PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE PRIVATE PLAZAS IN CENTRAL MELBOURNE

AMENDMENT C308 SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSIS CITY OF MELBOURNE

INTRODUCTION

Response to Submissions

This research report was prepared in response to submissions received to the exhibition of Amendment C308: Urban Design in the Central City and Southbank.

The report specifically focuses on the following provision within the proposed Design Development Overlay Schedule 1 (DDO1):

Retain a minimum of 50% of any existing publicly accessible private plaza oriented to a main street or street that contributes to reducing pedestrian congestion or where there is good potential through retrofit and repurposing to achieve a high quality space with opportunities for stationary activity.

A summary of the submissions relevant to this provision are outlined below:

 This requirement makes no distinction between the qualities of the existing plazas within the Hoddle Grid, ie whether all existing plazas are of a quality worthy of protection.

- Clarification is sought on whether this provision calls for a 50% retention of the existing plaza as it is or 50% of the existing plaza area.
- The provision fails to recognise that there may be circumstances where built form on or above existing plazas would achieve a superior outcome when compared with the protection of 50% of an existing plaza.
- The requirement to retain a minimum 50% of existing publicly accessible private plazas demands the provision of public open space on private land, which albeit discretionary, removes the level playing field for negotiation.
- The publicly accessible private plazas requirement inhibits development and places a burden on any future redevelopment efforts.

Responses to these submissions were presented to the Future Melbourne Committee on 20 November, 2018. This additional report was prepared for the Panel to form a part of the response to submissions.



The enduring value of private plazas

Since the 1960's, publicly accessible private plazas have provided a critical public amenity to the Central City, alleviating congestion on footpaths and providing opportunities for stationary activity.

Currently, opportunities for Council to deliver new public open spaces in the Central City are limited to the conversion of existing road space or through public acquisition of private land at full market rate. These options present significant limitations to address the increasing demand placed on the City's footpaths and limited network of open spaces.

In light of a rapidly growing population and constraints to delivering new public open spaces, the strategic imperative of retaining any existing publicly accessible private plazas is heightened.

The provision within Amendment C308 builds upon an array of past and concurrent City of Melbourne initiatives and studies that highlight the enduring value of publicly accessible private plazas in the Central City. These include:

- Open Space Strategy (2012)
- Places for People Study (2015)
- Improving the Amenity of Small Public Spaces (2018)

For further reading on the history and value of publicly accessible private plazas refer to the Synthesis Report for Amendment C308 (2018).

DDO1 definition of private plazas

The terminology section in the proposed DDO1 provides the following definition of a publicly accessible private plaza:

publicly accessible private plazas means a privately owned space provided and maintained by the property owner for public use.*

 * The terms plaza, private plaza, and publicly accessible private plaza are used interchangeably in this report.

Supplementary analysis and testing

Building upon the analysis and investigation conducted as part of the Synthesis Report (2018), this report contains supplementary analysis and research on the historic retention of existing publicly accessible private plazas in the Central City and Southbank.

The structure and components of the document are as follows:

- Identification of existing plazas
- Identification of plaza by status
- Analysis of redeveloped plazas
- Conclusions
- Appendix: Case Studies

IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING PLAZAS

List of existing private plazas (27)

- 114 William Street (Former Qantas House) 1976
- 140 William Street (Former BHP House) 1972
- 1 Spring Street (Shell House) 1989
- 222 Exhibition Street 1988
- 300 Exhibition Street (Telstra) 1982
- 452 Flinders Street (Riverside Plaza) 1993
- 500 Collins Street 1973
- 120 Collins Street 1991
- 607 Bourke Street 1990
- 360 Collins Street (Collins Wales House) 1978
- 500 Bourke Street (National Bank House) 1978
- 45 William Street (Former Wang House) 1983
- 440 Collins Street (Royal Insurance Centre) 1965
- 575 Bourke Street 1987
- 530 Collins Street (Former Stock Exchange) 1991
- 461 Bourke Street 1969
- 160 Queen Street (Elder House) 1964
- 595 Collins Street (Former Transport House) 1976

- 447 Collins Street (Collins Arch) under construction
- 555 Bourke Street (St James) 1969
- 555 Collins Street (Former Enterprise House) 1975
- 200 Queen Street 1982
- 50 Franklin Street 1965
- 520 Collins Street 1975
- 266-310 Elizabeth Street (St. Francis Church) 1879
- 635-653 Bourke Street (St. Augustines Church) 1869
- 440 Collins Street (Royal Insurance Centre) 1965

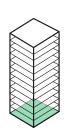
Note: setbacks, colonnades, and covered atrium or forecourts are exempt from the DDO1 provision, and are not included in this list



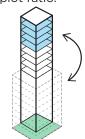
Map data source: Based on the Local Liveability Study 2015 (External Open Space); modified by author to exclude minor setbacks, colonnades, and covered atrium or forecourts.

A majority of private plazas were delivered under the historic plot-ratio regime (1964-1999)

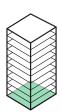
- The analysis of plaza locations and era of construction updates and refines the 'External Spaces Audit' conducted during Local Liveability 2015 Study. Historic planning records were then sought for each space, to obtain a date of plaza delivery, to correlate with the applicable planning regime, and to understand if any subsequent refubishment had taken place.
- With the exception of the 2 churches, all of the remaining 25 private plazas identified in this study were delivered between 1964 and 1993. This time frame coincides with the operation of the former plot-ratio regime which shaped built form outcomes between 1964 and 1999. For further detail on the history of plot ratio refer to the Ramsay Consulting's 'A history of Built Form Control in Central Melbourne' which was exhibited with C270.
- This research confirms the findings that a majority of private plazas were delivered either as a redistribution of floor area for additional height and views or as a bonus item to achieve the maximum allowable plot ratio.



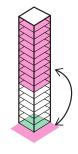
12:1 plot ratio 100% site coverage



12:1 plot ratio 60% site coverage



10:1 plot ratio 100% site coverage



12:1 bonus ratio unlockedPublic open space delivery

Prior to 1999 Plazas were either delivered through a reallocation of a maximum Plot Ratio, or through a specific Bonus provision articulated within the Planning Scheme, as seen in the City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974.

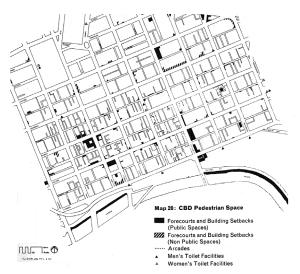
A majority of plazas are situated in high pedestrian activity areas

 The locations of existing private plazas within the study area demonstrate a strong correlation with areas of high pedestrian activity, especially along Bourke and Collins Street West in the commercial district.



Pedestrian crowding at intersections (source: City of Melbourne Walking Plan 2014-2017).

 Of the 27 identified private plazas in the Central City, more than half (15) are located within the area between Bourke and Little Collins from North to South, and Queen and Spencer from East to West.



The 1974 City of Melbourne Strategy Plan shows a large number of Forecourts and Building Setbacks (Public Spaces) located in the western end of the Bourke and Collins Street. (Source: City Of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974, page 93).

IDENTIFICATION OF PLAZA BY STATUS

Plazas with heritage status (6)

- 114 William Street (Former Qantas House) 1976
- 140 William Street (Former BHP House) 1972
- 1 Spring Street (Shell House) 1989
- 440 Collins Street (Royal Insurance Centre) 1965
- 266-310 Elizabeth Street (St. Francis Church) 1879
- 635-653 Bourke Street (St. Augustines Church) 1869

Plazas protected under legal agreement (2)

- 600 Collins Street (Mandarin Oriental) permit approved
- 447 Collins Street (Collins Arch) under construction

No heritage or legal status (19)

- 222 Exhibition Street 1988
- 300 Exhibition Street (Telstra) 1982
- 452 Flinders Street (Riverside Plaza) 1993
- 500 Collins Street 1973
- 120 Collins Street 1991
- 607 Bourke Street 1990

- 360 Collins Street (Collins Wales House) 1978
- 500 Bourke Street (National Bank House) 1978
- 45 William Street (Former Wang House) 1983
- 575 Bourke Street 1987
- 530 Collins Street (Former Stock Exchange) 1991
- 461 Bourke Street 1969
- 160 Queen Street (Elder House) 1964
- 595 Collins Street (Former Transport House) 1976
- 555 Bourke Street (St James) 1969
- 555 Collins Street (Former Enterprise House) 1975
- 200 Queen Street 1982
- 50 Franklin Street 1965
- 520 Collins Street 1975



Map data source: Based on the Local Liveability Study 2015 (External Open Space); modified by author to exclude minor setbacks, colonnades, and covered atrium or forecourts.

Factors influencing the redevelopment of private plazas

Existing restrictions on the redevelopment of publicly accessible private plazas include the following:



Heritage listed

(Victorian Heritage Register/ Heritage Overlay)

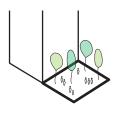
These restrictions apply to plazas that are included in the statement of significance and often a key architectural component of the heritage listed development.



Legal Agreement

(Permit Approval Condition)

This restriction applies to proposed plazas that were secured and protected through a legal agreement under Section 173 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.



No protection

Publicly accessible private plazas that do not have any heritage or legal restrictions. The proposed DDO1 provision to retain 50% of existing private plazas applies to private plazas with no existing protection, and is not intended to override existing heritage protection or legal agreements where they may apply.

Examples such as 1 Spring Street or 140 William Street are already protected under both the Victorian Heritage Register and the Heritage Overlay in the Melbourne Planning Scheme. This status includes significant restrictions to the redevelopment to the built form and its associated plazas.

Some of the recently approved permits on strategically significant sites, such as 447 Collins or 600 Collins Street, have incorporated legal agreements to protect private plazas from redevelopment or subsequent amendments to permit approvals. The DDO1 requirement should not impact this status.

The rest of the existing publicly accessible private plazas in the Central City fall under the last category of unprotected plazas. While many of these were delivered under a site plot-ratio regime as a public benefit bonus enabling greater development yield, these public contributions were not legally protected and have become subject to infill redevelopment following the removal of the site plot ratio in the late 1990s.

The number of affected properties under the proposed DDO1 provision

19 properties /27 total*

*The 27 total includes private plazas that already have heritage or legal protection. This figure is based on data collated from the Development Activity Monitor (City of Melbourne) and the Local Liveability Study 2015 (City of Melbourne).

ANALYSIS OF REDEVELOPED PLAZAS

List of redeveloped private plazas (13)

Completed (7)

- 360 Collins Street (Collins Wales House)
- 500 Bourke Street (National Bank House)
- 555 Bourke Street (St. James Plaza)
- 525 Collins Street (Rialto)
- 50 Franklin Street (Former Qantas Building)
- 500 Collins Street
- 470 Collins Street

Under construction/permit approved (6)

- 80 Collins Street (Former Nauru House)
- 595 Collins Street (Former Transport House)
- 555 Collins Street (Former Enterprise House)
- 447 Collins Street (Former AXA Centre/Collins Arch)
- 330 Collins Street
- 600 Collins Street*

*Permit unlikely to be acted upon.

Methodology

Two separate categories of public space retention are measured:

- 1. Retained Publicly Accessible Private Plaza Space (%) defined as publicly accessible private plazas that are oriented to a main street or street and are 'open to the sky'; calculations include uncovered areas with vegetation (lawns, planters, etc.), circulation spaces (stairs/ramps), and outdoor dining areas within private property boundaries. Calculations do not include covered undercroft areas or forecourts, car park and services.
- 2. Retained Publicly Accessible Space (%) defined as all other publicly accessible spaces that do not fall under category 1. Calculations include covered atriums, forecourts, undercrofts, private laneways, and any other publicly accessible space that is not oriented to a main street or street.

Data Sources

Given the reliance on the City of Melbourne GIS mapping system and available permit application drawings, the calculations should be considered approximate and do not reflect the accuracy of site survey data.

- Endorsed Plans (architectural drawings)
- GiS Data of Building Footprint and Property Boundary
- Historic aerial images from Neapmap (Compass)



Map data source: Based on the Local Liveability Study 2015 (External Open Space); modified by author

Full retention of existing plazas is very rare

- Of the 12 redeveloped plazas identified in the study, only 2 developments (50 Franklin, 555 Collins) have retained at least 100% of existing plaza area.
- In the case of 555 Collins, the approved scheme for redevelopment of the site includes an increase of open to the sky plaza relative to the existing area. This is the only development within the scope of study that is proposing to provide a greater area for a private plaza than existing or previous conditions. This development has been sold and is pending a new office proposal.

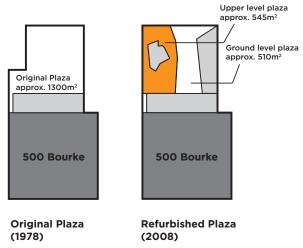
Successful redevelopments have balanced activation with retention of open space

- A successfully redeveloped private plaza typically provides enhanced activity, safety, and intuitive way-finding through the site. It establishes active edges along the built form to extend life beyond the facade, and pays particular attention to the scale and proportions of the open space to ensure the perception of 'publicness'.
- The examples of 360 Collins and 500 Bourke Street demonstrate successful cases of balancing commercial activation with the retention of open to the sky plazas. Both redevelopments have achieved the 50% (52% for 360 Collins, 81% for 500 Bourke) retention rate while significantly enhancing activity and legibility of connections through site. In both instances, additional building structures were limited to no taller than 2 storeys in adopting a 'pavilion-style' approach which responds to street context and human scale.



Before and after images of 360 Collins Street

• 500 Bourke, in particular, is successful in providing additional spatial depth through an elevated plaza space (in addition to the ground floor plaza) that has direct visual connections to Little Bourke Street. It is noted that while the area of the ground floor plaza alone (approximately 40% of the existing plaza area) does not meet the 50% provision, the additional open space in the upper level enables a total retention of approx. 81% of the existing area.



 Of the 12 redeveloped plazas identified in the study, 4 have adopted a partial retention of private plaza area. The % of retention among these 4 redevelopments range between 33% to 81%, with St. James complex having the lowest rate of retention and 500 Bourke Street having the highest.

Plazas with a small area (less than 250m²) have a low rate of retention

- Of the 12 redeveloped plazas that were analysed in this study, 3 could be classified as being smaller in scale and more akin to an 'uncovered setback or forecourt' (less than 250m²) rather than a traditional 'corporate plaza' type.
- All 3 of these redevelopments had a 0% retention rate with additional building structures being built to the edges of the property boundary.

EXTENT OF PLAZA RETENTION

1. Full retention of plaza following refurbishment

Construct Year	Refurbish Year	Building Name	Address	Site Area	Retained Plaza Space % (open to sky)	Retained Publicly Accessible Space % (incl. covered)	
1965	2018	Former Qantas Bldg	50 Franklin	2210m ²	100%	100%	

2. Partial retention of plaza following ground floor addition/refurbishment

1969	2013	St. James Plaza	555 Bourke	7580m²	33%	71%
1973	2008	500 Collins	500 Collins	2813m²	48%	48%
1978	2008	National Bank House	500 Bourke	4335m ²	81%	81%
1978	2016	Collins Wales House	360 Collins	4270m²	52%	52%

3. Zero retention of plaza following ground floor addition/refurbishment

1963	Permit Approved	330 Collins	330 Collins	1000m²	0%	0%
1970	2014	470 Collins	470 Collins	1467m²	0%	0%
1976	2019	Transport House	595 Collins	3750m ²	0%	27%
1977	2019	Former Nauru House	80 Collins	4750m²	0%	33%

4. New development on site with existing plaza

1965	2019	AXA Centre/ Collins Arch	447 Collins	5900m²	27%	94%
1975	Permit Approved	Enterprise House	555 Collins	2050m²	155%	200%
1986	2016	Rialto	525 Collins	6000m²	0%	130%

CONCLUSIONS

Clearly define private plazas as being 'open to the sky'

- In a number of instances, a redevelopment of an existing plaza had resulted in comparable or higher retention of all publicly accessible space (including covered atrium and laneways) but minimal or no retention of publicly accessible plazas that are open to the sky.
- Examples such as Rialto and the former
 Nauru House redevelopment demonstrate the
 importance of distinguishing open to the sky
 plazas from other forms of publicly accessible
 spaces. It is critical for plazas to have a good
 sunlight amenity and to be oriented to the
 streets to ensure a strong sense of publicness
 and accessibility.

Identify the qualitative aspects of a successful plaza

- Examples such as 500 Collins (48% retention)
 demonstrate that the mere retention of
 existing area does not guarantee a high quality
 refurbished plaza. It is important to highlight
 the qualitative spatial attributes of a successful
 plaza which would include the following
 considerations:
 - · Active edges
 - Opportunities for stationary activity
 - · A sense of publicness and accessibility
 - Landscaping
 - Sunlight/daylight
- This approach of identifying the critical qualitative elements of a successful private plaza is consistent with the DDO1 approach to guide the design of pedestrian connections.

Maintain flexibility and discretion to allow for alternative responses

- The 50% discretionary requirement is a necessary starting point to elevate the need for protection. The discretionary nature of this provision will balance the need for protection with a case-by-case approach that will consider an array of contextual and site-specific issues.
- For example, in instances where an open to the sky plaza is not viable due to wind and other site-specific considerations, there is sufficient discretion to support an alternative response through a rigorous Design Review process.
- Similarly, a two-tier plaza approach, such as the one adopted in 500 Bourke Street, could be supported if clear sight lines and accessibility from the street are maintained. Having discretion enables consideration of this alternative-type offer which in effect boosted the retention from 40% to 81% of the original plaza.

Exempt plazas that are heritage-listed

- The primary purpose of the DDO1's plaza provision is to ensure the protection of publicly accessible private open spaces which lack protection in the current planning scheme.
- The proposed DDO1 controls are not intended to overrule any heritage status or existing legal agreements to deliver and retain publicly accessible private plazas. It is imperative that this provision does not have the unintended consequences of unlocking restrictions on recent plaza delivery or placing pressure on significant heritage assets.
- Accordingly, the provision should be framed to ensure that plazas under existing heritage or legal protection are excluded from the 50% allowance through a carefully framed exemption.

APPENDIX:	CASE	STUDIE	ES
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ANALYSIS OF PLAZA RETENTION IN REDEVELOPED PROPERTIES

FORMER QANTAS BUILDING 50 FRANKLIN STREET

Property Information

• Address: 50 Franklin Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1965

• Refurbishment year: 2018

• Design team: Jackson Architecture

• Site area: 2213m²

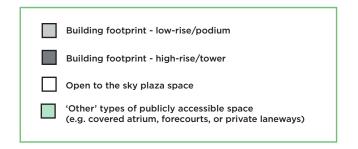
• Existing plaza area: approx. 320m²

• New plaza area: approx. 320m²

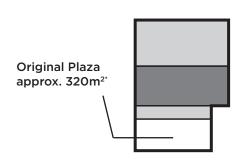




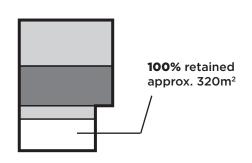
100%







Original Plaza (1965)



Refurbished Plaza (2018)

ST JAMES PLAZA 555 BOURKE STREET

Property Information

• Address: 555 Bourke Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1969

• Refurbishment year: 2014

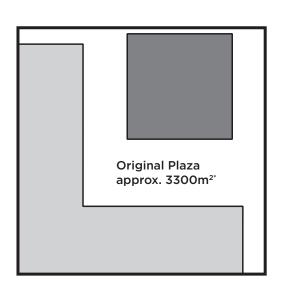
• Design team: METIER3 Architects

• Site area: 7700m²

• Existing plaza area: approx. 3300m²

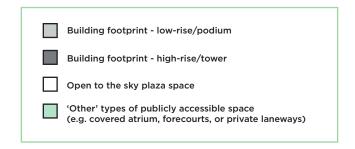
• New plaza area: approx. 1100m² (Covered atrium space: approx. 810m²

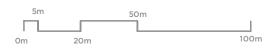


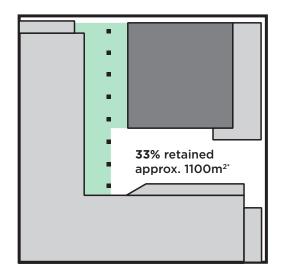


Original Plaza (1969)









Refurbished Plaza (2014)

NATIONAL BANK HOUSE 500 BOURKE STREET

Property Information

• Address: 494-512 Bourke Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1978

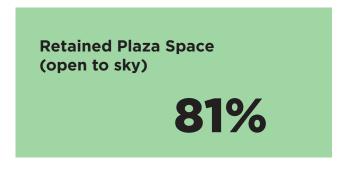
• Refurbishment year: 2008

• Design team: John Wardle Architects

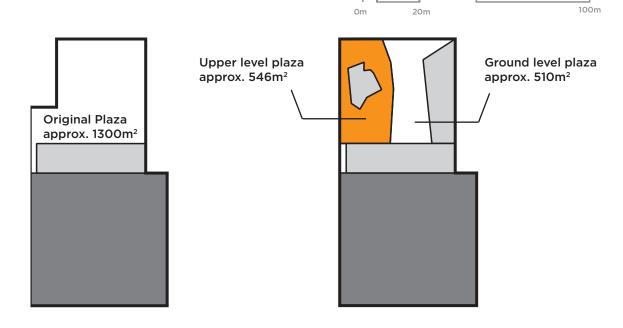
• Site area: 4335m2

• Existing plaza area: approx. 1300m2

• New plaza area: approx. 1056m2 (510m2 on ground floor + 546m2 on first floor)







Original Plaza (1978)

Refurbished Plaza (2008)

COLLINS WALES HOUSE 360 COLLINS STREET

Property Information

• Address: 360 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1978

• Refurbishment year: 2016

• Design team: Bates Smart and Oculus

• Site area: 4270m²

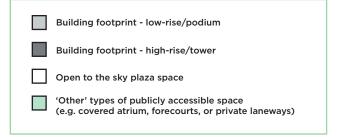
• Existing plaza area: approx. 1265m²

• New plaza area: approx. 655m²

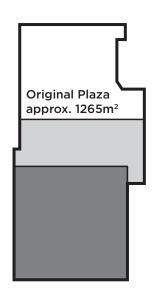


Retained Plaza Space (open to sky)

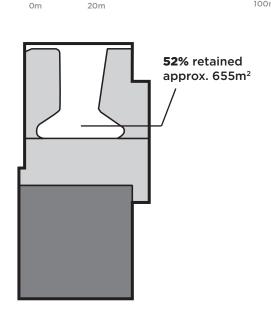
52%



5m



Original Plaza (1978)



50m

Refurbished Plaza (2016)

500 COLLINS 500 COLLINS STREET

Property Information

• Address: 500 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1973

• Refurbishment year: 2008

• Design team: Peddle Thorp Architects

• Site area: 2813m2

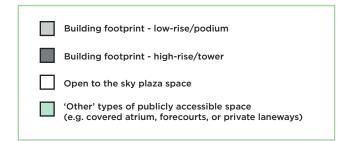
• Existing plaza area: approx. 900m2

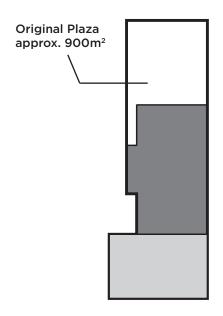
• New plaza area: approx. 435m2



Retained Plaza Space (open to sky)

48%





Original Plaza (1973)



Refurbished Plaza (2008)

470 COLLINS STREET

Property Information

• Address: 468-478 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1970

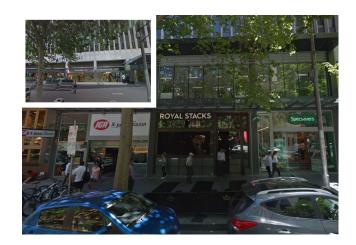
• Refurbishment year: 2014

• Design team: Doig Architecture

• Site area: 1467m²

• Existing plaza area: approx. 212m²

• New plaza area: approx. Om²

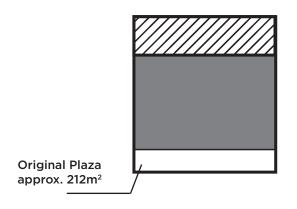


Retained Plaza Space (open to sky)

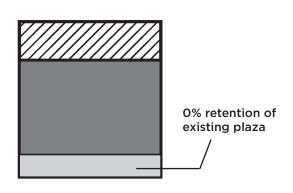
0%







Original Plaza (1970)



Refurbished Plaza (2014)

330 COLLINS 330 COLLINS STREET

Property Information

• Address: 330 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1963

• Refurbishment year: Permit Approved

• Design team: Unknown

• Site area: 1000m²

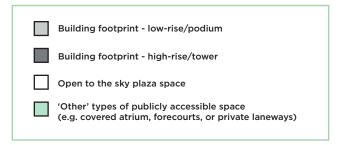
• Existing plaza area: approx. 135m²

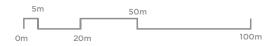
• New plaza area: approx. Om²

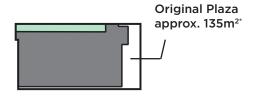


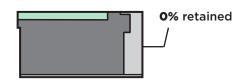
Retained Plaza Space (open to sky)

0%









Original Plaza (1978)

Proposed Refurbished Plaza

FORMER TRANSPORT HOUSE 595 COLLINS STREET

Property Information

• Address: 595 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1976

• Refurbishment year: 2019

• Design team: Peddle Thorp Architects

• Site area: 3750m²

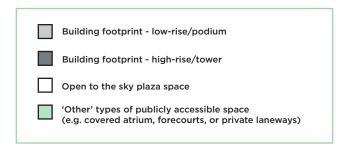
• Existing plaza area: approx. 400m²

• New plaza area: approx. Om²

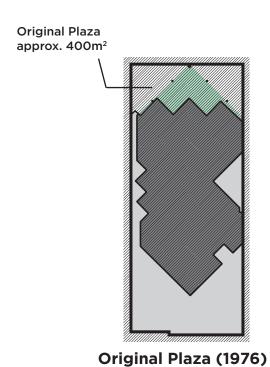
• Covered publicly accessible space: approx. 100m²

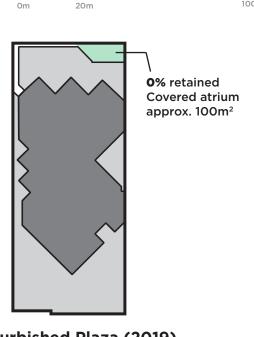






5m





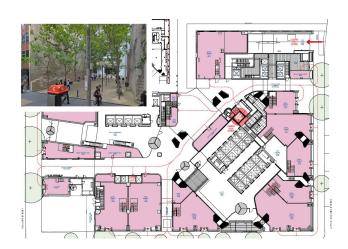
50m

Refurbished Plaza (2019)

FORMER NAURU HOUSE 80 COLLINS STREET

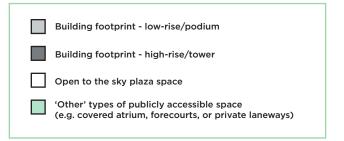
Property Information

- Address: 80 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000
- Original year built: 1977
- Refurbishment year: Permit Approved
- Site area: 5025m²
- Existing plaza area: approx. 2200m²
- New plaza area: approx. Om²
- Covered publicly accessible space: approx. 710m²



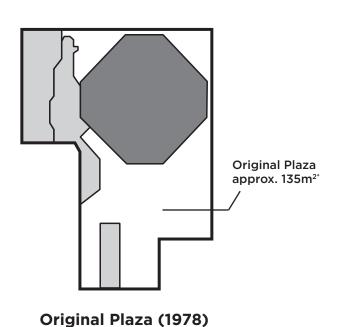
Retained Plaza Space (open to sky)

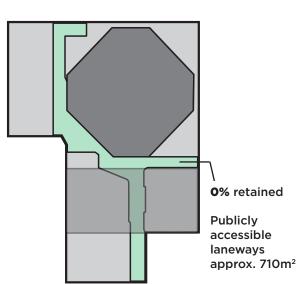
0%



5m

20m





Refurbished Plaza (2019)

100m

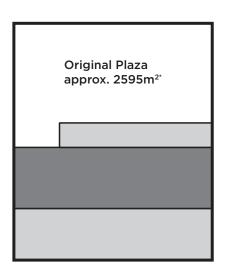
COLLINS ARCH 447 COLLINS STREET

Property Information

- Address: 447 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000
- Original year built:
- Refurbishment year: 2019 (expected)
- Design team: Woods Baggot & SHoP Architects
- Site area: 5900m²
- Existing plaza area: approx. 2595m²
- New plaza area: approx. 700m²
- Covered publicly accessible space: approx. 2440m²

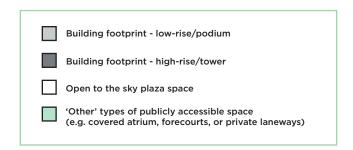


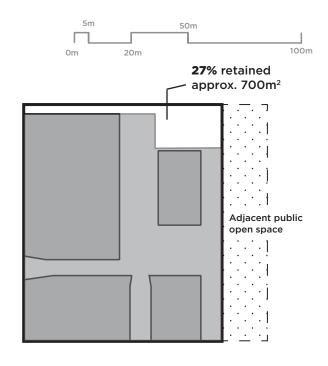
^{*} Applicant contributed 50% of funds to the development of Market Street park off-site.



Original Plaza (1978)





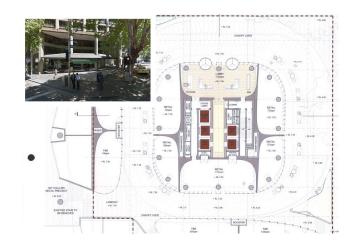


Refurbished Plaza (2016)

FORMER ENTERPRISE HOUSE 555 COLLINS STREET

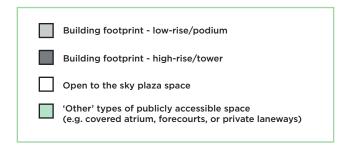
Property Information

- Address: 555 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000
- Original year built: 1975
- Refurbishment year: Permit Approved
- Site area: 2050m²
- Existing plaza area: approx. 180m²
- New plaza area: approx. 280m²
- Covered publicly accessible space: approx. 1085m



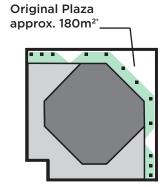
Retained Plaza Space (open to sky)

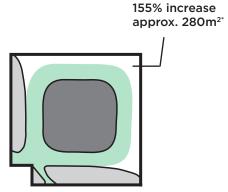
155%





5m





Original Plaza (1975)

Proposed Refurbished Plaza

RIALTO 525 COLLINS STREET

Property Information

• Address: 525 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000

• Original year built: 1986

• Refurbishment year: 2016

• Design team: Woods Bagot

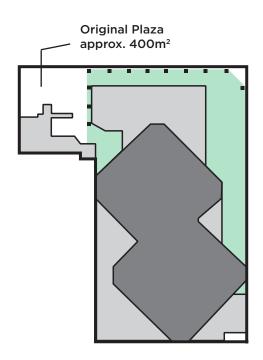
• Site area: 6000m²

• Existing plaza area: approx. 400m²

• New plaza area: approx. Om²

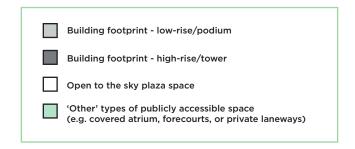
• Covered publicly accessible space: approx. 2300m²

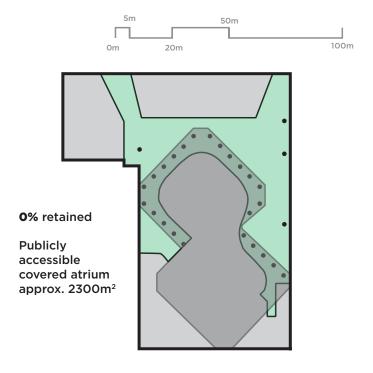




Original Plaza (1978)







Refurbished Plaza (2016)