

Gold Coast Cultural and Civic Master plan ideas competition

Report of the competition jury

The members of the Competition Jury congratulate the Gold Coast City Council on hosting this ideas competition to focus exploration of the future of the cultural and civic heart of the fast growing and ever changing city of the Gold Coast.

The competition attracted wide interest and the fifty six conforming schemes reviewed by the competition jury provide a wealth of potential ideas that warrant further consideration and investigation as the city moves forward.

In forming its assessment the jury was led by the vision, objectives and scope expressed in the competition document. It further pursued the question as to what difference would civic responsibility make to creating an exemplary outcome that could be distinguished from those arising from conventional master planning and from the commercially led strategies that underpin much development throughout the city and its region. In this sense, the jury questioned the ambitions and intentions evident in each of the competition entries and their relation to the aspirations of representative civic authority.

The jury also considered the role of an “ideas competition” and how the resulting ideas and propositions could drive wider discussion about ideals and intentions. We came to the view that the competition should provoke the discussion of issues and concerns, that it should inform public debate about critical aspects of environmental and cultural issues relevant to the site and to the city’s vision and that it should inspire by revealing or suggesting opportunities that sit beyond the frame of conventional planning processes.

The history of development of the Gold Coast was reviewed together with the extensive modifications of the original landscape to create the linear braiding of the canal developments within which the competition site sits. Several issues were highlighted by virtually all schemes including the impact of the physical extent of car parking to be provided and the relationship between the scale of a civic and cultural precinct when set against the background of the typical development models that surround and overlook the competition site.

In forming its decisions the jury considered that there was a single outstanding scheme that best exemplified the expectation that the proposal should provoke, inform and inspire. A second scheme was considered to best illustrate the issues to be faced given the predicted changes to potential flood levels in the near future. Its resolution was largely conceptual and so was considered to be separated from the winner by some distance. A further three schemes were

selected as representing contrasting approaches to the optimisation of the site that also respond to the issues raised by the overall winner and the second placed scheme.

Recognising the nature of the schemes the jury recommends that the prize money be distributed accordingly with the winning scheme receiving \$90,000, the second selected scheme being highly commended receiving \$18,000 and the three joint ranked schemes being awarded \$14,000 each.

The jury confirms that full anonymity of entrants was maintained throughout the competition process and that there are no known conflicts of interest between the members of the jury and any of the authors of the selected schemes.

Selected conforming schemes are to be shown on the competition web site and a range of schemes including those short listed are to be exhibited by the City Council in appropriate public venues.

The decisions of the Jury are as follows:-

The winning scheme is:

AAAY provided by Super Colossal team members Marcus Trimble, Matthew Bennett, Erin Field

The supplementary winner (High Commendation) is:

C4C4 provided by Gall & Medek Architects with the Queensland College of Art, GU, Masters of Design Futures programme. Team members: (G&M) Jim Gall, Chris Schofield; (QCA), Dr. Tony Fry, Petra Perolini, Rae Cooper (student), Nora Kinnunen (student), Olivia Mathieson (student).

The selected representative schemes (Commendation) are:-

AAAD provided by DC8 studio team members Brett Anstis, Jacob Hutson, Amelia Lee, Marianne McKenzie, Lachlan Walker

AACP provided by LVO' Architecture Pty Ltd team members Greg O'Brien, Nick McGowan, Sharlene Anderson, Yula You, Greg Holmes

AACS provided by Matt Drysdale

Summary jury report of the selected schemes

Entry_ID_AAAY: 'Gold Coast Island of Culture'

In common with many entries this proposal recognizes that the site of the Gold Coast Cultural and Civic Precinct lies within the flood plain of the Nerang River and is therefore vulnerable to inundation from predicted future sea level rise; initially flooding low-laying land and later almost half the site.

Responsible approaches to meeting the danger of predicted flood events are to prepare either to defend the site or to retreat.

This scheme creates a decisive subdivision over the site to defend the land by both consolidating and raising the low-laying areas to form the precinct as an 'Island of Culture'.

By designing a defended cultural and civic precinct as a hybrid - 'is it a building island or is it a landscape island?'- this bold scheme presents a new urban type for the Gold Coast whilst simultaneously recalling the ancient islands in the Laguna Veneta such as the Isola Murano and Isola San Michele.

The winning scheme proposes a civic square, located at the heart of the 'Island of Culture' envisaged as a grand outdoor place with a central address at the intersection of three bridging pathways that reach out from the island to the community.

The bridges connecting the city to the 'Island of Culture' can also extend pedestrian and bicycle routes through to the civic square creating the potential for a lively public place at the centre of this visible, iconic landmark.

By concentrating the civic and cultural functions on the 'Island of Culture' the remaining site is proposed as open parkland not only retaining the green edge at this point in the city but also extending the opportunity to link with a sequence of forest parks that would create significant linear landscapes stretching into the south-west hinterland.

With the scarcity of public open space for the future flood-free City of the Gold Coast these open parklands will make a significant contribution.

Entry ID C4C4

This is a highly qualitative response to the ideas competition brief offering positive aspirations for the social, cultural, economic and environmental evolution of the subtropical coastal city over coming decades and beyond, using the Evandale site as a catalyst.

Examination of the submission reveals a nuanced outcome that is embedded in responsive communities and local distinctiveness.

The importance of an identity based on the lifestyle advantages provided by the location's natural characteristics is taken into account at a profound level. The result is an approach that provides strong ideas for 'casting the city of the Gold Coast into a position of global leadership' in achieving long term care of community and place.

Rather than spectacle and short-lived drama, this submission recognises the symbolic values of the site and offers a plausible re-imagining of the Gold Coast city of the future that includes and celebrates the current city.

A conceptual mosaic accommodates future challenges including certain inundation, cultural diversification and reorganised urban patterns that include food production and knowledge industries.

The submission demonstrates the authors' knowledge of the cultural and creative life of the Gold Coast community and proposes ideas for two new kinds of cultural institution: a multiversity and an inter-cultural resort.

This submission adds valuable concepts to the dialogue regarding visions for Evandale and the Gold Coast City's future. It presents the possibilities of innovative thinking, and suggests actions for directing the incremental changes necessary for transforming the mental map of the city for residents and visitors.

Entry ID AAAD

This design approach is interwoven with symbolism entertaining a rich story of regional context and history. The open character of the river site is enhanced and the site uses have been adapted to allow flexibility of planning.

The proposal focuses on a pragmatic site plan, generated by aspect and prospect opportunities with linked built form 'wings' providing a dynamic edge to a new open green space - a positive landscape space.

The green space gathers the site uses, providing order to the built form and a foreground to the water and city skyline views beyond, to the sites north and east. The overlooked green space also invites activity and participation, a stage for others to relate to. The new built forms are dynamic and stand elevated above the ground plane isolating spatial use from possible inundation, this feature enhances visual connectivity and legibility.

Accessible under crofts created by the fragmented overhead structures provide shade and shelter at the ground plane. Vehicles and services are stored below grade within the building footprints freeing the ground plane for public open space. The need for strengthening public transport links is identified in minimizing reliance on the private vehicle. Substantial areas of existing mature vegetation and open space are retained and enhanced with the capability for deep planting.

Site connectivity is addressed through a new green link to the east via a shaded, lightweight bridge, a linkage to the Chevron Island 'urban village' is required. The adaptive scheme use presents no net loss in flood storage capacity and allows flexibility for overland flow. The site planning and built forms are informal, sculptural, address sustainability issues and have a cultural significance to the Gold Coast.

Comment :

The signal and beacon analogy of connected light towers whilst supported in extending an idea beyond the site is seen as somewhat remote, one best experienced via media or a place of some elevation.

Entry ID AACP

The genesis of this design idea lies in the desire to re-establish a respectful relationship between man and nature and to demonstrate this through the recreation of an exemplary ecosystem. This ecosystem then lends unique identity to this cultural place.

The reclamation of the site attempts to redress historical instances of insensitive coastal development which stripped ecosystems bare and hardened the interface between land and water in order to expedite the sale of land or the establishment of platforms to build upon.

This proposal seeks to re-establish a natural waters edge and the provision of wet-lands, marshlands and swales to allow for inundation and a potential manifestation of water level fluctuations through climate change. An overlay of high ground is achieved for buildings to house various cultural functions and over that again is a network of pedestrian and cycle paths that enable a myriad of routes to traverse the site and to access different buildings.

The elevated pathways allude to the "lighter touch" with which man should engage with nature. The ground plane remains accessible to pedestrians to explore the various spaces created by the network of wetlands and waterways.

The elevated path system is an alternative and a “retreat” proposition that can accommodate intermittent flood events but still give access to all cultural facilities. A superimposed layer of photo voltaic cells provides shading to the elevated paths and electricity for the site.

Whilst the buildings defer to a topology that asks for green roofs and walls they each are proposed to express an identity pertinent to their various uses. The major buildings closest to Bundall Road are those that provide landmark structures to celebrate the civic roles and the pursuit of education and innovation.

The network of paths and the arrangement of buildings, generally to the extremity of the peninsular leaves a new town square in the centre which is suitable for events, festivals and public assembly. This space is clearly and easily accessible from Bundall Road and the bridge link from the east and is contained by low-level buildings.

A dynamic bridge structure connects the tip of the peninsular with Surfers Paradise and providing a route for pedestrians, cyclists and modern public transport. The sinuous form of the bridge with intertwined structure to allow for different modes of movement is an innovative concept worthy of further exploration.

Unlike other proposals which arrange buildings around streets or important view corridors and axes this proposition of a web of elevated paths and islands for buildings risks being illegible and difficult to negotiate. A brightly coloured ribbon structure provides a way finding device towards important buildings, access points and destinations. Whilst unresolved in its current stage the device which is also designed to provide shelter, folly and interest could be further explored as an orientation device across the broadly proportioned peninsular.

True to its title “threading people – place and ecosystem” this proposition is refreshing because it elevates the importance of natural systems in achieving a sustainable future. As the driver for the precinct “Nature” would bring a unique and iconic status to the Gold Coast’s cultural heart.

Entry ID AACS

This proposal brings a street of substantially scaled buildings towards the most easterly point of the peninsular to reach out towards Surfers Paradise, thus reducing the currently perceived sense of isolation of the cultural precinct from the coastal strip. The location of the major anchor building at the tip of the peninsular provides a magnet and legible destination for bridge links from Surfers Paradise and Chevron Island.

The predominately “edge” location of buildings gives over the substantial areas of the site to landscape space providing a park-like interface with Bundall Road and also views into the site and to a public gathering space.

A canal and tidal pond become both the destination and an important focal point within the “Civic Village” and create a distinctly Gold Coast and egalitarian public space reflective of the lifestyle connections to water, boating and the development history around canal making.

Excavated material from the tidal pond and canal is used to cover some basement car parking which occurs under landscape and also to shape the open space areas in order to provide a range of differently scaled spaces for public enjoyment and development of exemplary landscape and environmental husbandry.

The elevated buildings (with basement parking below) and landscape allow for flood mitigation and the potential for sea level rise.

The arrangement of buildings, which are large to suit their civic and cultural roles, flank the waters edge and are set away from Crombie Avenue. This enables the “Civic Village” to have an impressive waterside presence when experienced from more distant vantage points and at the same time engage positively with existing low rise residential areas to the south.

The alignment of the pedestrian spine provides a legible link from Surfers Paradise through the site towards future destinations and redeveloped areas to the west. This pedestrian spine which offers differently proportioned outside public spaces for a range of performances, events and activities could also figure as a route for future, people friendly, public transport linking Surfers Paradise towards Nerang.

This Civic Village proposition is underpinned by sensible strategies regarding landscape, pedestrian and vehicle movements, views, vistas and connections.

The idea achieves not only the configuration for substantial civic buildings but also a diversity and quantum of genuinely accessible public space and landscape to this precious Gold Coast site.

Concluding remarks

The Jury congratulates the competitors selected as prize winners together with all those who submitted ideas and proposals in answer to the Competition brief.

The competition organisers are thanked for the impeccable organisation of the selection processes and for the clarity of the competition documents. In particular we thank Darren Langen and Carly Mills for their unrelenting support and for their ability to overcome any organisational obstacle with efficiency and imagination.

Finally, the Jury members thank the Gold Coast City Council for inviting them to assist the Council to enlarge the public debate of the ideas that will guide and inform the design and delivery of the cultural and civic heart of such a vibrant, ambitious and rapidly developing city.

Competition Jury:-

Professor Brit Andresen

Philip Follent, Queensland Government Architect and former Gold Coast City Architect

Chris Gee, Gold Coast City Architect

Rosemary Kennedy, Director Centre for Sub Tropical Design, QUT

Professor Michael Keniger, Jury Chairman.