

## Response to the DRAFT Central Darwin Area Plan

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects - NT Chapter (AILA NT)



The Northern Territory Chapter of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA NT) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft release of the Northern Territory Planning Commission's *Central Darwin Area Plan (CDAP)*.

AILA is the growing national advocacy body representing over 3,000 active and engaged landscape architects throughout Australia. Together we are committed to promoting the importance of the profession, advocating for innovative, smart landscape planning and design while striving to achieve improved environmental, cultural, community, health and economic outcomes for the built environment.

As Landscape Architects one of our key areas of interest is the built environment of our cities and urban areas. As a profession, we work on projects of varying scales from citywide strategies to local parks. It is encouraging that numerous landscape issues and themes have been considered in the *CDAP*. Within this letter we have reviewed and highlighted those issues and themes for further consideration within the *Area Plan*.

### 1. Heat Mitigation

AILA commends the *CDAP* for highlighting the heat island challenges that Darwin continues to battle with. The 'Liveable City' section at the *Introduction* of the document, notes the importance of the *Area Plan* recognising heat mitigation opportunities and discusses typical measures that can be implemented to cool the city. While some of the *Acceptable Responses* (in the *Themes* and *Focus Areas*) promote planting of trees for shading and greening of buildings, we request the Planning Commission further investigate and then clearly articulate these opportunities and specify *Objectives* under all *Themes* and *Focus Areas* to encourage heat mitigation as an integral aspect of all development. A link to AILA's position of the Urban Heat Island Effect can be found in the appendix of this letter.

We would also suggest in any further document release a higher quality copy of the 'Heat Study Map' be included so the legend is clear and legible.

### 2. Open Space Network

AILA NT recognises that Darwin does not have an Open Space Network Strategy. This is a major gap in the planning documents that should shape a modern city. The *Area Plan* references parks, the environment and open space areas, but there is very limited understanding of what this is, what functions it serves, levels of use, gaps in service or over-use. The *CDAP Needs Assessment* reflects this with only a spatial mapping indicating the location of open space and other environmental resources with the *Environment Map*. More detailed qualitative and quantitative information is required to inform how the open space network will develop and support the changing nature of our city.

The open space network, in its broadest sense, is an integral part of Social Infrastructure, Culture and Heritage, Environment, Movement and Transport. It provides the 'stage' for many of these *Themes*. In addition, with the ongoing densification of the City, the role of the open space network in the delivering a healthy, quality living environment will become ever more critical.

Within Focus Area D, Frances Bay there could be further *Objectives* identifying the need for public open space within the Mixed Use precinct that is accessible to the future population of this area, who will be partly 'cut-off' from other open space areas by Tiger Brennan Drive.

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We would also encourage further expansion of the 'Green Links' and a detailed description of what these entail. There is mention of a 'Green Link' for Focus Area D, Frances Bay in the *Acceptable Responses*, however it is unclear what type and sizing is appropriate for a 'Green Link' and we suggest that this be elaborated on and shown on the diagrammatic plan. There should be a clearer articulation of 'links' generally throughout the city area, covering movement corridors, environmental and general recreational outcomes.

The *City Recreation Loop* on page 30 is an excellent initiative that has been discussed for many years. The renewed interest in active transport suggests now is the time to implement such a scheme. We recommend an expanded network incorporating a potential 'shortcut' or two within the loop as well as indicating on the map connections to the *Priority Pedestrian/Cycleway Network*.

The current route does include a number of sections that traverse the escarpment and streets, these may require new or expanded open space areas to make these viable.

We also query if the arrows are intentionally one-way directional on the *Movement and Transport: City Recreational Loop* plan.

### 3. *Healthy, Social Cities*

To create a liveable city it is important to recognise factors that help foster and promote healthy communities, not just physically but also mentally. There is anecdotal evidence of the healing powers of nature and the need to incorporate landscape elements to promote healthy living spaces, intertwined in planning and design processes, is paramount to create a liveable Darwin. AILA have written a policy on Healthy Communities and how landscape solutions can assist in the creation of these. This document, which can be found in the appendices, discusses key issues and give examples of case studies where landscapes have been implemented that promote the health and well-being of their local populations.

Research undertaken by the Grattan Institute also highlights the role of open space and active streets to foster social interaction that is positive, healthy and intergenerational. Linked to this is the responsibility to provide for our diverse community. It's acknowledged that the *DCAP* responds to the need of new residential development to support the projected increase in population as outlined in the *Needs Assessment*. However there is no discussion in either document regarding the current and future needs of low income and social housing in the central Darwin area. We would encourage the planning commission to include research to form appropriate *Objectives* throughout the *Area Plan* to address existing and future social housing requirements.

### 4. *The Landscape Character of Darwin*

And finally, the question that has forever challenged planners, visionaries, developers and authorities – what is the character of Darwin? This will be an ongoing debate no doubt, but the underlying environment that shapes our lives and activities every day is that of the monsoon tropics. This should be recognised and underpin our approach to the development of the city. Development of appropriate and innovative planning and design solutions for our environment would be an exportable commodity internationally. Can we finally put to bed the comparisons with Singapore and Cairns? We are Darwin in the Top End, and we are unique in Australia. The Larrakia and other indigenous people know this and so should the entire community.

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019

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We congratulate NT Planning Commission for their work to date and the opportunity to provide comment on the plan. We look forward to reviewing the final document. If you have any questions, require further information or would like to meet with us to discuss this submission please get in contact as we would be more than happy to assist.

Yours Sincerely,

Samuel Hare

**AILA NT Chapter President**

### **Attachments**

*AILA's Liveable Cities - Cooling Cities - Urban Heat Island Effect*

[http://www.aila.org.au/imis\\_prod/documents/AILA/Advocacy/AILA%20Policies/COOLING%20CITIES%20-%20URBAN%20HEAT%20ISLAND%20EFFECT%2014.4.pdf](http://www.aila.org.au/imis_prod/documents/AILA/Advocacy/AILA%20Policies/COOLING%20CITIES%20-%20URBAN%20HEAT%20ISLAND%20EFFECT%2014.4.pdf)

*AILA's Liveable Cities - Healthy Communities - Healthy Living Landscape Solutions*

[http://www.aila.org.au/imis\\_prod/documents/AILA/Advocacy/National%20Policy%20Statements/3.%20Healthy%20Communities\\_Nov%202016.pdf](http://www.aila.org.au/imis_prod/documents/AILA/Advocacy/National%20Policy%20Statements/3.%20Healthy%20Communities_Nov%202016.pdf)

*AILA's Liveable Cities - Green Walls and Roofs*

[http://www.aila.org.au/imis\\_prod/documents/AILA/Advocacy/AILA%20Policies/GREEN%20WALLS%20AND%20ROOFS%2014.4.pdf](http://www.aila.org.au/imis_prod/documents/AILA/Advocacy/AILA%20Policies/GREEN%20WALLS%20AND%20ROOFS%2014.4.pdf)