Implementing New Urbanism in Australia
Two decades on a steep learning curve

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Structure of Presentation

- The Context and Challenge for Australian New Urbanism
- Brief Congress Program Overview
- From Plans to Places - overview of progress using a range of Australian New Urbanist project examples that are built or under construction
- Examples focus on changes to urban extensions and street forms since 1990
- Conclusions about our progress with streets - the fundamental building block of New Urbanism and sustainable growth
Context and Challenges For Australian New Urbanism

- **Australian New Urbanism has always focussed on achieving systemic transformations of all our growth... not just ‘diamonds in a dustbin of sprawl’.... So many of our built places are ‘hybrids’**

- **Since the early 1990’s, NU has had a significant influence on planning policy at State level across the country. Most State and local governments now have strategic plans, policies and/or codes that call for Smart Growth: more intensification, TODs, enhanced public realm, mixed use, higher fringe densities etc**

- **Now, NU projects are often accused of under-delivering... not enough infill focus; not enough mixed use, limited increase in fringe urban densities...**

- **Policy is now ahead of us, yet NU remains one of the few tools for delivering the outcomes of Smart Growth policy**
‘Turning around the Oil Tanker of Sprawl’
a long hard process! Analogy by Paul Murrain, 1990

NU began as an alternative to sprawl. Now our expectations are that it is the basis of sustainable urban growth… the built form response to climate change… the answer to our low levels of physical activity… and a balanced response to environmental constraints….. and more….

Yet first, we needed to slow the boat! How much change can we expect in 20 years?
Evolution Of New Urbanism in Australia

- New Urbanism began in 1991-92 in California, with first CNU Congress held in 1993. Concurrent emergence in Australia... based on similar principles.. so nearly 20 years now!

- Why CNU in USA? Need for a coalition of design practitioners to increase effectiveness against sprawl; to share professional knowledge, experiences and provide mutual support; and to define shared values and principles.

- Australians have been active contributors to CNU since the beginning...

- A small but relatively influential group of Australian practitioners have promoted and practiced New Urbanism since the early 1990’s, both within Government and in the private sector.

Program Overview

This morning - setting the context - overview of NU progress in Australia, Europe and USA

This afternoon - fixing the existing city - urban intensification, infill and redevelopment; TODs and corridors

Thursday - TODs in more detail; sustainable urban extensions; field trips to Adelaide projects

Friday - town centres; sustainability frameworks and metrics.
What is New Urbanism?

... a built environment which is diverse in use and population, scaled for the pedestrian, and capable of accommodating the automobile and supporting mass transit...

... a well-defined public realm which is responsive to site features and ecology, and supported by an architecture reflecting the climate and culture of the region...

... fine-grained mixed use town and neighbourhood centres with a variety of higher density housing in proximity....

... a highly permeable and logically-connected street network, with traffic management to provide safety and comfort for pedestrians, cyclists and transit-users....

...when applied at the regional, as well as local scale, provides a basis for comprehensive sustainable growth management.
Urban Extensions
Street Networks and the 1990’s Residential Design Workshops
Contrasting Urban Forms

Urban structure: suburban sprawl v traditional urbanism - one very poor for sustainability, community, walkability, physical activity and health...the other much better... the essential building blocks of New Urbanism

Conventional suburban development /sprawl v traditional urban form

Real life case - Mandurah in WA!

What progress have we made in transforming urban extensions?

Structure and streets as built.... Brighton in 2008 contrasts with early 1990’s Merriwa, in Perth’s Northern Corridor
A Brief History of Transforming the Fringe

In 1988-89 the Adelaide design community held a series of Residential Design Workshops applying Oxford JCUD “Responsive Environments’ principles to urban fringe sites (Gawler, Wirrina, Tanunda RDW)


Perth RDW series began in 1990 - Wanneroo; then pre-Liveable Neighbourhoods series (Jindalee DW etc) with Edition 1 of LN released in 1997

Sydney, Brisbane – slower and later to change

Lively national debate in Urban Design Forum around 1988 - 1993, especially grid v cul-de-sac street networks
UDF as the key Forum for Debate

CURBING THE CUL DE SAC

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN WORKSHOP CHALLENGES CONTEMPORARY SUBDIVISION LAYOUTS

The Federal push for more affordable housing and the Vicki commitment to urban behind a recent work of Plenty Valley. Modeled workshops at Gawler parts worked in living produce a layout for Melbourne's fringe.

THROWING THE BABY OUT WITH THE WATER

By Jan Martin

On a balanced approach to permeable residential design.

Oh Wendy's Morris you've done it again! Your Melbourne's-built-up-grey-graph paper (UDF) is kept the letters going for months. This time though, in Curbing the cul-de-sac (UDF) you have gone too far.

Oxford Polytechnic's Paul Morris led a residential design workshop in Melbourne this July. Reporting it, Wendy tells us how the 'cul-de-sac road hierarchy was challenged. It is a break with the traditional and impermeable. We argued to return to the "themed street layout".

I hesitated to agree that some recent subdivisions are excessively interwoven. But last the reaction become a backlash, the cure worse than the disease, let me put a moderating view.

First, some common ground:
1. Permeability is a good thing. The question is how much of it and when.
2. It is possible to create layouts that bury people in endless ends. The "terminal box" ideology is simplistic and soothing. But there are alternatives other than the grid.

Now, gloves off. The "Morris-Morrison Model" in permeable percolates on about 5 centres.
1. Morris-Morrison dismiss the new theories as being achieved "under the guise of traffic management". As one who has been able to work closely with traffic planners all my professional life, and having seen many projects where residents have clearly articulated their views, easy traffic management is not going to be easy. People and cars are a sticky business. Residents know this. They ask us for layouts which, by their very nature, inhibit vehicle speeds and volumes. Cities tend to.

2. People fear streets. They tell us they want streets wide enough to be visible and instantly identifiable. Or in the jargon, they want permeable spaces. A degree of vehicle impermeability may be worthwhile to achieve this.

3. Morris-Morrison seems to negate permeability with vehicle permeability. Of course we do not want to return to Reidville-style total separation of car and pedestrian. But overly sophisticated the pedestrian can go straight, limited contact briefly while the driver goes round a bit.

4. Current practice, says Morris, means Melbourne would become a series of "devoid of encumbrances". Depending on the scale we are talking about it is about road traffic! Urban fabric perhaps needs some differentiation and sense of local ownership. Conversely might the choice ladened for just a non-anonymously own territorial?

5. Last and worst, the claims made in this article on behalf of that "section of our community least able to express their needs" are only assertions. None of us actually know how or even whether different layouts can socialise or human happiness. We want to, and a major survey might find out, but right now we don't.

My own views, having pondered about motor safety and about permeability before I learned to call it that - it is the answer line in the middle of a connective but somewhat indirect residential street system which is also, but not exclusively, more direct pedestrian cycle network.

Incidentally, I suspect that Paul Morrison himself, with whom I have discussed these issues and why - like me - had to struggle with some of the issues of modern hierarchical street design at Milton Keynes, would agree with much of what I have said here.

A PERMEABLE WORLD: THE RIGHT OF REPLY

An open letter to Jan Martin

Dear Jan

Well done for generating a hot debate between friends and fellow professionals. Your article "throwing the baby out with the water" (UDF) certainly does that, and if you allow me I'll not only "take the gloves off", but I'll put on a set of knuckle clatters as well.

If, when accusing us of subdivision, you mean the outer or the upsetting of a set of established principles, you are absolutely right and I'm disappointed that it is only subdivision on two fronts. I can supply a whole lot more.

First of all, the three diagrams supporting your article are rather naughtily by implying in one of them something called a "Morris-Morrison extreme" (the mind boggles). The diagram is purely as organisational idea, not a literal representation of a piece of town. I never draw the diagram as simplistic as that, but even when drawn by you it provides the basis for the overwhelming majority of urban places from San Francisco to Stennis. Nearly every "beautified" city in the world has a rational or defensible grid.

Therefore, the implication that "choke-laden or anonymous" are part of the same debate is patently nonsense. We can all go into towns all over the world and find the objectively beautiful and boring, or characterful and anonymous places regardless of layout. However the use advantage of an anonymous permeable area of town as opposed to an anonymous impermeable one is that we can move through it in our hands and directions and make our own mind up.

So, enough of anonymity! It's important of course, but nothing to be done with arguments a la permeability.

The key point to this debate is centred on an understanding of the physical form of the city as a political system: a manifestation of the values of those who produce it and buy into it as well as the impact it has on all the people who choose to use and interact with it. There's an official trend in all our cities (from office blocks to retail malls) and all the way down to the cul-de-sac) to privatise the public realm and literally turn our backs on it. You talk of permeable spaces being desirable; I'm afraid you are dead right. I acknowledge it, worry about it and I fight like hell to convince people of the self-sustaining prosperity in it. If we back off from the public realms it in turn becomes worse,

The Morris/Morrison permeable and legible concept produced at the Plenty Workshop.

JAN MARTIN

MORRIS/MORRISON EXTREME

They choice ladens or anonymous.
Plenty Valley 1989 site – a good outcome… but not matched by many others. Yet all that have been built do show impact of the RDW.

Plenty Valley has a service road arterial frontage; created park to protect red gum assets, and is fronted by streets; good permeable street network; lots of cross-roads (roundabouts imposed); increased density and lot diversity; established a corner store (but now dead?).

Now the train is coming to South Morang, and this core piece of catchment is prime real estate… but density far too low!
Currumbine Station Precinct - first apartment block now built, street networks and density improved, but not an optimised TOD

Huge commuter car park a legacy of being the end of the line until recently

Now becomes a development opportunity
Perth and *Liveable Neighbourhoods*

LN was preceded and informed by the Jindalee Comparative Design Workshop, 1996, and other design workshops on different sites.


Significant change in form of new urban fringe extensions built across Perth and WA. Impressive, but still a long way further to go….

Good impact on major Perth infill sites as well.
Built urban extensions in Perth

PERTH EXAMPLES

Brighton - mid 2000’s

Merriwa - late 1980’s/early 90s
Typical Perth urban fringe development to the mid 1990’s – ‘best planned sprawl on the planet’

Currumbine, 1980’s
Typical major junction

Merriwa – junction of Marmion Ave and Hester Ave from 1990’s

Cul de sacs; poor walkability; back-fenced arterials without safe crossing to shops or schools; bus stops but poor bus access; car-based local centre (at least its on the Movement Economy!) with no urbanity
Brighton
NW Growth Corridor, Perth, WA

‘Liveable Neighbourhoods Code’
urban extension with village centre,
future rail route and mixed use
Brighton Town Centre
Brighton – post LN
Brighton - Village Centre

Major Intersections and Centres - Brighton – Marmion Ave and Knightsbridge Bvd - An activity node on an integrator arterial is emerging
Brighton - village centre

Brighton’s CornerStone pub
Brighton – small street blocks; legible and direct; local cross roads; rear lanes; parks bounded by streets; housing diversity
Brighton – rail being extended ahead of growth, nearly 40km north of CBD; increasing housing density emerging around future station…but is it enough?
Mindarie, Northern Perth – new section on left… very different to 1980’s on right
Contrasting Urban Forms

Mindarie - new (left) and old (right)
Somerley
Clarkson, North-west Corridor, Perth, WA

Transit-oriented urban village at recently-opened Clarkson Station. Rail being extended well in advance of freeway. Nearby Ocean Quays Town Centre is a main street hybrid, with street front development expanding. Council and Landcorp key players.
Clarkson Station, built well in advance of freeway, and urban development rapidly building out
Transit-oriented urban extension at new station south of Kwinana on the new Perth SW railway, with village centre and higher density housing.
Urban extension with proposed mixed use village centre in a rehabilitated farmland valley. Private development-led, with first stages opened in 2006. Relatively dense plan with extensive use of rear lanes.
Tarneit, Western Melbourne

Mill Park 1990

Tarneit, 2010
Wodonga - White Box Rise

Good density -
1163dw/86ha = 13.5dw/ha

Terrace lots and smaller conventional lots selling very well
Terraces and rear lanes in WBR

New dwelling controls in WBR requiring garage setbacks for front-loaded dwellings, eaves, etc also changing housing product in Wodonga
Australian New Urbanism - An Overview of Progress

Major Urban Infill Sites
Beacon Cove
Port Melbourne, Victoria

A formerly-controversial and contaminated government-owned infill site that catalysed medium rise development in inner Melbourne. New public waterfront and village node, with tram stop, and great ‘general’ store.
Kensington Banks
Melbourne, Victoria

Former saleyards site. Very dense terrace development with lanes, studios and home-based businesses, and retained heritage landscape. Government-led initiative… with flooding problems solved off-site.
Subi Centro
Subiaco, Perth, WA

Former industrial. New station, and Rokeby Rd retail anchor. Extensive new commercial/office development, lots of terrace housing and some live-works.

Redevelopment Authority.
Claisebrook Village
East Perth, WA

Former contaminated industrial site. Done by a Redevelopment Agency. Now a major new mixed use inner urban community. Great urban art & public spaces.
Hunterford
NW Sydney, NSW

Landcom-led dense and diverse housing infill site north of Parramatta. Excellent application of design guidelines. Rear lanes and studios.
Discovery Point
North Arncliffe, Sydney, NSW

A high density mixed use urban village around Wolli Creek Station, serving two rail lines. Key outcome of a 1996 charrette to revitalise an old inner industrial area.
Breakfast Point
Concord, Sydney, NSW

A dense residential infill of mainly apartments on a former gasworks site on Sydney harbour. Village centre; live-works, medium rise apartments. Private development.
University integration, a dense mixed use centre and diverse housing. The Qld Dept of Housing in lead role, with QUT.
Australian New Urbanism - An Overview of Progress

New Mixed Use
Street-based
Town Centres
Gungahlin
Canberra, ACT

Creating a street-based town centre for Shellharbour by linking up two distant retail stand-alone centres. Mixed uses are gradually being constructed along the new street. Cinemas and restaurants are completed. Pub underway.
Rouse Hill Regional Centre
NW Sydney, NSW

Joondalup City Centre
Perth, WA

Creating dense, mixed use inner suburbs around a new urban fringe centre. Extensive terrace housing, rear lanes, studio units and a range of small business spaces.
Point Cook Town Centre
Western Melbourne, VIC

Main street-based centre to serve around 30,000 people in the Wyndham growth corridor. ‘Melbourne 2030’ demonstration. Private developer (Walker Corp) appointed by VicUrban, and construction of Stage 1 is now open (August 2008).
Australian New Urbanism - An Overview of Progress

Urban Centre
Regeneration
Kogarah Town Centre
Southern Sydney, NSW

Major revitalisation of middle-ring town centre to walkable urban village. Catalysed by redevelopment of a Council car park to a five-storey mixed use development focussed around a new town square. Leading design demonstration of building energy and water efficiency.
Midland, WA

Major revitalisation charrette 1997
MRA established 2000
Refined visions 2002 & 2007
Extensive site clean-up, street construction, new level crossing, landscape restoration 2002-2009
Police, hospital, university catalysts
Woodbridge coal dam catalyst - now >$1m housing
Urban frontage to Midland Gate SC as part of expansion
Retail high street revitalising
Recent 3-4 storey mixed use, apartments, live works
Midland - Central Mixed Use Precinct and Coal Dam precinct
Council-led redevelopment of town centre badly affected by low amenity, car-based highway strip development. New Main Street connected at-grade across the rail line to integrate communities west of the line into the Centre, and a new station constructed.
Australian New Urbanism - An Overview of Progress

Government Codes, Strategies and Policies
Liveable Neighbourhoods Code
State-wide Code, WA

Code Design Elements
E1. Community Design
E2. Movement Network
E3. Lot Layout
E4. Public Parkland
E5. Urban Water Management
E6. Utilities
E7. Activity Centres & Employment
E8. Schools

CNU 2001 Charter Award winner
Edition 4 now adopted as Policy

www.wape.wa.gov.au
Conclusion
Street network transformations (in most Australian cities and towns) after 20 years

Virtual disappearance of the CUL DE SAC!

Highly interconnected residential street networks

Return of the footpath, smaller kerb radii

Disappearance of the 400+++m long street block

Frontage, rather than back fences, to most arterials

Traffic lights, not roundabouts at arterial intersections

Vastly improved legibility, and return of the local cross road

Rear lanes in common usage again

Missing street links being built in revitalisation projects

*THE OIL TANKER HAS SLOWED AND THE TURN IS UNDERWAY*