

# URBAN & BUILT ENVIRONMENT NEWS

Samraj Project and Design brings to you their newest initiative to add to the urban planning discourse in Australia. This first April edition reports on the new-age debate of urban sprawl and the efforts of Parramatta City in finding viable solutions towards becoming the Next Great City. To find out more about the work done at Samraj, please visit <http://samrajpandd.com.au>



## PLANNING TO AVOID THE URBAN SPRAWL

The population of Melbourne is set to almost double, to more than 7 million, by 2030, and the city as we know it will need to evolve to absorb this new population.

Australian cities are redeveloping into two co-existing city types, says Prof. Michael Buxton, RMIT University. "The trend of urban sprawl is continuing with force due to expensive suburban housing prices and a generous urban growth barrier"

In his article *Planning to fail: the worst of urban worlds*, Buxton explains how higher income, tertiary-educated, professionally-employed households are being concentrated mainly in relatively dense, service-rich inner and middling suburbs while lower-income households without tertiary qualifications are, on the other hand, in low-density, service-poor outer-urban areas. Density is to be at the center of urban division in Australia.

Transport being the second highest cost for low-income, outer urban households, expensive suburban housing prices and urban growth barrier is already driving urban proliferation around activity centers with public transport connectivity.

**Meanwhile, Australian inner areas are growing upwards.**

Many researchers predicted that Australians would never accept urban intensification but, increasingly, multi-unit construction is occurring in every Australian city and regional centers. Sydney, epitomizing the use of residential towers, is already the most compact city of Australia. Multi-unit dwellings in Melbourne have also increased over 700% in the ten years since 1991, and account for 40% of all residential development. This 'vertical sprawl' may seem like a sustainable option, but it too comes at a cost. **Congestion and sprawl is driven by myopic public policies, irresponsible**

**private practices, outdated cultural norms, and population growth.**

Generally, governments prefer to use planning systems to transfer decisions about type and location of intensified housing to development companies. This also destroys heritage of established suburbs and removes the amenity that attracts entrepreneurial and creative thinking. Smart growth solutions are the most effective and equitable way to combat suburban sprawl.

**Solutions must be crafted on the basis of local circumstances and need.**

Poor planning and population growth interact with each and exacerbate their negative impacts. City planners need to anticipate a world where far-flung suburbs are difficult to inhabit. Cutting the subsidies to both, development and job relocation that feed sprawl and using greenbelts to protect fragile areas are some of them.

**Australia now, more than ever, urgently needs to consider alternatives to outer urban sprawl and inner urban high-rise development**







## A STRATEGY FOR A CITY: GOING ENVIRONMENTAL

**As Sydney's Central City, Parramatta is going through great change and transformation. A strong focus on environmental sustainability is preparing this city for the opportunities and challenges that unprecedented growth brings. For more information about the planning strategy of Parramatta, please visit: <https://goo.gl/24gvGE>**

As the threat of urban sprawl and its negative impacts are being felt in Australia, one city is 'planning' to stay ahead of the game.

As the Parramatta City grows, its planners chose to reach out to the community for their opinions on what a city should provide.

The feedback lead to a dominant theme of natural environment improvement, which would also create a better quality of life, 'not just for people, but for all living things.'

Parramatta is planning its way to becoming a great city that also 'grows better every day'.

The city plans to be an amalgamation of the green and blue spaces within a city, where parks and green spaces, transport, swimming places and the skyline all grow together. A great city is also one where everyone shares in the city's success.

To ensure this happens, the City of Parramatta Environmental Sustainability Strategy outlines the key environmental directions and priorities, so that

all of citizens -- residents, workers and visitors -- feel the benefits of a growing city.

## WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS

Through an extensive survey the urban planners divided the feedback that they received from the communities into four overarching themes that eventually define their goals and strategies.

- More parks, green space and trees, healthy waterways, bushland and biodiversity to relax, escape and enjoy for passive and active recreation.

- A holistic approach to development that sees environment, the economy and other social infrastructure improved at the same time.

- An eco-efficient, smart city where buildings can use less energy and water and recycle more waste efficiently as the City grows.

- Transport options, with improved public transport, cycle ways, walking routes, and less traffic.

## STRATEGY THEMES AND GOALS

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy seeks to deliver 20 long-term goals through a series of actions over four yearly cycles, which will be reviewed and updated including revised actions to align with the City's budget cycles and Council terms. At the same time Parramatta also has a strategy to work with increasing population and the problem of urban sprawl.

**A City in Nature:** Protecting and enhancing Parramatta's parks and green spaces, bushland and biodiversity and waterways, while also providing more trees will be the foremost task. The city's focus on natural places is rooted in the societies need to play, relax, and connect with nature and each other. Bushland and green spaces are proven to improve both physical and mental health. They can alleviate the stress that comes

from living and working in a city, by creating spaces to recharge.

Planting more trees will help cool down buildings and streets. Creating shaded walkways and cycle ways that connect up the City will help get out of cars and into nature. By building the natural environment, connectivity and efficiency into planning, Parramatta intends to make a city for its community today and future generations.

**Built for the Future:** The city aims plans to build its infrastructure in such a way that it uses less energy, water and raw material, produces less waste, and is still able to accomplish more. Improving efficiencies in existing buildings, new buildings, and key development precincts and ensuring that lives become more livable while at the same time reduce its impact on the natural environment, will be a key focus area.

**Connected and Resilient Communities:** Protecting and improving the livability of the community in extreme weather events such as heat waves and flooding to help minimize the impact from disaster will be a priority. It will be also about connecting the community through active and public transport, bringing more life to our streets, public spaces and natural areas for recreating.

**Leading by example:** It will be the Council's responsibility to lead the way as Sydney's Central City in environmental sustainability performance.

*In a world of already stark disparities that is only steadily expanding, it has become more important than ever to try and conserve the environment that we live in.*

However till date urban planning was far more concerned with the way roads, buildings, transport and people interact, almost ignoring the key areas that people love the most -- the green and blue spaces. It has become more relevant than ever before to be environmentally conscientious, not just as individuals, but as communities, and growing cities.

## REFERENCES

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