

14th March 2008

Mr. Gary Brennan
Chief Executive Officer
City of Geraldton-Greenough
Cathedral Avenue
Geraldton WA 6530

Dear Gary

CITY CENTRE DESIGN INITIATIVE – DRAFT DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (WA) is pleased to provide this response to the City of Geraldton-Greenough's draft *Geraldton City Centre Design Initiative, Draft Design Guidelines*. UDIA is the peak body representing the property development industry in Western Australia with a membership drawn from the land development, planning, urban design, architecture, engineering and environmental professions.

UDIA recognises the contribution of design guidelines to developing a sense of place and enhancing local identity, particularly in regional areas undergoing significant population growth and development. In relation to this document, it would be helpful to have a clearer idea as to what the vision for Geraldton is and what the future desired character of the city centre is, given the strong growth projected for the burgeoning Mid-West region with Geraldton as the major urban centre in the region.

Members canvassed for this response are generally supportive of the draft design guidelines with all major issues being addressed. Qualifications are made on the following points:

- Stronger reference to the unique qualities of Geraldton, not just a healthy, diverse and vital place
- Greater clarity is required in the use of 'should' and 'shall'
 - 5g 'awnings **should** be provided' – change to 'awnings **could** be provided'
 - 5h 'gateway entrances **shall** contribute to a sense of arrival' – change to 'gateway entrances **should** contribute to a sense of arrival'
- Separation of mandatory requirements from desirable elements is recommended
- Requirements at Development Application could be more clearly listed and would benefit from being in a separate section, for example
 - shadow analysis
 - landscape strategy 3D images
 - streetscape
- The following items are considered too prescriptive and should be revised:

- 2e: showrooms not to exceed 300sqm
 - 3.2: continuous urban wall (urban wall should be defined)
 - 4a: nil setbacks for front and rear boundary (nil setbacks do not always create the best result, sometimes spaces as part of the streetscape are good as long as they are designed as urban space)
 - 4c: the requirement for balconies to not occupy more than ¼ of the building façade at any one level. Clarify whether balconies also extend over footpaths
 - 4e: Corner site requirements seem too rigid, and will not necessarily result in good buildings. An example is Station Street Subiaco, where poor outcomes have been achieved from a similar requirement
 - Addressing corners is important but the need for extra height is questioned
 - 8b: this item is too complex. A developer will likely opt for providing the maximum parking he can viably achieve, and the bonus for providing a truncation or other items that are requirements is questioned
- It would be helpful if there was greater clarity on when a building can go to the maximum bonus height rather than the base height. Is there a minimum height for new development?
 - Will there be a public art policy with a 1% contribution cost in the CBD?
 - Will there be a signage policy? 'Restrained signage' should be defined
 - The Public Pedestrian link through the shopping centre loading area and supermarket is difficult to achieve and should be reviewed

UDIA recommends that the City establish an independent Design Review Group (DRG) comprised of experienced and qualified professionals from disciplines such as architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, building services and energy usage. DRGs work effectively in many local authorities throughout Western Australia, for example Victoria Park and South Perth, and play an important role in providing independent and professional advice to the local authorities and to applicants. DRGs make recommendations to Council based on whether the development proposal meets the intent of the design elements and the relevant criteria set out in the City's Design Guidelines.

I would also like to alert you to the work done by the UK based organisation, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE, www.cabe.org.uk) which is the government's advisor to local authorities on architecture, urban design and public space. The CGG may find this a useful resource to help it achieve the best possible outcomes for Geraldton's CBD.

I hope you find UDIA's comments instructive and I thank you again for giving us an opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely



Debra Goostrey
Chief Executive Officer

