

64 **PROPERTY**

# Sales spur makeover revival for city precinct

SAM JONES

Experts say the Stirling Street precinct just north of the CBD is on track to be the city's next area of revitalisation — with recent building development in the area showing promising signs.

Colliers International Agency director Ian Mickle said the pocket between Lord Street, Stirling Street and Newcastle Street, home to HBF Park, would get a makeover spurred by the sale of three big sites — the Megamart site at 30 Beaufort Street, the GolfBox site on the corner of Lord and Newcastle streets, and the former Sunday Times building on Stirling Street.

"Because of their size and ownership, these sites have the capacity to accommodate significant projects that will bring much-needed density and commercial activity into its relatively quiet part of Perth," Mr Mickle said.

Stirling Street has had two student accommodation projects — an 11-storey complex with 700 beds and a 23-storey, 571-bed development — open, something Mr Mickle said was vital to the suburb's revival.

"We know a successful mix of residential density and commercial activity lays the foundation for activated streets where businesses can prosper and by those standards, this corner of Perth is moving in the right direction," he said.

Mr Mickle said because development margins were thin, lower land values gave developers the ability to



Stirling Street, Perth

break even far quicker than more central CBD developments.

"Recent transactions put land values in the area between \$3500 and \$5000 per square metre, which allows for a lower break-even level for developers than land rates of \$6000 to \$7000 per square metre on Wellington Street, on the other side of the railway tracks," he said.

The former Sunday Times building, bought for \$24 million by investment fund Elanor Investors Group, is earmarked for future development.

"In the short term there is holding income from the partially leased two-storey office building but with a zoning that allows for a 24,340sqm to 36,500sqm tower and commercial, residential, hotel and retail uses, this former media property has the potential to anchor the city end of Stirling Street," Mr Mickle said.

The 18ha area, which plays host to festivals and entertainment events throughout the year, sits on the doorstep of Northbridge and the CBD, an ideal location for residential-commercial mixed zoning.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT SITE

## Design's back in the planning

### STREETWISE

ANTHONY DUCKWORTH-SMITH

With the release of the new State Planning Policy 7 Design of the Built Environment and the Apartment Design Policy, the role of design will be formally elevated into the planning system.

It's a big change to the way our built environment is produced. For the first time, we have a policy framework which supports decisions being made on design quality. Many professionals will, however, need to adapt to this new focus and the processes that will be put in place.

Last year we mapped out the key roles of those typically involved in the production of buildings, what sort of design understanding they usually have and then what they are expected to have to effectively use the new policy. Perhaps the most significant knowledge gap revealed was in planning assessment.

Planning assessment has relied heavily on prescriptive criteria, a check-box approach of standards and measurements. This was straightforward to administer — but it tended to standardise buildings and didn't encourage designs that were innovative or responded more appropriately to local context.

The new policy moves away from this prescriptive approach, which is good news for those who want flexibility in their design ability, but demands new skills from the assessment staff.

Importantly, the policy reinforces the role of experienced architects and designers in supporting planners to make decisions around design objectives. This is an opportunity to strengthen relationships between planning and design professionals and provide a comprehensive foundation from which to improve outcomes in our suburbs, streets and centres.

If the policy is to be successful it's important education and training in the required skills is timely



Goodwood Parade's mixed-use tower is an example of clever design.

it's important we develop training and support that integrates with the busy working lives of the modern professional, is practically focused and draws on the experience of peers.

At the Australian Urban Design Research Centre, for nearly a decade we have been helping planners improve their ability to understand and communicate about spatial design concepts and ideas through our education programs. These approaches have led to professionals diversifying their careers rewardingly into more design-focused roles.

The formal design review process incumbent in the policy provides an opportunity for planning officers to become familiar with

exposed to exemplary work by good architects. Case studies such as these provide a rich practical basis from which to develop content to meet learning needs. Architects, though, have a responsibility to ensure they clearly and consistently communicate the justifications for their recommendations.

It's up to all of those involved in the production of the built environment to work collaboratively to support this transition and ensure West Australians get to fully realise the benefit of good design in our built environment.

**Dr Anthony Duckworth-Smith is assistant professor at the Australian Urban Design Research Centre. He lectures in the University of WA's Master of**

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