The judging process, following registration from applicants includes an online scoring process, a vetting breakfast to derive a shortlist, followed by interviews with short listed candidates. A separate jury panel operates for each award category; however these are located under a single chairman who can determine the winner if a jury panel is divided.

The Events Team undertook a review of the Melbourne Awards in early 2019 leading to a restructure of the program and categories to align with Council's Goals. The Urban Design team discussed the possibility of including a new category relating to design as part of the restructure. The new Melbourne Awards structure was launched in May 2019 with a single Urban Design Award as a pilot phase.

The new Urban Design Award criteria includes 5 key questions including:

- How has the project / design strengthened Melbourne's reputation at a local, national or global level?
- Has the project achieved a successful outcome?
- Does the project demonstrate innovation in sustainability?
- Does the project demonstrate innovation in spatial design, land use, or financing which foster social sustainability?
- What will be the civic legacy of the project to the City of Melbourne?

Under each question a series of 12 sub questions have been developed by Urban Design to help frame these questions, and provide the terms of reference for the assessment by the Jury. A jury has been selected with a number of esteemed industry representatives including Amy Muir - Muir Architecture and the AIA Victorian Chapter President, Martin Hook – Dean of RMIT School of Architecture and Urban Design and Tim Leslie – Open House Melbourne and Bates Smart Studio Director. At the time of this paper a series of 12 projects have been registered by June 7, with final submissions due July 12. Judging will take place through September with finalists announced in October and the Awards Gala Ceremony on November 16.

Discussion

The integration of design awards into an existing public event, which is not specific to the design industry offers an opportunity to capture a broader audience. As the most public facing component being investigated in the Design Excellence Program, this opportunity allows for an opportunity to contribute to the strengthening of the design literacy and culture of our community, outside of the potential echo chamber of an industry awards event. This approach offers a cost effective opportunity to leverage existing Media and Events commitments around an existing Awards program. Rather than introduce an additional stand-alone awards program there is an opportunity to integrate with the Melbourne Awards, an existing, successful awards program with an existing public profile and media strategy that can be built upon.

While the pilot phase of the 2019 Melbourne Awards will comprise a single Urban Design award category, there is a risk of perpetuating the image of the 'sublime' singular building or project, over a series of awards which reward a range of outcomes in the City. A single award invariably favours project scale and impact, over the demonstration of excellence at the small scale, which is a key focus of the Central Melbourne Design Guide. A number of award categories might allow targeted focus on strategic areas of interest including heritage, small scale infill development and larger scale commercial, residential or institutional development. Equally, recognition of finalists in the form of a commendation category enables an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the pursuit of excellence in projects which are not the final award recipient.

<u>Recommendation</u>

- Do not progress a stand-alone City of Melbourne urban design awards program.

- Co-ordinate with Events Melbourne to integrate a single Urban Design and Architecture Award initially in 2019, but advocate for a number (2-4)of strategically important Urban Design and Architecture categories into the Melbourne Awards in future years.

- Ensure jury are highly regarded in their field and drawn from the fields of architecture, landscape architecture and urban design to reflect a multi-faceted approach, and emphasis on urban integration over 'object' focused awards. Also consider integration of other design advocates including cultural and arts representatives outside of the traditional built environment sphere.

- Ensure that any award is not solely focused on the design architect, but reflects the multi-faceted team structure required to deliver complex projects, including developer, builder, architect and any consultants key to the achievement of design outcomes. A broader conception of the project team should be rewarded and publicised for the achievement of design excellence.

- Review the categories annually to ensure that they reflect strategic interests at the time (for example student accommodation, heritage, GOCAP, office development etc)

- Engage with Media to actively promote existing industry awards within the design and development community where a project within the City of Melbourne has been acknowledged. This can provide advocacy for the achievement of design excellence outside of a City-led design awards program.

Existing Municipal Awards Programs

A number of municipalities run in-house design awards programs both locally, interstate and internationally. In the Melbourne context this includes Bayside City Council, City of Whitehorse, City of Boroondara, City of Port Phillip and the City of Knox (inaugural awards commencing in 2019). A number of these have been in operation since the late 1990s. A select number of municipal award programs have been explored to understand their structure, jury composition, award categories and media impact. Programs reviewed include:

- Port Phillip
- Whitehorse
- Gold Coast
- Vancouver

A comparison of these examples is provided at Appendix A.

In understanding the effectiveness of municipal design awards programs, the City of Whitehorse has helpfully undertaken a review entitled *Building a Better City Design Awards Review*, in 2011. Further, the City of Port Phillip undertook a similar review in 2015 before they relaunched their awards program in 2018.

A number of key findings which arose from the City of Whitehorse Review of their previous annual awards program included:

- There was a consistent lack of nominations and a lack of quality nominations across all categories with the annual award model.

- As a result of the above, poor quality nominations were being automatically accepted and risk the rewarding of projects which do not exhibit design excellence.

- The judging criteria did not reflect current built environment issues and industry best practice.

- The number and composition of the judging panel was excessive and unwieldy, with a high level of Council representation (as distinct from independent jurors)

- The awards program does not have a significant profile in the community or industry media, both leading up to and following the award event.

- Organising and facilitating awards requires dedicated resources and appropriate assessment skills.

- A dedicated budget is required to facilitate the award event, print media and payment of jurors.

As a result of these findings, Whitehorse, consistent with a number of the surveyed municipal awards shifted to a bi-annual event model with a reduced number of categories to elevate the quantity and quality of entrants per category, while reducing the relative annual resource and budget constraints. Further, program management shifted to the relevant Council business area with the skills to publicise and organise public events, and away from Urban Strategy, whilst maintaining oversight and expert content input from a range of work areas within Council. In order to maximise the public interest in the event and subsequent media, the Awards ceremony was integrated with Sustainable Living Week.

The City of Port Phillip Design and Development Award revamp similarly sought to improve the standing and effect of their program. Following an internal review process requested by Councillors, Port Phillip elected to continue their awards program, and implemented a series of changes as follows:

- Integration of the Awards event with Melbourne Design Week and partnering with the National Gallery of Victoria.

- Hosting of the event by a high profile entertainer, with the event hosted as a significant event at the NGV Pavillion, highlighting the importance of a thematically relevant and inspiring venue.

- Stronger alignment with the process with existing design industry award methods such as the AIA Victorian Chapter Awards.

- Engagement of high profile independent architectural experts (Shelley Penn and Donald Bates), alongside elected Councillors to form the jury panel.

- Development of clear key selection criteria for each award category to ensure consistency and transparency in jury decisions.

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

- Transparency around judging and printed information in the winner booklet.

- Increased budget for for venue hire, judges and printed material coupled with dedicated staff time from an administrative office within Strategic Planning.

The 2018 event achieved significant media interest and presence relative to other municipal awards and generated strong awareness within the design industry.

Discussion

It is apparent that municipal level design awards are commonplace in Victoria, to a greater degree than other Australian states. The widespread uptake of Awards programs around Melbourne is testament to the perception that they are an effective tool to elevate design quality in private development. From available literature as well as interviews with staff they are accepted as a method both to recognise the achievement of good design, but also provide a valuable opportunity to educate Councillors and Council staff through project visits and engagement with expert jurors, providing a feedback loop between policy and built outcomes.

A significant unknown factor with any awards program remains the lack of direct evidence around the impact of awards on the quality of built form outcomes observed at the planning application phase. There is limited evidence to support the notion that a stand-alone awards program can elevate design quality without supporting policy and processes. Other potential drawbacks or limiting factors to the success of a design awards program include:

- It does not immediately translate to elevated expectations through planning assessment unless tied to policy improvement.

- It relies on a longer time frame of cultural change and is difficult to measure the direct impact following implementation.

- There may not be suitable projects delivered in each calendar year which are deserving of award.

- There is a risk of duplication and creation of 'awards for awards sake' which diminishes their value relative to more prestigious industry awards.

While awards send a strong message to the industry around expectations of what is meant by design excellence, it must be part of a suite of approaches to improve design excellence including design policy to influence development proposals through converting soft advocacy to 'what will or won't achieve planning support'. Accordingly, the recent adoption of the Central Melbourne Design Guide offers a significant opportunity to tie any awards program directly back to policy ambitions for future development applications, maximising the potential effectiveness of the new policy. Provisions within the Guide can be integrated within the assessment criteria and jury deliberations to provide consistency and clarity. Teamed with the other elements of the Design Excellence Program (Design Review and Design Competitions) there is a significant opportunity to complete the 'feedback loop' between a requirement to achieve excellence, and the ability to reward it when achieved in built projects.

It is important to distinguish between the strategic ambitions of each Council and the primary development type they are seeking to influence. It is also important to note that a number of middle and outer suburban Councils have low representation of development projects in other Industry Awards Programs due to their scale and profile (for example villa unit or low-rise apartment style development). The City of Melbourne is a peculiar context due to the high volume of development, the relative capital investment in each individual development and the predominance of Registered Architects designing buildings.

The key considerations for a successful, effective awards program include:

- Program development, governance and resourcing

- The number and breadth of award categories

- The transparency and clarity of the judging criteria

- The transparency of the short listing process

- The selection of the jury and relative independence of members

- The framework to guide the jury deliberation and project visit process

- Submission and judging processes

- Event promotion, marketing and media

- Publication of winners, commendations or shortlisted projects in an accessible permanent format to provide a case study or educational information

Recommendations

- Noting the volume of construction within the City of Melbourne relative to other municipalities, commence an annual award event integrated with the existing Melbourne Awards program, with a review period after two years to determine whether a reduction to a bi-annual version is warranted if the number of quality projects is insufficient.

- Consider the opportunity to co-locate the Melbourne Awards with a major public event or festival such as Open House, Melbourne Design Week or other calendar events to maximise public interest. Host the event in a thematically relevant and inspiring venue, held in high regard by the design industry.

- Limit the award categories to a select number of development categories, to maximise the impact of a reduced number of awards, and minimise duplication with existing Industry Awards.

- Avoid the introduction of award categories which do not contribute to Council's strategic ambitions, or where existing awards provide adequate coverage (for example, single dwellings or heritage additions).

- Implement an independent jury, and limit Council Officer input to the pre-selection, briefing and technical assistance process. This will heighten the perceived independence and therefore credibility of the award.

- Seek opportunities for engagement of Councillors, either through project visits to shortlisted projects, or exposure to juror deliberations, whilst maintaining the independence of the jury. This would assist in elevating design education for Councillors, and understanding where and when design excellence has or hasn't been achieved.

- Ensure independent design jurors are paid befitting of their time contribution and expertise and to support the design industry with ethical employment practices. If jurors are unable to be paid, then it is important that jurors are drawn from existing Institutions where contribution would be an extension of existing non-profit advocacy work (for example the Office of the Victorian Government Architect, the AIA, AILA, NGV, Open House Melbourne etc).

- Ensure resources from City Design and Urban Strategy are allocated to contribute to the briefing and pre-selection process for any awards event. It is not expected that any additional dedicated staff would be required to administer an awards program.

- Ensure that the correct Council business area with appropriate skills hosts and manages the event; in this instance Events Melbourne, with content and technical support from Council Officers.

- Ensure that the 'case study' effect of awarded projects is maximised through on-line publication and social media posts outlining the jury determination and providing explanation of how design excellence has been achieved.

- Engage with industry and mainstream media to maximise the impact of the awards as a positive voice for design advocacy. Engage prior with industry media outlets such to understand how to maximise readership of online content. Emphasise at all opportunities the broader Design Excellence Program messaging with clear briefing of Councillors, to act as design champions and avoid any perception of the awards as a standalone event.

Point Score System and integration with Awards

Point Score System

The *Promoting high quality Urban Design outcomes in the Central City and Southbank - Synthesis Report*, (January 2018) documented the research which led to Amendment C308. This document includes investigation of benchmark 'supporting processes' including checklist and point score systems. A number of examples were surveyed including the Maribyrnong Good Design Standard and various versions of the Building for Life Standard (Design Council, 2018), as two examples. Since this research the City of Moreland has released a Design Excellence Scorecard.

Key details of this City of Moreland process include:

- It is a voluntary tool
- The scorecard is not integrated within the Moreland Planning Scheme and will not be part of any future planning scheme amendment
- The process is undergoing a 12 month trial and reporting period
- The process is tied to an offer of additional pre-application meetings without charge
- Dedicated resourcing to the application including a Co-ordinator or Senior Planner
- Guaranteed decision by Council Officers, rather than Council, saving 4-6 weeks

The scorecard aims to augment provisions within Local Policy and Rescode, however also incorporates a number of additional ambitions relating to Accessibility, ESD, Design and materials and Community Benefit (affordable housing), the majority of which sit outside of the planning scheme.

Drawing upon the reviewed examples, there appears to be a number of variations of point score or checklist process available including:

- Articulation of design ambitions in a graphic form which is accessible to a broad range of proponents
- An integrated planning assessment process which ascribes a value or score to policy ambitions
- A supporting self-assess approach which is required to be submitted by proponents as part of the planning process, but without any statutory weight.
- Checklists which underpin the criteria the selection or assessment criteria for an award.

<u>Discussion</u>

Set within the broader design excellence program, it is important that the term 'design excellence' is tied to processes which enable *the highest standard of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture*. From the stakeholder feedback for the Central Melbourne Design Guide and as part of API 8.13 it was clear that the design industry perceives any public facing checklist or point score system negatively as an oversimplification or codification of design. It is felt that a checklist is not an adequate tool to support a holistic design process befitting of a design excellence outcome.

It is important to acknowledge the regulatory difference between the UK context where Building for Life is implemented and successful. The planning system in Victoria is highly litigious and the exercise of discretion in the assessment process is limited to matters which can be considered through the Melbourne Planning Scheme. From discussion with Development Planners at Maribyrnong and within the City of Melbourne Development Planning Team, documents outside the Planning Scheme are seen to be of limited value at best, and as a confusing addition to the assessment process at best. There is evidence in the Maribyrnong trial that applicants tend to over exaggerate their compliance with self-assess processes and accordingly the submission is not taken seriously. As a result an otherwise high quality and well-intended publication fell out of favour with the planners due to a lack of faith in its effectiveness as a tool to assist assessment and negotiation.

Where scorecards / checklists sit outside of the statutory planning framework, there is little evidence to suggest that this will be effective in the Victorian context. Such a system of 'informal guidance' creates ambiguity for applicants and has proven to be ineffective at the Tribunal. It is also noted that a number of the outlined benefits in the Moreland Scorecard are standard practice currently within the City of Melbourne, particularly the level of applicant and urban design team engagement throughout a planning process, involvement of seniors, and free pre-application process. For such a method to be effective in the City of Melbourne, the economic reward for developers would need to be proportionate to the cost of adhering to the checklist requirements. Process guarantees would not be of sufficient monetary value. It is noted that the process also appears to be aimed primarily at residential development, whereas the City of Melbourne deals with a broader spectrum of development type.

It is felt that the Design Guide as an integrated planning tool (Incorporated Document) fulfils the role of what is intended with a number of guideline and checklist documents and to produce an additional point score system outside of the planning scheme would have a limited effect on the delivery of design quality.

There is a good opportunity to convert the provisions of the Design Guide into a series of weighted point score elements which could be valuable for the assessment of whether minimum standards of Design Quality have been achieved, before awarding a project for Design Excellence. However the Award should not be limited to such categories alone and should encompass a broader range of criteria aimed at evaluating Design Excellence, as distinct from the achievement of a minimum standard of quality.

<u>Recommendations</u>

- Do not proceed with a checklist or point score system as part of the planning assessment process, which creates ambiguity and adds work for Statutory Planners without any demonstrable benefit.
- Carefully ensure that the distinction between minimum Design Quality and the achievement of Design Excellence (the highest standards of urban design, architecture and landscape design) are retained.
- Implement a weighted point score system as part of any design awards program to ensure that a minimum standard of Design Quality is achieved. This should be teamed with broader criteria to determine whether the project exceeds minimum objectives and achieves a standard of Design Excellence.

Governance & resourcing

It is important to acknowledge that any awards program will have implications both in terms of staff resourcing but also in terms of the cost of the event and payment of experts.

The key financial implications of an awards program comprise:

- Payment of jurors to undertake site visits, deliberation and attendance at the Awards Event
- Marketing, print and digital material to promote the awards, including advertising in Industry and Public media outlets

- Design awards brochures / postcards and other collateral
- Award frames / trophies etc
- Venue hire and catering
- Advertising
- External event host

With the awards integrated into a Melbourne Awards program there would not be any cost to Urban Strategy, however based on the research for a standalone program from a range of municipalities the cost would be between $20,000-$60,000.

Additional dedicated staff would not be required to deliver an urban design awards program integrated with the Melbourne Awards, noting the existing skillset within the team and the benefit of a well-resourced Events Melbourne team with considerable experience in delivery high profile events. The time required from staff within the Urban Strategy Branch could be managed within existing workloads, as an extension of the commitment to Design Review processes. This time consumption would need to be acknowledged however in the planning for Annual Plan Initiatives and Branch Plan Initiatives.

Conclusions

It is clear that a design awards program, within a broader Design Excellence Program offers an opportunity for Council to promote the achievement of the 'highest standard of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture'. The award enables Council to leverage its significant public profile to promote exemplary projects with a limited direct repercussion for resourcing. In this sense it represents an excellent return relative to the modest level of required investment.

In direct response to stakeholder feedback, the project aims to complement the emphasis on elevating minimum expectations of design quality through Amendment C308 towards a focus on rewarding innovation and experimentation, which cannot be forced through codes or regulation. It achieves this through creating a platform for esteemed industry representatives as independent jurors to determine the winner based on a current understanding of what constitutes best practice in response to a given context and project type.

Any implementation of a design awards program must consider the range of target audiences from developers, to designers and the community. It is important that the jury findings, case studies and marketing material is tailored in such a way to avoid jargon and best describe how a project has achieved design excellence to the broadest possible audience.

However, the research reveals that an awards program can only have an effect on the quality of private development if it is integrated within a broader media and advocacy campaign which maximises the value of winners and shortlisted projects as case studies, which provide a feedback loop between 'reward' and 'advocacy'. Further, the recent adoption of the Central Melbourne Design Guide offers a platform to connect policy ambition with award criteria to frame jury deliberations. This ensures that Council as a 'design champion' has a clear and consistent message around expectations of design. Teamed with the other elements of the Design Excellence Program (Design Review and Design Competitions) there is a significant opportunity to complete the 'feedback loop' between a requirement to achieve excellence, and the ability to reward it when achieved in built projects.

Appendix A – Comparison of municipal awards programs

Municipal Award Program	Year commenced	Frequency	Sponsors / Partners	Budget	Jury structure	Award categories	External media exposure
Port Phillip Design and Development Awards	1998 (reviewed 2015)	Biannually	NGV provided event venue	$58,000 (including staff time, event hosting and jury payment)	Two external architects and 3 Councillors (on rotation)	Residential Dwelling (multiple), Multi-unit and mixed use development (multiple), Place making, Non residential development (multiple), public art, interior fit-out	Architecture AU (3000 hits), Australian Design Review, Green Magazine, Business Group websites, Landscape Australia, Architects websites, Developers and Builders websites, National Gallery of Victoria website, Planning News
Whitehorse Built Environment Awards	1998 (reviewed 2011)	Biannually	None	$20,000 (including event hosting and jury payment and not staff time)	External urban designer and heritage advisor, Archicenter manager and 8 Council members.	Best New Dwelling, Medium Density (3 units or less), New Medium Density (4 units or more), Best New Apartment Building (4 storeys or more), Best New Commercial / Institutional Building, Best Landscape Design, Best Exterior Renovation, Environmental Sustainability Award – Residential, Environmental Sustainability Award – Commercial, Best Heritage Development, Mayors Award.	Architects websites, Builders, Developers websites, Green Magazine, BDAV website, Herald Sun.
Gold Coast Urban Design Awards	1998	Biannually	PIA, AIA, AILA, Landscape Australia, UDAL, 91.7 ABC Gold Coast	Unavailable	Independent panel from the fields of architecture, planning, landscape architecture, urban design and development industry.	Excellence in Urban Design Award , Helen Josephson Award for Urban Design Leadership, Urban Design Award, Special Mention, Unbuilt Category	The Weekend Edition, Architecture AU, Landscape Australia, Courier Mail, City of Goldcoast News, Architects Website, Developers and Builders Website
City of Vancouver Urban Design Award	2014	Biannually	None	Unavailable	Independent panel from the fields of architecture , development and landscape architecture.	Small, medium and large scale residential building, commercial building, government and institutional building, innovation, outstanding sustainable design, landscape, public space and infrastructure, urban elements, special jury award.	Architectural Institute of British Columbia, Developers and Builders Website, Design Quarterly, Canadian Architect, Huffington Post, Vancouver Sun