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# Architecture firm Bates Smart ‘reimagines’ multi-level car parks as places for people

A top architecture firm wants to turn Melbourne’s multi-level car parks - that take up more area than New York’s Central Park - over to the people.

John Masanauskas

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Herald Sun

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Wellbeing precinct Little Bourke Street (west end). Picture: Bates Smart

Multi-level car parks in the CBD should be turned into “healthier and happier” places for people to enjoy, says a top architecture firm.

[Federation Square](#) co-designer Bates Smart says that cars create disconnection in the city, and waste vast urban space by sitting unused in car parks for most of the day.

The firm has reimagined three parking sites in central Melbourne for this year's MPavilion program — one of the nation's leading architecture and design events.

A modified [car park](#) in Hardware Lane is seen as an extension of the laneway with a series of ramps providing a “vertical experience whereby functions such as working hubs and outdoor events and festivals may occur”.



A Hardware Lane carpark reimagined. Picture: Bates Smart

A site at the west end of Little Bourke Street becomes a “wellbeing precinct” with recreational spaces like a park and basketball court.

And a car park in the east end of Little Bourke Street is converted to markets and food halls featuring an atrium and sculptural ramp with a rooftop garden.

Bates Smart director Julian Anderson said studies showed cars going to town were used only 36 minutes per day, while the other 95 per cent of the time they sat around in car parks “wasting a huge percentage of urban space”.

“A substantial amount of land and buildings that are set aside to accommodate immobile vehicles can be used otherwise,” he said.



“In the City of Melbourne, [carparking](#) accounts for 460 hectares of land – the equivalent of one and a half times the area of New York’s Central Park – making carparking the third-largest land use.”



“Calming and restoring” space Little Bourke Street (east end). Picture: Bates Smart

Amid council policies deterring cars from entering the city, Mr Anderson said the reduction in parking spaces would mean lots of planning opportunities.

“Our responsibility, as architects, is to rethink the structure and the use of our cities,” he said.

“Cities that once again can be tailored around humans. And our idea is to start with car parks, particularly the privately-owned multi-level off-street carparking”.

A virtual panel discussion on the issue with Mr Anderson, City of Melbourne design director Professor Rob Adams and international guests will be held on Thursday at 1pm as part of MPavilion 2020.

MPavilion will open free to the public from November 12, 2020, to April 5, 2021.

[mpavilion.org](http://mpavilion.org)

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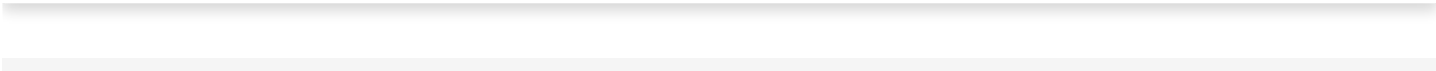
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