2015 Urban Design winners

The Urban Design Awards are presented to recognise outstanding design, livability and sustainability within the City of Gold Coast.

For further information on 2015 winners please click the headings below.

Helen Josephson Award for Urban Design Leadership

Gold Coast Light Rail

GoldlinQ, State Government, City of Gold Coast

The Gold Coast is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. The city form is determined by its geography of the long, east-facing beaches and the parallel hinterland to the west. This long, thin, elongated city desperately needed an innovative transport solution that also aligned with its role as one of the world’s most desirable tourist destinations.

The light rail is an incredibly unique project for Australia and it is fantastic to see it complete and in operation — it is an exemplar of the importance of creating new modes of high quality public transport systems — it is a pioneering project we hope will be replicated through the country.

The 13 kilometres light rail network links Griffith University to Broadbeach, providing the Gold Coast with a sustainable and safe transport framework. The light rail is an environmentally sustainable initiative, not just because it will reduce reliance on the private car, but it will act as a catalyst to renew existing centres where existing building stock can be used or the city centres renewed, as we have seen with the Chinatown project, and it will also encourage new investment around the light rail corridor, itself. It will create a focus for investment, both private and public, well into the future.

Retrofitting such a project within an existing city was clearly a challenge and the jury acknowledged the strong urban design considerations. There was great consideration to the public realm, from the placement of the route that considered both the current and future land use patterns and development, the passenger visual experience of the journey, landscape treatments, and what is most successful the stations are permeable, inclusive and accessible. The ease of access promotes the utilisation of the service.

The light rail is a game changer for the Gold Coast. It will revolutionise patterns of development and movement within its high-density corridor. This comfortable and humane mode of movement connects directly with the city as a tourist destination and represents the future for public transport integration in the Australian city context. It identifies the Gold Coast as a place for innovation in urban design.

Commendation

Chinatown

Submitted by: City Placemaking, City of Gold Coast

Chinatown is an initiative that recognised the importance of public investment for providing urban projects for the community to act as a catalyst for private investment. This transformative project is a streetscape enhancement of two interconnecting streets on an elbow of the light rail network in Southport — the two streets each have stations at their end making a rich, well-serviced precinct and hub.

Although modest in scale, the project is an excellent demonstration of what the potential can be, with the many sites now suddenly made accessible and strategically positioned due to the connectivity provided by the Light Rail.

The streetscape design is well considered and a number of differing modes of use are contemplated, from the usual day to day function of the traditional high street through to the event mode for festivals and cultural events. The clever theming recognises the importance of branding and place identity in the tourist context of the Gold Coast, however there was also sensitivity that the places made were relevant to the whole community. An authentic experience has been achieved due to the care and attention given to design elements such as paving design, circulation paths, colour, and cultural embellishments. The visual appeal makes for a memorable experience for visitors and a source of pride for the local community.

The carefully planned accessibility and flexibility will support the organic growth of the precinct. The quality finishes will have the longevity required of a space which will serve the community well into the future. It brings diversity to the city and character to the Southport retail precinct.

It is a place that celebrates culture and community. The project provides the catalyst to encourage future investment, with the additional benefit of developing into a tourist attraction.

Although the project is still in its early formative phase, the care and attention to the process of delivery, the well-considered consultative approach with the local stakeholders and property owners, and the leadership initiative from Council of the City of Gold Coast for this investment are the attributes that the jury recognised as exemplary and worth of a commendation in the City of Gold Coast Urban Design Awards.

Capri On Via Roma

Submitted by: BDA Architecture

Capri on Via Roma is the adaptive reuse of an existing local retail centre. Capri on Via Roma could have easily been a pedestrian mall with a pedestrian-only street for the passage to retail stores and has been creatively transformed into a pedestrian-friendly street through the addition of seating and canopy. A new loading gate on the south side is hidden from both the street and the pedestrian zone but easily accessible by truck.

The decision to have a single entrance to the retail area from the south side of the street is the key design parameter. Since internal loading operations are wholly to the south, this has already influenced the street design and the building design.

The street is visually transformed by the cloistering of the buildings in a closed form which is both useful functionally and visually engaging. The street is always within view under the canopy and with the car park hidden through the buildings. The form of the cloistering and the canopy to the street is achieved through the height of the buildings, the height of the roof slab and the height of the roof over the south side of the street.

The winning project is a brave and imaginative intervention in the street form, activating the street and the pedestrian zone and in doing so, has given the precinct new identity as a pedestrian-friendly street.
Instead the architects and project developers created a memorable place that engaged cleverly with its canal setting creating a very pleasant and engaging place that is quite unexpected.

The project successfully incorporates a combination of re-purposing an existing building asset and new built form to provide an integrated multi-purpose development within a pre-existing residential community.

The re-use of existing structures demonstrates that redevelopment can build upon and improve existing urban form. The history of the site has not been lost as well where certain elements and finishes are retained – something that is important in city that itself is relatively very young.

The project is respectful of the residential context it sits very close to. It handles with care all of those critical adjacencies and deals with the challenges of the differing uses. The ground plane is both welcoming and permeable and when combined with the dramatic built form creates a destination that is inviting and engaging.

It is clearly a commercial success and the popularity re-affirms the place making strategy the tenancy mix as a destination.

The jury enjoyed visiting this place and it certainly elevates the local retail centre as the new community hub.

Related information

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