1.0 Streets are Places

Streets satisfy a multitude of the functions of a community’s public life. They are the movement corridors of the built environment. They are the showcase of our community, the place where we present who we are and the values we consider important. They are the places where we meet, walk, ride, sit, and watch others. They are the places where most of our public life occurs.

Due to the complexity of functions that they perform, streets are often places where there are conflicts between different functions and users. Providing guidance on managing these conflicts in a balanced way while providing for all the functions that occur within them, is the role of this Framework.

To do this the framework provides overarching principles and the goals associated with the visual and physical qualities of the streets of the region, guidance in assessing the impacts of change within the street or placing items within the street, and the application of best practice streetscape design.

It is intended to provide guidance to those involved in decision making, designing, constructing and maintaining the public realm associated with the streets within Moreton Bay Region. It aims to help create quality public places and streetscapes which are responsive to the needs of their users and uses.

The framework seeks to establish a Moreton Bay Regional Council decision making philosophy in relation to the development or refurbishing of the public realm within the region.

As such the framework is not a manual for designing the streetscapes of the region but a starting point for integrating our environments with their context and the elements placed within it to ensure that good design is considered in the process of creating good streets in the region.

The information and guidance in this document would best be used early in the process of designing and creating streets, when placing items in them and/or as a way of monitoring the development of the streets of the region as they evolve.

This document is intended to be a framework for producing what is thought to be good streets in the region. It is intended to be a guide, a source of reference for determining the appropriate design, material and method for creating good street environments.

Other policy documents and manuals seek to define different types of streets and roads and, for their purposes, this is undoubtedly useful.

But any inferred move to relate strategic or detailed urban design outcomes directly or simply to a defined hierarchy of types of roads or streets needs always to be tempered by thinking about the particular design challenges and opportunities of each case.

It is the intent of this Framework to provide a dialogue which informs decisions about how to view the role (and hence the design) of each relevant street, particularly as more “community place” than “movement corridor”.

Woodford
How to Use the Framework

The rest of this section provides the purpose and scope of the framework, the vision, values and general principles of what Council considers makes for good street and streetscape design in the Moreton Bay Region.

The second section titled ‘The Street’ provides guidance on understanding of the parts of street and how they work together to ensure a quality urban environment is achieved, the consideration of the character and context that development within the street needs to consider and the communities they service.

The third section considers the ‘Users of the Street’ providing guidance on the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, public transit and private vehicle users once they have arrived in the street.

The fourth section ‘In the Street’ provides guidance on the placement and design of individual and groups of elements in the street such as the greenspace, lighting and street furniture. It also includes some guidance on placing art and signs in the street.

Definitions

Street
This is the overall corridor/place. The balance between its role as a movement corridor and as a place, determined in large part by its role in the overall public realm and/or movement network, will lead towards its appropriate design.

Streets provide the opportunity for direct access to the buildings and spaces to their edges and the structure for our communities and neighbourhoods to be built upon.

Roadway/Carriageway
This is the part of the street that directly provides for vehicle movement. It is that part dominated by vehicle traffic, including vehicle, bus and cycle lanes, and includes the on-street parking areas.

The development of guidance in relation to this element of the street is not the part of this document.

Footpath/Verge
This is the pedestrian-dominated area, usually between the roadway and the boundaries of the properties that front/define the street. It is the most public part of the public realm that is clearly the setting for most social and economic interaction. This part of the street, in combination with the streetscape and the development and uses that front it, are the primary concerns of this framework.

Streetscape
Streetscape is a term given to the combined visual and physical qualities of footpaths, building facades and elements within and immediately adjacent to the street. It is the overall effect created by pavement, roadway, public space of hard and soft landscaping within the edges of the two alignments of the street in combination with the defining built facades and those publicly visible private spaces that adjoin it, impact on it and are probably connected to it.
9 Values for Quality Streets

The nature of the urban environments of Moreton Bay Region and the qualities that we seek in the communities and places that form it, are first and best seen in its streets. As these streets are the places that we use everyday, where we access our homes from, do our business, recreate and meet others. They are the point at which we connect to the rest of our community, the region and beyond.

They are the places that our visitors first see when entering our communities, where they form their first impression of where we live and the values that we hold in our community. These are the places where we showcase the image and aspirations of the community that we work, live and play in.

To ensure that the future of the urban environments of the region have the values that will make it a quality place, Council has endorsed a set of values for Good Urban Design that it believes provides good general guidance to the design, development and maintenance of the places that make up the region.

The following 9 Values for Quality Streets reflects those values found in Council’s Urban Design Charter while interpreting them in the context of the streets and streetscapes that are the structure of the region.

With the use of these guiding principles it is intended that the future streets and streetscapes of Moreton Bay Region will be of a quality that will provide well for a functioning and sustainable built environment while reflecting the needs and aspirations of the people who reside and work within it.
The streets and streetscapes that best reflect these needs and aspirations are streets that:

- are pleasant, **vital** and interesting to be in;
- provide physical **connection** and social and economic interaction to and throughout the communities that they serve;
- are **safe**, and encourage increased usage and people to feel confident and safe when using them;
- encourage activity within them and promote **healthy** lifestyles;
- are easily **accessible** by all, being simple to comprehend and navigate through without barriers or obstacles;
- will **respond** well to our needs and the subtropical climate in the provision of appropriate shade and shelter;
- are **distinctive** and reinforce the character of the local place and the region;
- enhance opportunities for **creative** and innovative place making; and
- are structured to be **adaptable** in their use and allow for change in the communities needs throughout the 24 hour day, the seasons and into the future.
Paths, streets, roads, highways, freeways and specialised transport routes like railways are the essential network of lines that connect the many parts of our suburbs, towns and cities…. and one city to another.

To this public realm of “movement” lines can be added other parts of the public realm such as public plazas, town squares, parks, river bank paths, ocean beaches and more which not only connect parts of our cities but are places in which to stop and do things.

THE ISSUE

For decades we have decided that the first of these (Movement) should be designed and managed in ways that principally support the use of the private vehicles we have invented over the last century to travel longer distances, carry heavier loads and especially do it quickly.

In many ways that was a logical sensible response: conflicts between pedestrians and cars rarely come out in favour of the pedestrian!…and so separation seemed best. But it was a policy choice by us that, for the well-being of the overall community, the efficient (and usually fast) flow of vehicle traffic was the most important goal. In important cases, such as major highways and freeways (or busways and trainlines), that still makes sense.

But what we lost in applying the same thinking to all other roads and streets in our networks was all too often the ability to maintain;

• the environmental and aesthetic quality of our towns;
• the economic vitality of parts of our suburbs and cities; and
• the social network spaces of our community.

THE PRECEDENTS

This challenge was not always so. Many of the great cities of the world that we love to visit were created long before cars and, for a while in the twentieth century, struggled with demands for car travel. The more complex and older European cities often resisted this and retained a sense of city streets as being equally public places that provide amenity to pedestrian and cyclist movement and to social activity rather than mere movement.

Paradoxically, the “colonial” cities of the “new world”, although well-placed by their urban design layout to manage the demand, often destroyed whole areas of themselves to deliver major new road networks. This in turn so challenged the quality of central city areas as “great people places” that those with dreams of “good places” often fled from central city precincts and into the suburbs.

Yet remarkably some cities decided, half way through their processes of introducing (often imposing) major road networks upon themselves, to stop and go back, truncating their ambitions or pulling down their unfinished new motorway networks and pursuing more energetically pro-pedestrian and pro-public transport strategies. These cities seem often to have prospered amidst the challenges of recent times and those facing us.

THE CHANGING VIEW

So gradually in recent decades we have come to look critically at our approach to streets as people spaces or as movement corridors…or as both. We have come to look more closely at the essential qualities of the different types of streets, roads and highways our communities need.
We have moved away from applying a uniform mind-set to all and to see much more that there are many factors influencing decisions about the design of these parts of the public realm network...and that those factors include many that are not technical in nature or about the engineering of the corridor for movement.

We are beginning to understand better the importance of the overall design of the street as a place of human activity and to prioritise differently, in various contexts, the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport over the needs of drivers of private vehicles just seeking to pass through.

This is about seeing some streets as much more “people places” than “movement corridors”.

NOT THE “ENGINEERING” RESPONSE

Up until relatively recently, it was often thought that the way to make good people places was always to exclude cars from them, by the horizontal or vertical separation of cars and people. In many, if not most, however, we have now discovered this is often a poor social outcome and the issue is instead about mix and managing or balancing the relationship between cars and people to the benefit of our urban places.

Indeed, the benefits of slow-moving traffic in close proximity to strongly-pedestrian civic or suburban spaces is central to much of the changing thinking in the last decade or so about how best to design sustainable urban developments. That thinking often derives from, or is supported by, observation of existing cities and suburbs of various kinds and weighing up their ability to deal with contemporary and forecast changes and outright challenges.

FUTURE CHALLENGES AND URBAN DESIGN

Australian society and the Moreton Bay regional community face a range of challenges including:

• continued population and development growth;
• climate change and its global and local impacts;
• peak oil and its impact on transport technology and cost;
• the continuing communications revolution and its effect upon society;
• the changing nature of the economy and its impact upon movement patterns;
• continuing urban growth;
• the changing nature of the Australian community and diversifying lifestyle needs;
• looming health issues for the population and the relationship to urban design; and
• the challenges to affordable living for many.

In issues such as these the connection to, or contribution of, the design of the built environment of our towns and cities is increasingly understood and recognised as important. As a result urban design thinking and best practice has evolved in recent years to reassert the importance for sustainable cities and suburbs of such approaches as:

• mixed-use precincts;
• transport-oriented development;
• traditional mainstreets (rather than “box” shopping malls);
• mixed tenure and dense urban housing;
• enhanced public transport networks;
• major institutions as part of mixed-use centres; and
• highly permeable and connected traditional grid-design precincts and neighbourhoods.

In many of these, a different view about the way land uses and people-oriented streets and public places should desirably relate to car access is evident. It is not a strategy of physical separation but of management of an active and continuing interface ... with the odds now on the side of the pedestrian, but without losing all that cars contribute positively to streets.
Of course cars and motorists in streets give us much including:

- the convenience of reaching a place from further away;
- covered movement in bad weather;
- equitable access to the buildings in the street for those with movement difficulty, perhaps the elderly, the physically handicapped, the very young...;
- access for public transport for those without cars or choosing not to use their car; and
- casual surveillance from cars to add to the security of pedestrians in the public realm.

Thus the question is one of design, both strategic and detailed.

**THE DIFFERENT ROLE OF STREETS**

Designing streets must, for a start, acknowledge the variety of context and purpose.

All of the evolving experience shows that a “street” is not, of course, just about the pavement on which vehicles move. The role of a street is about the balance between its function as:

- a movement corridor for pedestrians;
- a movement corridor for cyclists;
- a movement corridor perhaps for public transport;
- a movement corridor for private vehicles intending to stop;
- a movement corridor for private vehicles passing through;
- and its role as a social or community place...or series of pedestrian-based places;
- an environmental or micro-climatic influence;
- an amenity space and aspect for adjoining uses;
- a movement destination space for service vehicles and more.

This balancing act, this design dialogue, between PLACE and MOVEMENT is the essential question......and arguably, there is rarely a single “pattern book” answer, but instead many things to be considered.

**THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE STREET**

So the design of a street in a particular context must therefore include the integrated design of:

- the pedestrian spaces usually at the edges;
- the interface of those pedestrian public realm areas with the adjoining defining buildings and spaces;
- the needs of cyclists;
- the interface between cyclists and pedestrians;
- the interface between cyclists and larger vehicles;
- the provision for movement though the space by vehicles;
- the interface between pedestrians and their activities and stationary and moving vehicles;
- the particular interface between (potentially large) public transport vehicles and pedestrians, both those about to connect to the public transport and those not so;
- the impact of the overall sense and scale of the street in length and cross-section (and therefore the height of the buildings, the width of the street and more); and
- the places where the street intersects or connects to others or where its nature should change.

The design process might therefore be said in broad terms to be dealing particularly with:

- the role and function of the street;
- the nature of the built form and uses that define and interact with it at its edges;
- the needs of different users of the street space; and
- the landscaping and other elements of design that deliver its physical nature and enhance its human functions.
THE URBAN DESIGN CHALLENGE FOR THE STREET

Since we are talking now about people in streets, of streets as people places (rather than just passive corridors for the movement of vehicles), then we must ask how well the design of the "total street" addresses various needs (that are often seemingly not associated with previous thinking on roads). How well, for example, does the street:

• create a desirable microclimate or amenity for people in the street?
• deliver an attractive interesting place?
• create spaces for appropriate social and community interaction?
• deliver (with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Design) a secure environment for pedestrians and cyclists?
• respect the needs and enhance the amenity of adjoining uses and buildings?
• display or celebrate the cultural uniqueness of the local community or landscape?
• take advantage of its special urban or landscape context?
• create opportunities for democratic expression?
• reflect the needs of the different groups within the community, such as the young, the elderly, the physically challenged, the poor, the newcomer or visitor….?
• accommodate natural change?
• provide a response that will be robust in the face of major climate and resource challenges?
• work appropriately at all times of the day and week? and
• work appropriately in all seasons and changing weather conditions?

AND SO?

In all this, streets that desirably include vehicle movement (and that arguably is most, if not all) must of course work at a technical level for that movement.

The change identified above in the approach towards the design of streets reflects, however, a greater evening up of the relative needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transit against the past emphasis upon the needs of drivers of vehicles, especially those just passing through.

The changed mindset or community design goal or priority is essentially about networks of people places rather than networks of vehicle corridors.

It is thus about sustainable urban design and place-making.

That leads to the sorts of questions and issues introduced above… and it is those sorts of questions upon which this Framework seeks to promote dialogue and to provide guidance.

They are the very stuff of best practice street design and hence urban design for the Region.

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Finding the Balance

The design of the urban and suburban areas of the region is a major contributor to their quality and efficiency and hence their sustainability. Equally the design of their streets (and parts of their public realm) is a central element of their strategic and detailed sustainable design.

They have a major impact upon the lives of the region’s people and the overall economic and environmental health of its community.

REGION & PLACE

Places across the Region have their own particular qualities, their individual characters, which reflect their natural and man-made contexts.

They reflect not only their natural settings of landscapes, geology, aspect, shape, relationship to coast or hills or rivers and the like, but also their built environments, cultural histories, uses, relationships to major infrastructure and more.

Some are clearly quite unique and iconic and seen as such by most within the regional community and to visitors. Consider for example the way the region’s places meet the Bay or its rivers or the historic qualities of traditional towns.

But this does not however mean the Region is little more than a myriad collection of individual places and with no overall character or “sense of regional identity”.

The identity of Moreton Bay Region certainly strongly includes and should continue to include the more obvious high-profile iconic places. But they do not exist in isolation and the Region and its community can equally be held together by broader outcomes such as:

- an observable commitment to excellence in the urban design of the public realm of streets and other spaces;
- the strength of the widespread overt celebration of the special qualities of the region’s landscape and heritage;
- the innovative and artistic exploration of consistent regional references and design approaches that, while linking across the region, do not deny the energetic celebration of “the local”; or
- the broad engagement of the many diverse communities within the region in place-making.

There is a natural balancing act between LOCAL and REGIONAL which this Framework sees as a creative dialogue, not a contest.

STREET & ROAD

The community knows there are substantial differences in the movement corridors of the Region.

In the regional network, there are obvious differences in the purpose of the myriad of linear corridors: between major highways and local streets, between the roads in residential, industrial and town centre precincts, between busy streets and quiet ones, between ones in densely-peopled urban areas and others in natural landscapes, between streets of civic importance to the regional community and those of a closer to private or intimate small community nature.

In part this has been because the role of these parts of our community as convenient MOVEMENT corridors for people in vehicles has too often been allowed to overwhelm, ignore or deny their role as accessible PLACES for people as pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users.

This Framework proposes that the distinction between Movement and Place is fundamental to our approach to sustainable urban environments.

There is of course a significant practical need for movement corridors where the primary purpose is facilitating the passage of vehicles often in large numbers and often appropriately at reasonable speed where the purpose is primarily getting from A to B.
But, at the other end of a continuum of the public realm there are other corridors where the speedy movement of vehicles from one end to the other is of far less importance than the creation of vital, pleasant, safe, characterful and socially-supportive places for people as pedestrians individually or in groups.

Seeing streets as providing such spaces is critical for they deliver in important ways the contexts for much that works towards social, economic, cultural and environmental sustainability for the community.

Experience shows that much of their ability to do this arises from where they sit within the MOVEMENT / PLACE dialogue.

The more important the chosen principal role of the corridor is to deliver traffic quickly through it, the more unachievable the creation of people-friendly public realm in that corridor is likely to be. The more important the chosen role of the corridor is to be a people place, where the community come to do things at their pedestrian speed, the less achievable or appropriate is the catering for fast traffic.

To assist this second Dialogue between PLACE and MOVEMENT, the language used by some has been focussed to distinguish between:

• STREETs as pedestrian-speed people-oriented places; and
• ROADS as corridors in which vehicle speed and movement is more the central goal.

This Framework uses this focus upon the language of Streets for it is concentrating on the urban design of streets as places.

As with Region and Local, the outcome is not exclusive: one or the other. Streets do, arguably mostly should, accommodate vehicle movement but in ways supportive of the increased emphasis on Place.

The issue then is much about how the presence of slow-moving, respectful, non-intimidatory or unsafe traffic is a positive factor in these urban places that are streets.

Bribie Island
The streets of Moreton Bay Region are critical in the community’s pursuit of sustainable futures.

They are places that, by their design and management, both prioritise the movement needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users, while providing settings for meeting the human need for social interaction and community life.

They balance by design, the competing demands of “place” and “movement” in ways that are thoughtful, practical, creative and people-oriented.

The streets of the region are places that people use, not just through necessity but by choice, as they are places that they enjoy, where they feel engaged and safe, as they are places that promote a connected, accessible, healthy, and vital community and lifestyle.

They are memorable places that celebrate the region’s unique qualities, and promote and support the human need to be part of a community.
**Principles** for Quality Streets in Moreton Bay Region

**People First**

- Recognise that well designed streets and streetscapes within the Moreton Bay Region are human in scale and focused upon the needs of people and their ability to interact within them.

- Ensure that the streets of Moreton Bay Region are designed to be convenient, accessible and safe for people at all times, day or night, weekday or weekend, winter or summer.

**Interaction & Exchange**

- Create streets within Moreton Bay Region that are well designed, quality places that maximise opportunities for formal and informal, social and economic exchange;

- Ensure there is space for public life in our streets where people can gather in comfort and that are of high environmental and aesthetic quality and amenity.

- Promote the economic vitality of the region and its centres by the high quality of pedestrian, cyclist and public transport friendly streets within and around centre precincts and other significant civic, educational or business facilities.

**Identity**

- Understand the role the streets of Moreton Bay Region play in establishing and promoting its unique identity through the general commitment to ‘design excellence’, and the fostering of a ‘sense of place’ reinforced by a contiguous entity under the management, care and responsibility of the Moreton Bay Regional Council;

- Design of streets and streetscapes to establish, maintain, celebrate and enhance the distinctive qualities of individual places, localities and communities of the region.
Quality of Design

- Ensure the streets and streetscapes of the Moreton Bay Region are designed and developed to a quality that reflects the locality and the built environment aspirations of present and future communities.

- Design streets and streetscapes to explore, establish, maintain, celebrate and enhance the distinctive qualities of individual places, localities and communities of the region.

- Ensure designs for streetscapes in the region have the goals of consistency in quality design, by defining the street’s rhythm and the integration of pedestrian-orientated elements with minimum clutter.

- In the pursuit of creative or “better” outcomes and pride or “ownership” by local (and the regional) communities, facilitate the involvement of artists and local citizens in the design, development and management of streets and streetscapes.

- Respect the natural and physical environment in the overall and detailed design of streets and streetscapes.

Accessible & Connected

- Create streets in Moreton Bay Region that are places through which all individuals can move easily and without hindrance.

- Ensure the network of streets and other related parts of the public realm of the Moreton Bay Region are attractive, easily identifiable and understood by residents and visitors alike.

- Aspire to a public realm that is accessible by all through application of universal design principles in the design process.

- Integrate pedestrian movement with public transit to ensure the most convenient transit and pedestrian orientated communities.

- Enhance the quality, attractiveness, equity and efficiency of the public transit systems in the region by placement of access nodes at points of high pedestrian activity and where the street system allows easy and direct access throughout the pedestrian catchment.
Access for All

- Create streets that are places through which all individuals can move easily and without physical or social hindrance.
- Design streets in ways that ensure they are accessible to, and friendly towards, as many people in the community as possible, including the elderly, the disabled and children.

Sustainable

- Ensure that the design of streets in the Moreton Bay Region and the items within them are developed in a sustainable manner.
- Ensure streets, and the elements of streetscape within them, are responsibly and sustainably developed and maintained at a high quality for their full lifespan.
- Ensure sustainable street and streetscape design acknowledges and responds to the region’s subtropical climate, both now and as it might evolve in coming decades.

Maintenance and Management

- Identify and consult stakeholders responsible for the ongoing maintenance and management of streets at an early stage to ensure thoughtful, integrated and committed outcomes.