

The final design for Bradfield City Centre’s Central Park, recently released for exhibition, seeks to honour Country and “set the bar for the new city of Bradfield”, according to ASPECT Studios.

The landscape architecture and urban design firm designed the competition-winning scheme in collaboration with architect Collins and Turner, cultural consultant and Baramadagal woman of the Dharug Nation Jayne Christian, curatorial collaborator from the Wiradjuri Nation Emily McDaniel, artist Janet Laurence, structural engineers Eckersley O’Callaghan and lighting designer Steensen Varming. Other collaborators joined the team as the design developed.



Central Park is the first key piece of Bradfield’s public domain

Australia’s newest city centre

The New South Wales Government has pitched the wider development of Bradfield as “Australia’s newest city centre”. Situated on the doorstep of the future Western Sydney International Airport, it’s set to be a cyber-secure, advanced, green and connected hub for advanced industries.

Central Park will comprise two hectares at the heart of Bradfield City Centre and sits on the land of the Cabrogal clan of the Dharug nation. It will be the main civic centre, gathering place and welcoming point for visitors as they arrive from Bradfield Metro Station, a five-minute ride from the new airport.

The planned park seeks to give form to the identity of Bradfield City Centre, providing a place of respite and recreation for the new city as it takes shape.

ASPECT Studios director Tamara Donnellan says her team is excited to support the delivery of this first key piece of Bradfield’s public domain. “It will be the green heart, where people can breathe, re-energise and immerse themselves in Country,” she says.



Central Park will serve as a civic centre and gathering place

Country, Custodians and community

According to Donnellan, Central Park will “set the bar” for the new city of Bradfield.

“To do this, it must be true to its place and work for Country, Custodians and community,” she says.

The vision has included the intent to engage meaningfully with the long-term Dharug nation-building project – not just for today but with consideration of the next seven generations.

First Nations collaborators McDaniel and Christian were integral to the development of the ideas and design as part of the broader competition team, and remain key members of the team ongoing.

What will Dharug people require in seven generations? To tackle this question and honour Country, McDaniel and Christian devised key values in response to inputs from Traditional Custodians and Community.

Value one – Recognition

The first key value McDaniel and Christian put forward was ‘recognition’.

“Custodial connection is unbroken and must be acknowledged,” the pair explains. Central Park had to be of service and use to the Cabrogal of the Dharug Nation. It also had a duty to reflect the peoples and ancestors that have been connected to this place now and into the future.

“The nature of this Country must be understood and reflected within Central Park,” Christian says.

Value two – Connectivity

McDaniel and Christian say the third value, connectivity of Country, means connectivity of all things – waterscapes, landscapes, skyscapes and humanscapes and non-human kin.

“We recognise that this place is connected to everything beyond its bounds and part of the bigger ecology,” says Christian.

“This park doesn’t have to be everything to everyone and do everything. It is our responsibility to consider existing landmarks, waterways and stories in neighbouring areas, along with future development, to foster respectful connectedness and avoid duplication.”



Connectivity of all aspects of Country was integral to the design

Value three – Reciprocity

The third value was reciprocity, i.e.: “What is taken, is given back”.

“This sentiment enables the centring of sustainability, regeneration and preservation,” says Christian.

“It is the acknowledgement of cultural and intellectual property, and ensuring First Nations voices inform all aspects of the design. It is ensuring the human experience of the site through participation and inclusion.”

Implementing these key values into the design

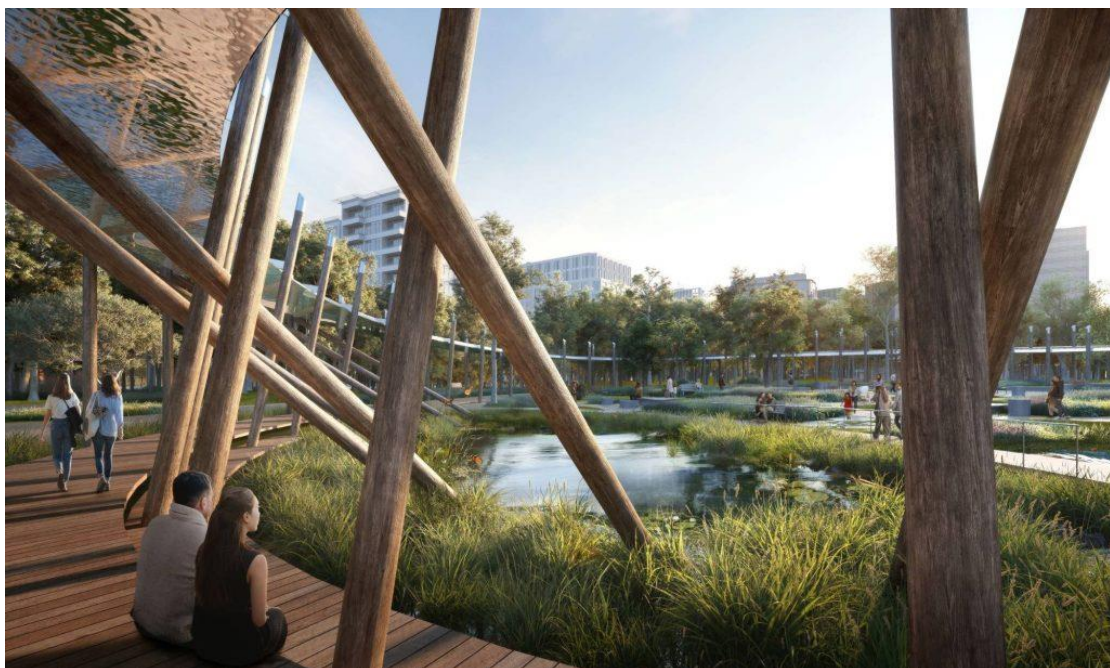
In recognition of the Cumberland Plain, a forested edge with a layered canopy contains Central Park and rich understory planting surrounds two major clearings.



A forested edge and rich understory surrounds two major clearings

The use of native grasses, trees and shrubs “reinvigorates” the Cumberland Plain, according to Christian. The choice of colours also reflect Country, while meandering paths, respectful use of water and natural materials for infrastructure honour Country.

Another signature element of the park is the ‘Skyring’, which features reclaimed timber and a reflective soffit. Skyring aims to create a unique threshold that frames a space for ceremony, contemplation and habitat. The textured native landscape within opens to celebrate Sky Country, making space to engage with all elements of Country.



Skyring opens to celebrate Sky Country

On the opposite side of the park is another clearing called the ‘Gathering Green’. This accommodates large-scale gatherings and events surrounded by the shady cool copse area.

The core of the park is the ‘Interwoven Heart’ co-designed with a team of Dharug weavers. The Woven Play and Woven Shelters aim to create a connected experience that is not limited to children. These structures sit within plantings designed to support the practice of weaving and cultural knowledge sharing.



Woven Play, co-designed with Dharug weavers

A space for healing

Central Park has been designed to cater to the needs of an emerging local community, and enhance the cultural and environmental fabric of the entire region.

ASPECT sees this park as a place that “heals, shields, nurtures” – a “place that is sensitively designed and supported by innovative technology to best care for the park and its users, adapt to a changing climate and a new and growing city”, says Donnellan.

“A place that can be quiet — but also welcome crowds for ceremony, cultural exchange and events.”

Balancing these social and natural elements has guided the design team to set up the park for what Donnellan hopes is long-term success.



Renders supplied by ASPECT Studios.

<https://www.australiandesignreview.com/architecture/bradfield-city-centre-central-park-the-green-heart-of-a-new-city>