

GOOD

URBAN

DESIGN

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

A strategic approach

Tackling the broad challenges presented by our ever-evolving urban environments can best be achieved by implementing a new way of working: adopting an “integrated approach” that establishes strong governance, shared responsibility, shared vision, and effective communication.

Good urban design is an integrated approach, a new way of operating, specifically for the urban design discipline and those involved in the production of the built environment.

Government Architect NSW (GANSW) advocates understanding the physical, overall built environment and the competing forces that impact its development, rather than pursuing only a narrow focus on a project site or on individual places. By undertaking the strategic approach outlined here, urban designers can use their expertise to influence decision-makers across all stages of urban development – not confined to traditional design stages alone.

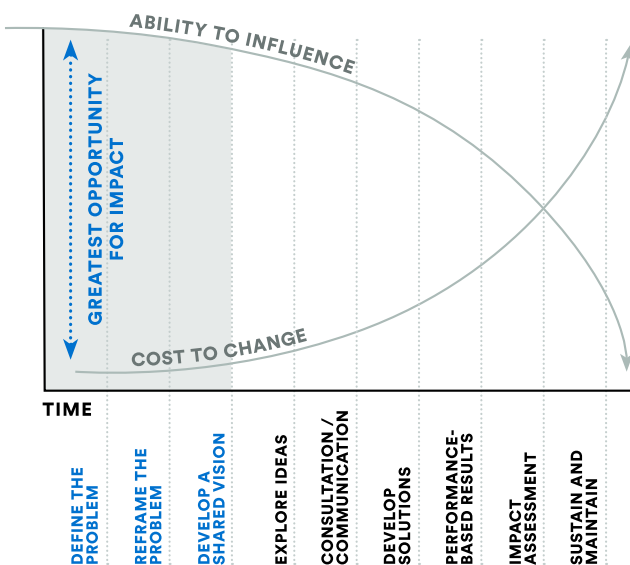
This summary document explains how the Good urban design guide can assist in organising and shaping projects, precincts, or programs. Its processes can help to set the framework to enable others – local agencies, authorities, designers, or end-users – to more effectively achieve great outcomes.

An integrated approach

The built environment is always in progress. Its design, planning, and development is complex and capital intensive. Its increasing complexity calls for new modes of thinking, analysis, and problem-solving.

The primary way of working on the built environment is to divide design, planning, and development into separate disciplines. This can result in missed opportunities, diminishing influence, inefficiencies, competing agendas, and lack of a shared vision. A well-designed built environment requires a more coordinated, integrated approach.

An integrated approach helps bring people together for improved processes, collaboration, communication, and stronger visions. It can be adopted by any built environment professional who participates, procures, plans, or designs projects to actively engage and influence decision-making and actions.



The following strategies can help to implement an effective integrated approach for project teams:

- Establish strong governance and leadership.
- Focus on people and community.
- Understand and respond to how larger issues effect impact.
- Enable effective communication.
- Create a collaborative culture with shared responsibility.
- Be accountable for design quality at every stage.
- Innovate for future practice.
- Be strategic and visionary.

Spatial practice

An integrated approach to the built environment is a way of working for the whole of government. It advocates better leadership, collaboration, communication, governance, and innovation, alongside an understanding of a project or program's life span.

Built environment professionals use their own type of integrated approach: a spatial practice. This is the action of understanding, responding, and thinking spatially across multiple disciplines, scales, time frames and for multiple users. It is a practice suited to designers who can use their expertise to generate spatial solutions to complex networks of problems.

GANSW guidance: Good Urban Design

Good Urban Design (draft, GANSW 2018) focuses on the strategic capacity of urban design. It offers a new mode of operation that aligns with strategic planning processes of forming a shared vision rather than adhering to rules. The aim of the guide is to support city-shapers, decision-makers, designers, planners, and developers by outlining what constitutes strategic urban design and how it can effect change. It advocates strong design values and goals, and provides the means for achieving them.

The document is strategic. It is not instructional or geared towards showing best practice methods via case studies. GANSW is finalising the guide Urban Design for Regional NSW and will develop a complementary guide Urban Design for Metropolitan Sydney – both these documents will include instructional content for practical use.

A spatial practice is an urban-minded, problem-solving activity requiring a collaborative approach to help shape frameworks which can support better procedures and built outcomes.

Early integration for greatest impact

GANSW projects include work on the Parramatta Strategic Framework, Macquarie Street Framework, and Gosford Urban Design Framework. These are all examples of urban designers having early involvement in a project to improve its definition, vision, scope, and aims. At this stage of a project there is the greatest potential to influence the overall quality of the outcomes, make long-term improvements for people and place, and manage risks effectively.

Mechanisms to support the delivery

Various mechanisms can support the design and delivery of a high-quality built environment, including:

- a **strategic framework** – a statement of aims and objectives for the regeneration of large areas of land or parts of an urban area. It may consider a much wider area than a master plan. A strategic framework functions as the brief for a spatial master plan
- an **urban design framework** – involving the generation of ideas and the preparation of realistic design concepts based on consultation, research, and analysis
- a **master plan** – a three-dimensional proposal for development or redevelopment addressing physical, economic, and social factors
- an **implementation plan** – a strategy including, where appropriate, budget, programming and development type, and other proposals relating to the implementation of the master plan.

See *Further information: GANSW advisory notes.*

Public space – the connective tissue

In an increasingly complex world, we should bring together diverse means for the benefit of all. This requires a broad understanding of the need for social, environmental, and economic improvements for the benefit of the wider society.

In the Good Urban Design guide, GANSW outlines the contemporary need for seeing the whole city or urban area, not just its select pieces. We advocate a discussion on public space as a large-scale issue with potential to help improve design quality and civic amenity.

Public space is an important and emerging focus for GANSW. Public space is the connective tissue that brings people together to help them make a place. It is the foundation of a well-designed built environment. Shaping public space is essential. Rather than seeing urban conditions as made up of buildings and the absence of buildings, we recognise built form as stemming from a coordinated consideration of public space.

The Good Urban Design guide provides expertise and strategies to help define, refine, and redesign public space. Improving existing or creating new public space is an opportunity for enabling social value for collective benefit to communities.

How urban design fits with planning

A strategic planning framework acknowledges large-scale issues as “global megatrends”. These are the broadest of challenges, such as health, climate, economics, and demographic change. GANSW policies **Better Placed** and **Greener Places** address these demands from a design perspective at a State level. GANSW Good Urban Design seeks to effect change within processes operating at the regional and district planning levels.

In Good Urban Design, we describe our “Place analysis” tool, effective in supporting the development of local strategic planning statements. Place analysis empowers local authorities to determine the impacts of future development on their local areas. We provide a template or framework for local authorities to tailor to their context. The inputs of numerous experts and the people that live and use a particular place are required to build

Place analysis:

understanding the impacts of future development on a place, considers its social, environmental, and economic factors, its ‘spatial geography’. The framework below shows how these contextual factors can be balanced with regulatory urban design elements to inform the parameters that result in quality built outcomes.



Strategic planning framework

this understanding. This then informs how a place can be shaped through urban design.

How do we measure the value of design and its impact?

Evaluating good design involves more than just focusing on outcomes. Too often evaluation is seen as a reflective practice that evaluates plans or projects at completion. Evaluation is then an assessment of an outcome rather than its process. To more effectively evaluate design, we need to change the point at which we evaluate – evaluation should be a continual process throughout the life of a project. GANSW predicts, measures, and analyses to ensure that good outcomes are delivered as intended and maximise public benefit and wellbeing.

Assessment makes decisions, evaluation informs
Evaluating Good Design (GANSW 2018) provides a set of considerations that can be used to evaluate proposals or completed works, both large- and small-scale, based on the design objectives set out in **Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW** (GANSW 2017). Evaluation enables a rigorous design process that aligns with the objects of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

See Further information on page 4.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

SOCIAL

Population and people
Culture and community
History and heritage
Politics and governance
Place sentiment

ENVIRONMENTAL

Climate
Landform and landscape
Ecology and wildlife
Hydrology and waterbodies
Human impacts
Built environment

ECONOMIC

Employment and income
Industry and business
Resources and value
Investment and tenure

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS

LAYOUT

Movement networks
Open space networks
Utilities and services

DIVISION

Land parcels
Ownership
Land-use zoning

BUILT FORM

Profiles, envelopes, interfaces
Orientation, function
Landscaped area

DESIGN VARIABLES

QUALITY	QUANTITY	SCALE	DISTRIBUTION	DIVERSITY	ACCESS + CONNECTION	MATERIALS + DETAILS
---------	----------	-------	--------------	-----------	---------------------	---------------------

About Government Architect NSW

GANSW holds a unique position in government. We are experts in design thinking and processes but are also tasked with making the connection between government priorities, industry expertise and capability, and the planning system as well as academia, our future creative thinkers, and communities.

GANSW provides strategic design leadership in architecture, urban design, and landscape architecture, supporting the NSW Government in delivering quality, managing risk, and fostering innovation to maximise public value in the built environment.

GANSW aims to create a healthy, responsive, resilient, equitable and integrated built environment to improve the lives of the people of NSW.

GANSW role

Champion: Promote, educate, and advocate design awareness and excellence on behalf of government, its agencies, and partners.

Connect: Foster public and private sector partnerships, collaboration, and design coordination across built environment initiatives.

Advise: Provide strategic and independent advice and quality review to support best practice and outcomes for design projects.

What we do

GANSW provides advice, leadership, and expertise in:

- spatial, strategic, and delivery frameworks for complex government-led precincts
- policy including design excellence processes
- design review panels and advice
- project formation and definition
- best practice processes for procurement.

Better Placed: integrated design

Good design is NSW Government policy. **Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW** establishes what the NSW Government expects in regard to good design and effective process across all built environment projects in NSW.

An amendment to the EP&A Act in 2018 included a key phrase – “good design” – which elevates the role of design in the built environment.

Better Placed provides clarity on what the NSW Government means by “good design”. Good design is both a process and an outcome of that process. It explains how we can raise the quality, expectations, and standards for our built environment through good design by establishing a set of design objectives:

- Better fit: contextual, local, and of its place
- Better performance: sustainable, adaptable, and durable
- Better for community: inclusive, connected, and diverse
- Better for people: safe, comfortable, and liveable
- Better working: functional, efficient, and fit for purpose
- Better value: creating and adding value
- Better look and feel: engaging, inviting, and attractive.

Further information

Additional GANSW policies, guides, and manuals

- Urban Design for Regional NSW
A key implementation tool to help regional authorities, agencies, businesses, and local communities create a well-designed built environment. It provides practical instructions for understanding and articulating regulatory or programmatic objectives. Due for final release in 2019.
- Greener Places: An urban green infrastructure policy for NSW – 2018
- Greener Places guides and manuals: Open Space for Recreation; Urban Tree Canopy; Bushland and Waterways – 2018
- Evaluating Good Design – draft, 2018
- Implementing Good Process – draft, 2018
- Urban Design for Metropolitan Sydney – forthcoming

Advisory notes: part of the GANSW Better Methods

series of documents providing specific advice on ways to improve design process:

- Overview: Master planning process
- Green infrastructure spatial frameworks
- Implementation plans
- Master plans
- Strategic frameworks
- Strategic visioning
- Urban design frameworks.

Government Architect NSW (GANSW) provides strategic design leadership in architecture, urban design and landscape architecture. By integrating design expertise, we work across government, the private sector and the community to improve social, environmental and economic outcomes for NSW and for all our communities.