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URBAN SYSTEMS

A Third Millennium City Prototype – Melbourne Docklands

John Tabart

INTRODUCTION

This Congress is timely – and very relevant. It provides an excellent opportunity to discuss and debate one of the greatest challenges for the Third Millennium – cities of the world, and the urban habitat.

We regularly refer to increasing globalisation, and the enormous steps forward in technology, communications, bio-science and finance. These are the high profile activities. But it is the quality of life in the cities in which an increasing majority of the world's people will live that will be paramount to local populations – shaping the physical form, politics, viability and sustainability of human endeavour. The subject is that important.

Within the theme of 'New Cities', we introduce Melbourne Docklands – Victoria's new waterfront, a 220-hectare waterfront precinct at the centre of Australia's second largest city. It is very unusual to find such a large re-development opportunity so accessible and so close to the centre of a major world city.

For decades, the Docklands area was an under-utilised port and rail yards, immediately adjacent to the CBD. Some of the nostalgic images are still in evidence and continue as an important part of the heritage of the area.

But the vision for Melbourne Docklands, and the practical planning, are very much focused on the future city concept – creating Victoria's New Waterfront for the Third Millennium. Already more than \$Aust 1 billion of development has been completed, is in construction or is committed to start this year, a further \$Aust 1.5 billion is contracted with major developers, and the estimated total investment over the next 15 years is more than \$Aust 6 billion.

By 2015, it is estimated that Melbourne Docklands will attract 20 million visitors annually as the venue for up to 200 land and water events – all focused on the 40 hectares of water that makes Docklands a special part of Melbourne. Local, interstate and international tourism will be an increasing part of the New Economy – and the water, arts, and events focus of Docklands will provide a major boost to employment in Victoria.

In 15 years, Melbourne Docklands is expected to become home to 15,000 residents, with both high rise apartments looking over the water and the central city and low rise apartments, with a water address, that will become part of a vibrant public realm.

Melbourne Docklands is expected to be workplace for 20,000 people in 15 years time. The nature of work places, globally, is changing rapidly. The high tech nature of the Docklands area, particularly our commitment to broadband communications links to the world, and across the whole area, will make it a very attractive area for many Century 21 work skills and enterprises.

Melbourne Docklands provides a prototype for cities of the Third Millennium. There are three key features of our approach:

- A focus on the projected and real needs of the people who will visit, live and work in the Docklands, and the community they will evolve.
- A robust partnership between the public and the private sectors to deliver the built and activity form.
- Substantial new public assets and attractions resulting from the private/public partnering

The partnership between the public and the private sectors will see the private sector providing most of the finance and the high tech development expertise, while the Government takes the planning and management initiatives to achieve a balanced outcome for the people of Melbourne and Victoria.

Substantial new public assets resulting from the private/public partnering will include seven kilometres of continuous public 30-metre wide waterfront, and a commitment to design excellence in all developments. This includes recognition of the rich history of the area, and integration of significant structures to fulfil our statutory heritage obligations.

The focus on the needs of the people who will visit, live and work in the Docklands, and the community will include: recognising the Aboriginal history of the area, building on the European settlement patterns begun in 1835, celebrating the multi-cultural nature of Melbourne, and anticipating the changing lifestyles of the children and youth who will benefit from the success of the endeavours of our generation.

These features of our approach are not just theoretical principles. They will provide practical outcomes that enhance private sector investment interest, support the values of the community, and achieve both an image and a reality that will attract local people and visitors alike.

WHAT IS MELBOURNE DOCKLANDS?

The key assets of Melbourne Docklands are threefold: its location – adjacent to the CBD and at the hub of the main waterways; seven kilometres of public waterfront, and 40 hectares of water surface; and excellent accessibility – at the centre of the metropolitan train, tram and road networks, and with key links being developed for pedestrians and cyclists.

Melbourne Docklands has made a strong start into its implementation phase. Colonial Stadium has been completed and operating for a year, with more than 1.8 million people attending events so far with 2 to 3 million expected this year. More than 1,100 apartments have already been sold in the last 15 months for a value of over \$500m, and their construction is underway. More than \$120 million of major infrastructure has been completed, funded by the private developers and coordinated by Docklands Authority; and the area has hosted many thousands of people at a wide range of events.

The results to date, and the projected outcomes, indicate a dynamic, new mixed-use urban habitat.

There are numerous examples of waterfront redevelopments around the world. We have studied them, learning both the successful and the less successful lessons, and applying them to the particular circumstances that make Melbourne Docklands a unique place. The extensive public promenades, and the integration of private, public and civic activities are key examples.

Making sure that the necessary provision for road traffic is achieved without compromising the pedestrian character of the public realm at the waterfront has led us to place the major new road away from the waterfront, adjacent to the railway. To connect Docklands to the central city and Spencer Street Station, new pedestrian friendly bridges and subway links have been constructed.

Achieving both financial viability and quality urban design are twin key goals of the development of Melbourne Docklands. We have produced Integration and Design Guidelines to assist developers and their designers to achieve high quality results, and we have the benefit of an Integration, Design, Amenity and Integration Review Panel – comprising international, national and local specialists – to advise us on these matters.

A THIRD MILLENNIUM CITY PROTOTYPE

Despite its proximity to the CBD, the 220 hectares of Melbourne Docklands has been something of a hidden area – set aside for important port and rail uses, but obscured from view, inaccessible to the general public, and to private investment. The port and rail complex continues to be Australia's largest, but has moved downstream with modernisation of operation techniques and to deeper waters suitable for growing size of cargo carriers.

Melbourne Docklands is planned to be a vibrant new part of inner Melbourne, and estimated to include 7,000 apartments. This is a relatively small proportion of the total projected resident increase for the whole of inner

Melbourne which is projected to see appropriately 90,000 dwellings in the next 20 years.

Also projected for Docklands for the next 15 years are: 450,000 m² of high-tech commercial space; 77,000 m² of retail space; more than 2,000 hotel rooms; and 100,000 m² of entertainment space. The area will be well serviced by car parking and 500 marina berths, as well as facilities for ferries, water taxis and charter boats.

THE PRECINCT

There are seven multi-use precincts in Melbourne Docklands, providing the dynamic mix of residential, commercial, retail and leisure activities. Based on current projects and the bids, the estimated proportions of development represent a strong mix of complementary land uses.

Colonial Stadium – located on the edge of the Central Business District, in the heart of the Docklands, has been purpose designed as the jewel in Melbourne’s entertainment and sporting landscape. The secret to Colonial Stadium’s success lies in its unique flexibility and world class facilities – which together create the best entertainment Stadium and corporate facilities in Australia

The Channel 7 Broadcast Centre is a \$40 million development that will be the home of Channel Seven Melbourne and Australia’s first purpose-built digital broadcast complex. The Melbourne Broadcast Centre will be a unique addition to the city landscape, with a design which aims to bring people closer to the magic of television production. A café looks into the news broadcast studio. The complex itself will be a showcase for Channel 7’s operations.

One thousand, one hundred (1,100) apartments already sold and are now under construction in the Mirvac Yarra’s Edge and the MAB NewQuay development. Further residential developments are included in bids for precincts yet to be decided. Eventually it is expected that about 50% of the total development will be of residential accommodation for a wide range of people – singles, couples and small families attracted to the inner city and water-based lifestyle.

NewQuay residential waterfront projects will integrate with new places to shop, socialise and sail, new places to work, dine and relax. NewQuay will have a strong artistic flavour with a contemporary Australian art gallery on Victoria Harbour, along with urban art, sculpture and water features throughout.

Mirvac’s Yarra’s Edge development is planned to have 2,000 apartments on its 14.5 hectares site – it will be one of Australia’s most outstanding residential developments. It will comprise high rise towers, with a 30 metre wide public waterfront and three parks, and low rise apartments, all sunny north facing across the water toward the central city and the other Docklands precincts.

Digital Harbour@Comtechport is an exciting \$300 million development that will focus on the growth of new technology businesses, research and industries in a working campus that has few precedents world-wide. Global changes in IT technology and practice are rapid and radical. This strategic initiative will

attract major corporations, research and educational institutions, small/medium enterprises, and technology-based start-up businesses to co-operate in a very dynamic way, and play a role in the global IT environment. The interaction of these organisations will be a major step towards establishing Comtechport as a centre of excellence in the commercialisation of innovation, gaining international recognition for Docklands and, in turn, Melbourne as a 'High Tech World City'.

The remaining precincts (Victoria Harbour, Batman's Hill, North West Precinct, and Northern and Southern Stadium precincts) present a potential investment value of a further \$3 billion over the next 10–15 years, and quality developers bidding for the waterfront and CBD edge precincts include some of Australia's and Asia's most credible organisations.

SPECIAL DETAILS

Achieving the broad vision for Melbourne Docklands is the main focus for our work, but it will only be successful if the details give it special qualities. They include the following aspects of the development.

Providing residents, the work force and visitors alike with a safe and attractive environment is fundamental. The recently launched Community Development Plan recognises that supporting the evolving strength of the social capital of Docklands – the people and the community of which they are a part – is a vital element in achieving a successful development overall.

Major infrastructure works have already been established, prior to demand – to encourage investment in the area. Most of it has been funded by the private sector. Items include improved public transport, new infrastructure for water transport, new roads and bridges, and high tech communications links.

Docklands Authority is committed to environmental improvement projects, a very necessary part of transforming an historic industrial area into a Century 21 living environment. They include the \$Aust 45 million remediation of an old gas works site, and decontamination of soil and rebuilding of wharf structures by the private developers as part of their precinct developments. The Authority has also replaced the antiquated stormwater system, and installed litter traps to improve water quality in Victoria Harbour. Catching fish is once again a viable pastime in the area.

Docklands is the most accessible location in the whole of Victoria, at the hub of Victoria's arterial road and rail system, and excellent links to the CBD, tram, pedestrian and cycle routes, and the Spencer Street Railway Station have already been put in place.

When fully developed, more than 27 hectares of public waterfront, promenades, open space and public parks, including the 2.7 hectare Docklands Park which is part of the Harbour Esplanade spine – the major civic focus for Docklands.

Creation of Melbourne Docklands as an 'iPort' is a cornerstone of the development high tech focus. The immediate provision for high bandwidth services to all access seekers in the region is a major step in making Docklands a

city for the Third Millennium. The base telecommunications infrastructure, including a high capacity data spine, is already installed.

IN SUMMARY

The key elements of the Docklands Vision are:

A place for all people – over 2 million people visited Docklands last year, a ten-fold increase on the 200,000 people who visited in 1999. When fully developed Docklands is expected to attract over 20 million visitors per year.

To be integrated with Melbourne – to complement rather than compete with other parts of central Melbourne and adjacent areas, with governance by the community for the benefit of all Victorians.

High quality design and public amenity – with development not only being commercially successful but combining high quality design functionality, sustainability, and aesthetics. Buildings, landscape, generous public open space and urban art will be designed together, to ensure Docklands is a destination with a unique character and sense of place which meets the variety of community needs.

A water, arts and events destination – where Victoria Harbour is the ‘Blue Park’ of Docklands, a significant international boating and activity node, and the best integrated boating, arts and events destination in Victoria – for Victorians and visitors alike.

Docklands will add an exciting new dimension to life in Melbourne, as well as providing a major economic boost for the State. Docklands is forecast to provide on average 3,000 construction jobs per year for the life of the project, and an estimated 3,000 new permanent jobs by 2015.

The people of Victoria have adopted Docklands as part of their new image. Community support for the development, in both the metropolitan area and the country regions, continues to be very high.

But the interest is spreading further, with interstate and overseas investors joining in. A wide range of people, young and old, are now voting with their feet, coming to live in or visit Melbourne Docklands – a city for the Third Millennium.

Docklands is now well and truly under way. We couldn’t stop it now if we wanted to. It will accelerate and slow down with market demand. Its offerings of public attractions, waterfronts, proximity to the city centre, public and private transport access, a preferred location for high capacity bandwidth organisations and a promise of a new exciting living and working place make it a focus of Melbourne’s progress for the next 10 years.