



A Vision for Arts Led Urban Renewal in Adelaide and the City West Campus of the University of South Australia

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Various perspectives on universities and urban renewal in the post-industrial era are considered in the international literature. These include universities' roles as drivers of physical environmental change and of economic and social improvement; their relationships, and sometimes tensions, with immediate and wider neighbours; and the social, infrastructure, economic, cultural, educational, and local environmental sustainability benefits of a university's presence for a city and its residents. One theme within the literature on universities' economic and cultural contributions is their potential and actual role in the evolution and development of arts and cultural quarters. This paper considers that topic in relation to the University of South Australia's City West campus that opened in 1997 in an area of Adelaide known as the West End. The campus was built adjacent to an emerging arts complex. Soon after UniSA announced its decision to move to the new location, the Adelaide City Council commissioned the West End Urban Development Strategy to optimise the benefits of the university's presence. This paper introduces and reviews that Strategy and a subsequent, related, initiative of the City Council and the South Australian Government to establish the West End as an arts and cultural quarter.

Keywords: urban vision; urban renewal; cultural quarters; University of South Australia, City West campus

Introduction

The diverse international literature on the post-industrial city in the last decades of the twentieth century in Europe, North America and Australia paints a complex and richly-textured picture of the particular ways in which those countries responded to a range of circumstances stemming from three broad impulses. One was industrial and economic decline that resulted amongst other outcomes in the loss of established manufacturing and commercial bases and consequently in unemployment, decentralisation, 'urban dereliction' and the 'need to find a use for land that has lost its [previous] use'.¹ These circumstances led in turn to initiatives to 're-centre'² cities, a phenomenon common in the 1980s and 1990s. A second impulse was new economic frameworks including neo-liberalist ideologies, the rise of new economies, as in Asia, and of the European Union, and deregulation and the opening up of international trade, tourist and investment markets. A third impulse was altered governance structures underpinned by neo-corporatist ideology and by neo-liberalism – the privatisation of public services and utilities, decreased government provision of public housing and increased private sector investment in that area, deregulated planning, a lack of public participation in the planning process, and the birth of urban development corporations and public-private partnerships to drive urban development projects.³

One subset of the literature on the post-industrial city investigates efforts at revitalisation as cities internationally endeavoured to find new footings and to establish and market their place locally and globally, but within shifting social, technological, political and economic conditions as well as in an increasingly competitive urban milieu. Several major strands emerge including one considering ways in which cities became 'entrepreneurial',⁴ underwent exceptional transformation as, for example, in the cases of Barcelona and Bilbao, 'reinvented themselves to attract new flows of capital investment',⁵ and rebranded, marketed and sold themselves and their distinctive profile and place qualities.

Another significant strand in the urban revitalisation literature is scholarship on regeneration through cultural planning which draws on both existing and new work on the culture of cities; on the production and consumption of design, and on their interrelationship and contributions to what Julier labels the 'culture of design';⁶ on the development of the creative city and of cultural quarters; and on design-led approaches to urban regeneration.⁷ Contributing to the last strand is yet another literature on the creative industries and design economy and their pivotal role in cultural regeneration, defined by Wansborough and Mageean as a process of 'restoring and improving the quality of urban life through the enhancement and development of the unique characteristics of a place and its people'.⁸ The contribution of universities to cultural regeneration is considered within this strand, for example by Dempsey,⁹ as is their part in a larger conversation about 'urban renewal and the university'.¹⁰ The last topic has been considered from a variety of perspectives including the opportunity not only for physical



improvement of degraded areas and their environs but also the social, economic, cultural, educational and local environmental sustainability benefits of a university's presence for a city, its residents and wider community.¹¹

This paper responds to the topic of universities and urban and cultural regeneration exploring it through a case study of the part played by the University of South Australia's City West campus in Adelaide, South Australia, to the revitalisation of the area where the campus has been purpose-built from the late 1990s. In particular, the paper introduces the West End Urban Development Strategy (1996) and a related drive for arts led urban renewal and a cultural quarter in Adelaide's West End. The discussion draws out selected outcomes and initial conclusions about the contributions of the City West campus to both initiatives.

Adelaide and its West End

Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia, was established as a colony of Britain in 1836. The selected site was located on the traditional lands of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains. The physical plan was for a place laid out using the conventional grid form and divided into two sectors, each with sites allocated for public squares; parklands enveloped the whole entity. One sector was on the northern and one on the southern side of a river later named the River Torrens. The earliest settlement was in the northwest corner of the part to the north of the river. Densely populated from the outset, it quickly assumed a mixed-use character. Its geographical location contributed to the name by which it was (and is) popularly known – the West End.

Hindley Street, a key east-west vehicular and pedestrian thoroughfare in the West End, was the city's principal commercial street in the founding decades of the colony. It was bisected by Morphett Street that ran north-south and over time created a physical divide between its (Hindley Street's) western and eastern ends. Following World War Two, Hindley Street was a focal place for migrants to establish retail and café businesses. Through the 1960s and 1970s, while retaining a retail function, Hindley Street East and the section of the street immediately west of Morphett Street increasingly emerged as the city's premier entertainment and tourist destination with hotels, nightclubs, cinemas and amusement parlours being the key attractions.¹² Meanwhile, the street's western end continued to accommodate industry, entertainment, commercial and residential functions. As Hindley Street East refocused its uses, it assumed a chameleon-like guise, presenting a generally sedate side by day, but a less desirable side by night. Incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour were common.¹³

Hindley Street's reputation was further tarnished, and enhanced, as the century wore on due to diminishing investment in property maintenance and upgrades by owners most of whom were private individuals and often absentee landlords rather than resident traders, and by degradation of the public realm.¹⁴ With its image and private investment at a low point, several factors coalesced in the mid 1990s to generate a renewed vision and an urban revitalisation strategy for Hindley Street and the West End at large. The principal factor was 'the decision of the University of South Australia to build its City West Campus in the heart of the precinct.'¹⁵

The University of South Australia

The University of South Australia (UniSA) was established in 1991. A product of the era of the Unified National System (1988-1996) in Australian tertiary education, UniSA was born through the amalgamation of several existing institutions. Significant space constraints on its existing city campus forced the UniSA Council to look for accommodation alternatives and in 1993 it decided to build a brand new campus in the West End.¹⁶ The selected site was immediately west of Morphett Street and adjacent to a recently opened arts complex that utilised heritage listed buildings as well as new structures (Figure 1). The complex included the Lion Arts Centre, the Jam Factory with studios for craft practitioners and a retail outlet, the offices and gallery of the Experimental Art Foundation and two cinemas.



Figure 1: Aerial view Adelaide west c1994 showing location of UniSA City West campus, middle lower left.



A mix of privately owned warehouses, retail outlets, restaurants and public entertainment places in various physical states occupied the proposed campus site.¹⁷ Some owners elected to retain their properties so the new campus was planned around them. In February 1997 UniSA moved into eight purpose-designed buildings with the intention of expanding the campus footprint in future years, a process that continues two decades later.¹⁸ Two major streets, North Terrace, the city's cultural boulevard and the northern boundary of the central business district, and Hindley Street bounded the campus (Figure 2). Its frontage was to North Terrace. Due to security concerns, the campus was secured by gates, which were locked after hours, and gave it a 'fortress' like appearance.¹⁹

The opening of UniSA's City West campus Stage One brought approximately 5,000 additional people to the West End. Amongst them were students and staff of the Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design.²⁰ Although the Faculty's entire Visual Art academic staff and student cohort did not move to City West until the completion of Stage Two in 2005, their imminent presence would lend partial weight to the late 1990s rationale for an arts and cultural quarter in the West End. Ahead of the consolidation of Visual Arts on the City West campus, however, UniSA's Art Museum (from 2007 the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art) moved to the city from its suburban location at Underdale, about 5 kilometres west of the city centre, to a former warehouse on a site earmarked for the Stage Two development. The warehouse fronted North Terrace and was refurbished specifically for the Art Museum's use. The Museum's relocation not only 'breathed new life into its programs' but also pointed to a cultural role for UniSA, and to the opportunity for it to engage with audiences and communities beyond those traditionally associated with universities.²¹

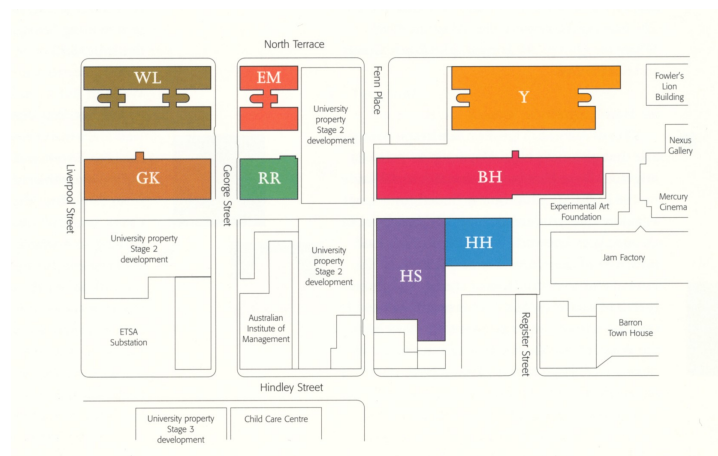


Figure 2: City West campus plan showing location of new buildings and future proposed development, the location of the existing arts complex and sites retained by private owners.

West End Urban Development Strategy

The Adelaide City Council commissioned local firm HASSELL to prepare the West End Urban Development Strategy that was finalised in 1996. Its brief was to develop a process for co-ordinating proposed and future public and private investment in the West End.²² Although the particular driver was UniSA's decision to move to the precinct, there were others. Firstly, TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Light Square, an existing neighbouring provider of tertiary education, commenced a substantial expansion of its premises and also announced that it planned to construct a new building for a Centre for the Performing Arts two blocks to the south-east of the City West site. Secondly, various state government and Adelaide City Council strategic programmes were in train as part of a larger vision, sometimes referred to as 'the "globalisation" of Adelaide',²³ to promote Adelaide to national and international business, as well as tourist, markets. One was a review of the City of Adelaide Plan that had guided Adelaide's development since 1976. Another was the Adelaide 21 Project that focused on the regeneration of the city centre and related sites like North Terrace.²⁴ One component of its vision was of Adelaide as 'The City of Creative Imagination' in which 'the creative industries' were promoted and developed, an ambition that became significant in shaping the state and local government's view of the West End of the future.²⁵ Thirdly amongst the other drivers for the West End Urban Development Strategy were 'the pressing issues within the Precinct: progressive dis-investment, poor image, declining population [and] under-developed private landholdings and the public realm'.²⁶ A related imperative was the appropriate management of social issues and behavioural problems associated mainly with the locality's places of public entertainment.



HASSELL carried out extensive consultation to produce the West End Urban Development Strategy. It identified the key agencies and stakeholders and employed surveys and workshops with specific foci and target groups as the main means to elicit information about perceptions of the West End; identify its strengths; suggest improvements; propose opportunities for its economic development; and to prepare a vision statement, and its underpinning strategies and actions, and establish key directions for the strategy's future implementation.²⁷ Representatives of UniSA were closely involved in the consultation. The Vision that emerged from the process explained, ambitiously in terms of the time frame, that:

By the year 2000, the West End Precinct, Hindley Street and its environs will have international recognition as a special area within the City. It will be recognised for its creativity, education excellence, its renewed sense of community pride and its contribution to the City's economic revitalisation. It will have achieved this through problem solving, leadership, collaboration, risk taking, investment and innovation.²⁸

To guide the Adelaide City Council in implementing the West End revitalisation Strategy, the consultants proposed an 'integrated strategic framework' based on ten broad objectives. These related to: the image of and access to the precinct; the creation of a cohesive social, business and education community; the provision of safe and affordable inner city residential accommodation; recognition of the key economic drivers for precinct revitalisation being professional development for management, application of information technology and delivery of performing and visual arts; creative approaches to precinct governance and management; the revitalisation of old buildings, removal of 'poor/obsolete development', and the introduction of new streetscapes to enhance the built environment; recognition of the history and heritage of the area in any redevelopment programmes; revitalisation being driven by local, state and federal government partnerships; and the commitment of the beneficiaries of the precinct's revitalisation to ownership of that process.²⁹ The West End Urban Development Strategy Final Report considered all of the objectives in detail providing current contextual information and setting goals, implementation strategies and priority actions for each.

The Arts and UniSA in the West End Urban Development Strategy

The Final Report was peppered with references to the UniSA City West campus along with recommendations as to how its presence could be optimised 'to maximise the benefits'³⁰ to the West End from economic, urban design, urban art, precinct image and property development perspectives. The consultants argued in part that 'The Arts and Education will be strong factors in the revitalisation of the Precinct and will complement the existing business community.'³¹ A section of the economic development discussion focused on practical ways in which that could occur. One was for a 'World Centre for Training in Performing and Visual Arts'. A set of strategies for achieving that goal centred on various proposed collaborations including a forum between the Adelaide City Council, UniSA, the proposed Centre for the Performing Arts, organisations in the existing arts complex adjacent to the City West campus, as well as appropriate existing businesses in Hindley Street and the West End. Potential indicative actions were to co-develop proposals, for example for new galleries and performance venues in the precinct, and to co-campaign for the Adelaide Festival and Adelaide Fringe offices to re-locate to the West End.

The urban art section made various mentions of the opportunity to work with the Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design to address the general absence of public art in the precinct.³² Recommendations about ways in which UniSA students could contribute included through the installation of art works at significant spots in the local streetscape and at entry points to the City West campus, murals on buildings, temporary sculpture installations, and the establishment of a permanent open air gallery via a partnership with the Art Gallery of South Australia and the Adelaide City Council.

West End Urban Development Strategy: urban renewal outcomes

The West End Urban Development Strategy was described as 'a comprehensive initiative to address social, economic and physical issues in the West End'.³³ It was well received not only by the Council but also by the state government and local community including business, individual and institutional interests represented by the Adelaide West End Association. Adelaide City Council approved it in 1996. The processes of developing and implementing the Strategy created considerable momentum not only within the City Council but also within state government departments and in the arts sector generally.

Several reports were commissioned: a crime prevention report for the West End; a tenancy plan to improve the vacancy rate (29% in 1997) on Hindley Street and to achieve a balanced mix of 'shopping, education and entertainment';³⁴ an urban design concept plan to better integrate Hindley Street East and nearby Light Square; and a strategy for accommodating people who lived in boarding and rooming houses in the West End and who may have been displaced as the precinct was redeveloped.³⁵ Amongst outcomes that flowed from the reports, the Adelaide City Council allocated significant capital works funding to effect urban design improvements including



paving, lighting and tree planting in Hindley Street and Light Square. It also instigated a West End building improvement programme in addition to its Heritage Incentive Scheme. The improvement programme led to the restoration of the façade of West's Coffee Palace, a local heritage place with significant presence on Hindley Street East (Figure 3).³⁶ Additionally, through the endeavours of the City Council's West End Strategic Taskforce, attention was directed to the management of licensed premises. The Hindley Street tenancy mix was altered and the number of tattoo and pinball parlours and motorcycle shops was reduced markedly.³⁷



Figure 3: Hindley Street East, Adelaide, South Australia c.1984. West's Coffee Palace is 19th century red brick building on left

West End arts and cultural quarter

In 1999, as the West End Urban Development Strategy was being implemented, the Adelaide City Council and South Australian Government jointly launched an Arts Led Urban Renewal initiative for the West End.³⁸ By then other government as well as privately funded new commercial and hotel accommodation projects and urban renewal schemes were underway on North Terrace neighbouring the West End and in the Riverbank (River Torrens) precinct a short walk away (Figure 4). Also, the first stage of a report for the West End Arts Co-location Project, commissioned to ascertain the demand for and capacity to accommodate artists moving in to the West End, was complete and had confirmed the availability of appropriate venues.³⁹

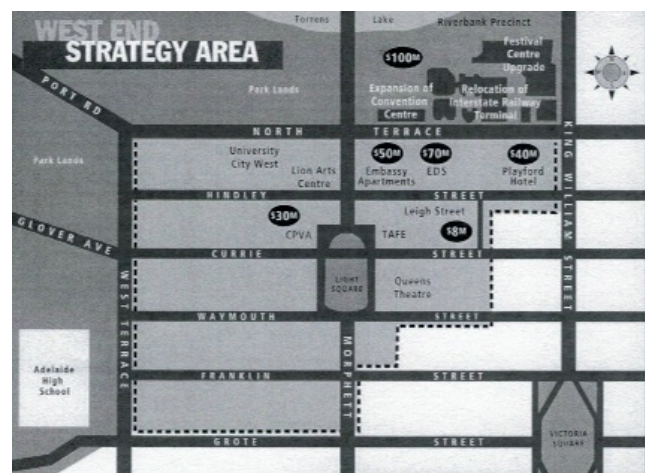


Figure 4: West End Arts Led Urban Renewal Initiative, Strategy Area, showing existing location and cost of new building development in the vicinity of the West End.



Additionally, by the time that the Arts Led Urban Renewal initiative was announced, several prominent arts related organisations and entities had moved into the West End, amongst them the Adelaide Festival and Fringe Festival offices and the Community Arts Network. The state government department Arts SA, comprising 60 staff, was poised to relocate to the restored and refurbished West's Coffee Palace. Before long, 'the largest employer of artists in the state', the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, would take up residence, too, in rehearsal and recording studios in a former cinema.⁴⁰ The momentum for renewal was fuelled as well by Shop@rt, a program of exhibitions in the windows of vacant shops in the West End, regular festivals and an arts market and a substantial redevelopment of heritage buildings and the public realm in Leigh Street, which connected Hindley Street with major roads to its north and south.⁴¹

Pointing to the existing and growing 'critical mass' of arts-based organisations, agencies, networks and infrastructure in Hindley Street East, as well as to the presence on the western side of Morphett Street of education institutions UniSA and TAFE, and respectively their Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design and Centre for Performing Arts, the South Australian Government and the Adelaide City Council expressed their aspiration to 'create a precinct for artists' in the West End.⁴² They cited arts and cultural quarters in international cities in Europe, Canada and the United States as examples of what could be achieved.⁴³ But the arts led renewal of the West End did not occur as envisaged. By 2002, three years after the launch of the initiative, it was clear that 'momentum ... [had] ground to a halt and [in 2004] the current trend ... [was] for artists to leave the area.'⁴⁴ This situation occurred despite the survival of various existing venues for cultural activities and the opening of some new ones, cultural events continuing, and artists and designers, arts organisations and providers of tertiary education in the arts having their bases on or near Hindley Street.

Montgomery has evaluated and investigated reasons for the demise of the Arts Led Urban Renewal initiative and refers to a number of structural and policy factors. These include the type of day and night-time activities that occurred on and in the vicinity of Hindley Street and the fact that they were not perceived as 'complementary'; the street's 'less savoury' night-time image; private ownership of a significant number of premises and, despite the existence of a tenancy management plan, artists' inability to pay the prices charged by private landlords; and the absence of 'specific enterprise or development programmes for the arts and cultural industries in South Australia', and of an 'overall West End cultural development or arts programme' and consequently of marketing and audience development for the arts in the West End.⁴⁵ Regarding public investment in the arts in South Australia, in a 2007 interview Greg Mackie, local arts champion and an influential independent bookshop owner in the West End, reflected on the reality of emerging and competing challenges for government like health care, alluded to the current situation and foreshadowed a future decline, since realised, in public investment in the arts in South Australia.⁴⁶

Conclusion

This paper has explored the topic of universities and urban and cultural regeneration through a case study of the role of the University of South Australia's City West campus in the revitalisation of Adelaide's West End in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The paper introduced the West End Urban Development Strategy (1996) and an Arts Led Urban Renewal initiative (1999) that included a vision for an arts and cultural quarter in the West End. Following are initial conclusions about the contributions of the City West campus to these endeavours.

The South Australian Government and the Adelaide City Council regarded the substantial financial commitment of the University of South Australia in Adelaide's West End as a critical stimulus to encourage future investment in that part of the city. Their confidence in that prospect led the City Council to implement a multi-pronged urban revitalisation strategy which, among other outcomes, aimed to improve the public realm, tackle safety concerns, address the negative image of Hindley Street, and promote community collaborations and partnerships that would benefit the precinct from social, economic, educational and tourism perspectives. As a result of the strategy, various public realm improvements were achieved but shifting the image of Hindley Street was far more problematic. Indeed, more than a decade later, one commentator observed that the east end of the street was being referred to locally as a 'wild west warzone'.⁴⁷ UniSA has continued to invest in the precinct on the western side of Morphett Street. In the last decade in particular it has expanded its footprint to the south side of Hindley Street and the north side of North Terrace (Figure 5). The South Australian Government and the University of Adelaide have invested also in the City West vicinity in a bio-medical precinct that occupies an extensive area on the north side of North Terrace. These new developments have brought thousands more people to the area. They have led to the extension of an existing tram line to provide public transport to the doors of each of the major institutions and they have been a catalyst for many new businesses, mostly eateries, on Hindley Street and North Terrace.



Figure 5: North Terrace looking west from Morphett Street showing UniSA City West campus (opened 1997) left and Cancer Research Building right (opened 2018) and University of Adelaide Medical School (opened 2017), middle right. The new Royal Adelaide Hospital (not in view) (opened 2017) is to the west of the Medical School.

The location of the Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design at City West was perceived as presenting an opportunity for staff and students associated with its various programmes to engage collaboratively with arts organisations and entities located in the precinct. Such collaborations continue to flourish for example with its near neighbours including the Jam Factory. Montgomery noted that ‘The presence of so many design and arts students was seen as a significant opportunity for the growth of new creative businesses and also for smaller-scale leisure and retail.’⁴⁸ And the Faculty’s staff and students and the presence of the Art Museum were counted amongst the ‘critical mass’ that helped convince the Adelaide City Council and the South Australian Government of the viability of an arts and cultural quarter in the West End. However, in reality, in UniSA’s early years at City West, students spent the minimum time on campus. Outside of designated study commitments there was little in the way of amenities to hold them at the university or in its environs. ‘The campus was merely a functional location; a place for study, the precinct: a place to park the car. Student engagement with their surroundings was minimal’⁴⁹ Perceived and actual physical deterrents emerged, too, in relation to accessing the creative premises and activities on Hindley Street East. Although not far from them geographically, the university campus and the complex containing the Lion Arts Centre, Jam Factory and other arts organisations were (and are) separated from them by Morphett Street. A major road carrying six lanes of traffic, Morphett Street, was (and is) like ‘a wall’ preventing easy and fluid access within the precinct.⁵⁰

Recent developments at and in the environs of UniSA’s City West campus suggest that the campus has contributed to a gradual process of physical revitalisation of the West End and most especially of Hindley Street and North Terrace west of Morphett Street. Since UniSA moved to City West, staff and students associated with its Architecture, Design and Visual Arts programs have engaged in various ways with arts and cultural opportunities in the West End and wider city precincts. The recent formation of the School of Creative Industries at UniSA and its potential relocation to City West raises the possibility of establishing a substantial and diverse critical mass of creative people and associated activities in and around Hindley Street West. In time, that may give cause to revisit the idea of an arts and cultural quarter in Adelaide’s West End.

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Figure 1: Messenger Press Album, State Library of South Australia B71876/138.

Figure 2: University of South Australia. *City West Campus* (Adelaide: Public Affairs Office, UniSA, 1997): np.

Figure 3: Whitelock, Derrick. *Adelaide: From Colony to Jubilee A Sense of Difference* (Adelaide: Savaas Publishing, 1985): np.

Figure 4: City of Adelaide, Adelaide West End, Arts SA, "West End Arts Led Urban Renewal", 1999, 3.

Figure 5: Photographer Christine Garnaut, 2018.