



AA



Experimentation, speculation and invention

Exploring the meaning and merit of unbuilt architecture



Winner

A Treasure Trove of Space – Rethinking Melbourne’s Car Parks by Bates Smart



Site plan (not to scale)

Jury citation: Perhaps paradoxically, the proposal receiving the main prize for unbuilt work is not in fact a building; it's a concept.

Although the drivers already exist for this proposal to happen, they have not been previously articulated in such a powerful way. Our immediate reaction is, “Why isn't this happening, now?”

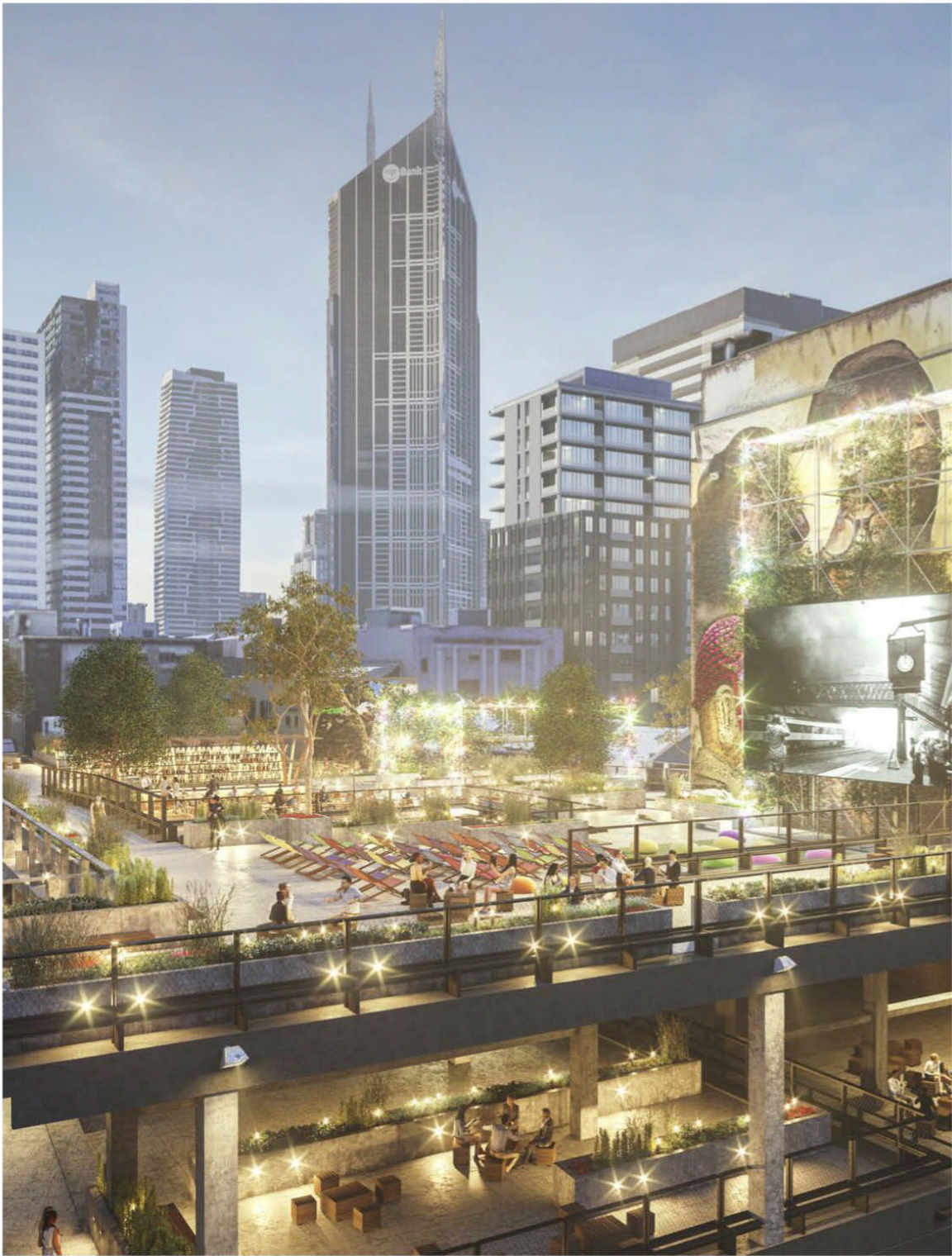
It is timely that this scheme is proposed, as Melbourne deals with the consequences of COVID-19. With movement and socializing restricted, and CBD office workers moving to home or local co-working spaces, there has been a considerable amount of discussion reassessing the role that the CBD plays in society and people's lives. Along with questions about the necessity of private car parks in the CBD and what constitutes “public benefit,” this scheme goes some way to addressing the clear imbalance between the amount of area devoted to private car parking as opposed to community spaces.

This scheme shows a compelling way forward. It not only creates useful and meaningful public spaces in an urban context, but it does so through the retention and conversion of existing structures. Perhaps most importantly, it generates two of the most important requirements for successful urban design solutions: diversity and intensity.

This is a scheme whose time has surely come. City of Melbourne, make it happen!



Site 1: Hardware Lane



Jan / Feb 2021



Architect's description: As Melbourne heads toward its next phase of development, we encourage the debate on how the city will evolve. In the CBD, much of this argument should examine how our city's functional systems, such as transport, intersect with its experiential systems, such as its public spaces and streetscapes. Central to this debate is how Melbourne has been designed to preference the car and a car-based experience of the city.

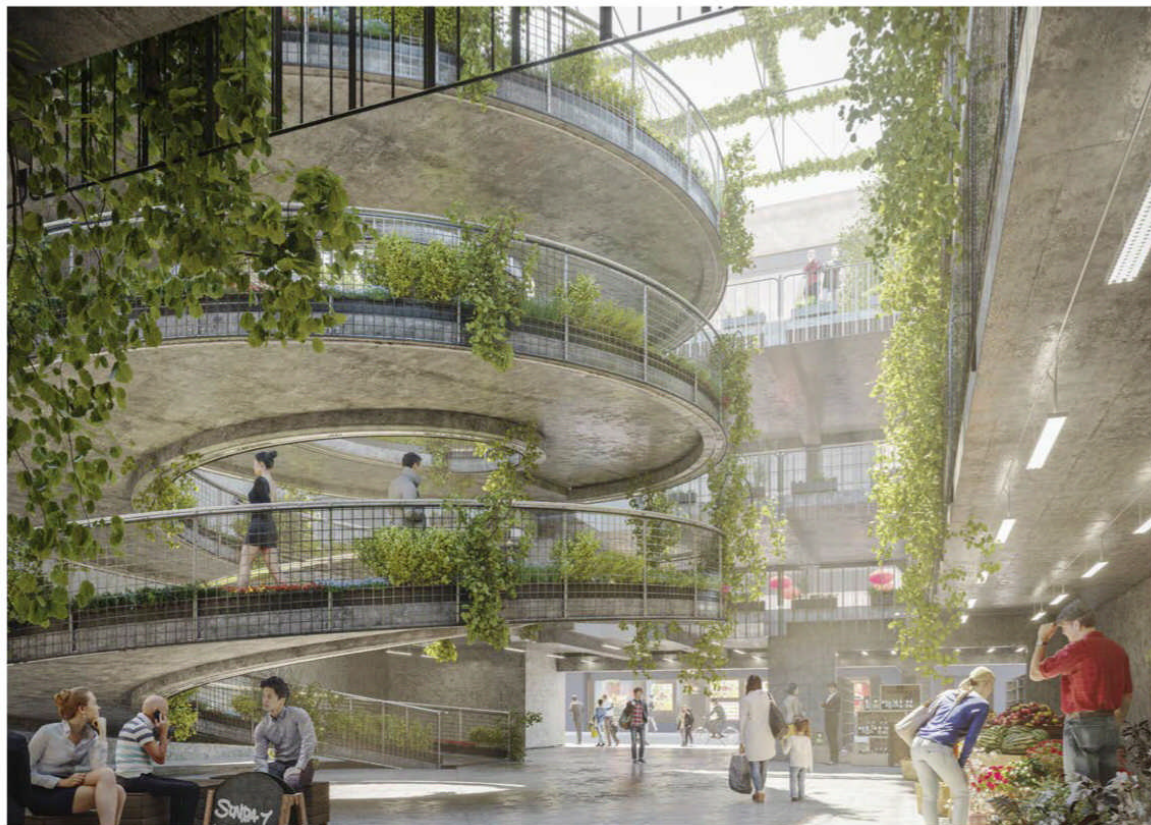
In the City of Melbourne, car parking accounts for 460 hectares of land and represents the third-largest land use. Space for community use ranks last and represents less than one-fifth of 1 per cent of total land use by area.

One way to reduce the number of privately-owned multi-level off-street car parks is to incentivize the sale of these sites to developers. Planning provisions stipulate that for the majority of sites, for every 1 square metre of site area, a maximum of 18 square metres of floor area can be developed. There is an allowance for an increase in this plot ratio where it can be proven that a public benefit is being provided. Typically, public benefit takes the form of public open space. Our proposition, however,

is that these multi-level car park sites, when sold onto developers, would be regarded as constituting a public benefit and therefore would allow these developers to exceed the allowable 1:18 plot ratio on another of their sites.

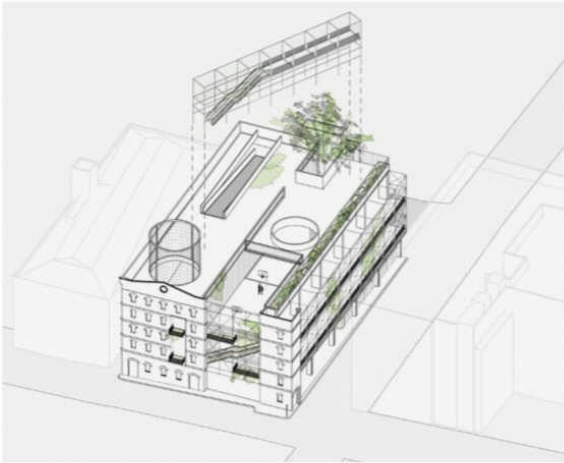
Once handed back to the city, a portion of the sale proceeds from these sites could be transferred to the city to refurbish the car parks in a number of different ways – for example, recreational facilities, open space, public bike parking and end-of-trip facilities, affordable housing and affordable small work studios.

We have identified a number of off-street, multi-level car parks in central Melbourne that could be repurposed in this way. Importantly, the intent is to repurpose the buildings rather than demolish them – a more sustainable approach. We have incorporated a series of simple architectural moves – such as stairs, ramps, balconies and platforms – into the bones of exemplar car park structures within the CBD. This approach utilizes a kit-of-parts and seeks to spark conversations about how we can reclaim space from cars so that Melbourne can be a greener, happier and more people-focused city.





Site 2: Little Bourke Street (east end)



Site 3: Little Bourke Street (west end)

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