Midland Redevelopment Authority

Celebrating 10 years
“The celebration of 10 years of the Midland Redevelopment Authority is an appropriate time to consider the significant achievements of this organisation.”

Founding Chairman, Ian Laurance (left) & Chief Executive Officer Kieran Kinsella.
To commemorate this 10 year milestone the MRA has produced this impressive publication. Centred around 10 themes that depict the MRA’s approach, the publication looks to both the past and the future through the eyes of 10 of the MRA’s close partners.

Just 10 years ago, Midland was a very different place. Unemployment was a major issue, infrastructure was ageing, investment confidence in the area was lacking and morale was generally low.

The creation of the MRA in 2000 gave Midland new confidence in its future and, as the MRA began its planning work, a vision for a prosperous metropolis took shape. The regeneration of the Midland city-centre as the MRA’s initial priority saw its transformation into a mixed-use precinct on par with the best urban regeneration projects throughout Australia. Parallel work on the remediation of the 80ha Midland Railway Workshops saw contamination removed, buildings restored and the creation of Midland’s first dress-circle residential estate at Woodbridge Lakes.

Central to all of this has been the emphasis that the MRA has placed on securing enterprise partners to bring new life and employment to Midland.

By encouraging local creative communities, and helping to fashion a new commercial and cultural ethos, these partners have been a critical element in effecting attitudinal change throughout the city.

With the work of the MRA now two thirds complete, I acknowledge and thank founding chairman Ian Laurance, the current chairman Dr Fred Affleck and the MRA Board members past and present, all of whom have guided the work of the Authority with wisdom and insight. Charged with refining the vision and bringing it to life, CEO Kieran Kinsella and the MRA staff have been tireless in their efforts and passionate in their commitment.

The Midland of today and tomorrow is positive and optimistic about its future. The changes that have occurred over the past decade have been remarkable and provide inspiration for the century ahead – a century in which the former Midland Railway Workshops will again be a driver of the local economy and society, but with the industrial past replaced by a sustainable knowledge and service economy focus.

HON JOHN DAY, MLA

WA MINISTER FOR PLANNING; CULTURE AND THE ARTS.
“What’s happening now and over the next few years will change Midland and this region forever and Midland will become the next big city for the greater Perth area. Forget Joondalup, forget Fremantle. Midland has the people, the catchment area, the infrastructure, and the community, we’re right in the middle of it all. It is Midland’s time.”

SANDRA WALLIS
CEO, SWAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
A *charrette* was the name of the small cart used by Parisian art students in the 1800s to carry their designs and drawings to the examiner at the end of their course, which is how the word has come to be used for a process in which interested parties submit their ideas into a cooperative design exercise.

The Midland Charrette in 1997 brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to hammer out a shared vision for the future of their city. From those few concentrated days of workshops and brainstorming emerged what became the blueprint for the transformation that followed.

Building on the strong community ownership of a vision for the future that the Charrette created, the MRA has had an unwavering commitment to ensuring the community continues to share and shape the revitalisation dream and passion. Just as importantly, the MRA has worked to ensure that it has become part of the Midland community.

Midland and the broader region’s many communities and interest groups have been actively engaged in the revitalisation project through visioning exercises, forums, face to face liaison, use of local media, newsletters and reference groups.

The city is now brimming with confidence as local investors, developers, businesses and residents commit to the journey ahead and become a formidable army of ambassadors. As word spreads of the opportunities that the modern Midland presents, so too does the wonderful sense of optimism and anticipation within the local communities.
“The Workshops were a self-contained city. You could obtain food from the canteen building, ranging from an onsite-made pie or pastie to a sit-down, one-course meal for the cost of one sixpence. You did have to provide your own knife and fork. You could get a hair cut for two bob in Block 1. You could hire a dance band. I was aware of three dance bands in the Workshops.”
When the Workshops lunch time whistle blew, Midland set its clocks. When the 5pm siren went, Midland put the kettle on. For over ninety years, the city rang to the sounds of industry – the clatter of rivetting, the thud of steam hammers and the crash of iron foundries.

One of the driving visions for the project has therefore been to bring back the voices, vibrancy and vitality that the Workshops created – albeit with a modern 21st Century twist.

At their peak, the Midland Railway Workshops employed more workers than any other employer in Western Australia. They have come to be recognised as a cornerstone of the State’s industrial era. Midland was a city built on heavy engineering, with a fine tradition of craftsmanship, of innovation and of training in skills – skills that had been handed down from generation to generation. This proud history has been at the core of the restoration and interpretation of The Workshops. It has driven the form of public art, landscaping and the adaptation and re-use of the buildings themselves.

To stand inside the restored Timekeeper’s Hut, to read the names on the Workers’ Wall, to look up at the outstretched arm of the Peace Memorial, is to feel the energy and atmosphere of the place – to gain a sense of the enduring contribution made by the Workshops, an energy that is being both celebrated and reharnessed.

Midland is changing, but it will never forget where it came from.
“Suddenly it all changed. Ten, fifteen years ago, you’d say Midland didn’t have a future. Now, you can feel the difference, the enthusiasm in the air. There’s no limit to what can happen here, no bounds at all – it’s all happening.”
Perhaps the greatest achievement of the MRA, and the principal reason for its success, has been the partnerships that it has fostered and maintained with the various stakeholder groups that brought about its existence. The organisations that helped formulate the concept plan for a redeveloped Midland have remained active and enthusiastic participants in the process, committed to realising a joint vision of a vibrant and exciting city.

As the project has matured and grown, so too have those partnerships – both the formal ones with stakeholders such as the City of Swan and the creative industry body, FORM – and the less formal but equally important alliances and relationships that underpin the project’s unique place in the community’s heart.

A willingness to invest broadly in Midland and the region through joint projects and funding has ensured that many groups and organisations share in the opportunities and benefits the MRA has delivered.
“It was a fascinating challenge for me, the most satisfying and professionally challenging of my career. Generations of my family had been associated with the Workshops. In the evenings I’d talk to my dad about things we discovered on the site – he’d be telling me how they got there!”

Insight 4

DR GREG MILNER
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST
Times change, and industrial practices with them. One hundred years ago, techniques for the disposal of waste materials amounted to little more than digging a large hole in a quiet corner of the operation and filling it over time with building rubble, scrap, diesel fuel, ash and clinker. Out of sight, out of mind was the order of the day, creating huge environmental remediation challenges for the MRA.

The last decade has generated significant, positive environmental change with a huge commitment to cleaning up the Workshops site and parts of the city-centre to create exciting spaces for future activity.

The restoration of the Coal Dam and the creation of Coal Dam Park, the establishment of Juniper Gardens and the Workshops remediation program which involved removing acres of asbestos roofs and a major soil clean-up, are just some of the inspiring environmental remediation programs that have been managed by the MRA.

The installation of 201 solar panels to create the sixty kilowatt Midland Atelier Solar Power System – the largest roof mounted system in the southern hemisphere – means that a significant proportion of energy needs will be supplied by renewables.

An MRA imperative has been the generation of new jobs and economic activity to support and nurture existing communities and to build viable new communities. This has entailed the ceaseless pursuit of a truly sustainable future for Midland through the building of a knowledge economy, the creation of healthy, usable spaces and a land sale program designed to achieve the best possible outcomes for Midland.
“I went to look at the space, and the first thing that inspired me was the shadow of the gum leaves on the ground, so I tried to create something that would cast shadows, shadows that would move through the day as the sun moves.”
Most great places have established art collections. The difference here in Midland is that the city’s art isn’t locked away in galleries reserved for hush-toned visitors – it’s out there on the street, seen every day by workers hurrying to the office, children on the way to school and shoppers waiting for a bus.

Why? Because it’s part of what makes Midland distinctly different. It’s a place that has battled hard to reinvent itself, a place that is proud of its achievements, and is keen to celebrate and share them.

There’s nothing fragile here – the works are robust, strong and built to last. Robert Juniper’s “Tree Forms” are solid, heavy bronzes, forged and rivetted with heat and hammers. The Workers’ Wall is honest brick and mortar; Kath Wheatley’s pole people figures are witty amalgams of scrap metal and new steel, while Warren Langley’s homage to lost chimneystacks tower over an embryonic city square, twin beacons proclaiming the rebirth of this treasured space.

The materials – metal plate and pipe – and the methods – welding and casting – will be familiar to generations of Midland’s artisans. That’s no coincidence, the works were deliberately commissioned to help reflect and define the special qualities that distinguish the city – hard work, well-earned play, and a bright future.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| 2000 | MRA Board appointed with Ian Laurance as inaugural Chair.  
 |       | $42 million Police Operations Support Facility concept plan launched.  
 |       | MRA Concept Plan launched. |
| 2001 | $5.04 million contract for the construction of access roads, services and landscaping awarded.  
 |       | MRA moves into the restored Railway Institute building.  
 |       | MRA's heritage brochure published, describing the history of the site, significant buildings and structures. |
| 2002 | Yelverton Drive-Clayton Street-Lloyd Street road network opened.  
 |       | The MRA's first permanent public art installations by Kath Wheatley are launched and installation commences.  
 |       | The restored Railway Institute Building officially opened by the Premier, Hon Dr Geoff Gallop MLA.  
 |       | Helena Street rail crossing completed and officially opened by the Premier, Dr Geoff Gallop, at the Midland Alive! Open Day on 3 November that attracted 80,000 people to the city centre. |
| 2003 | Australian Opera Studio’s new headquarters in the Midland Junction School officially opened.  
 |       | Dedication of the Workers’ Wall attended by approximately 3,500 people.  
 |       | Commencement of construction of the Keane Street extension between The Crescent and Great Eastern Highway in early May 2003 to create two substantial redevelopment sites in the city centre.  
 |       | First bulky goods site sold. |
| 2004 | Midland Railway Workshops centenary year sees the Workshops’ named an official WA heritage icon.  
 |       | Transport expert Dr Fred Affleck takes over as MRA Chairman from Ian Laurance.  
 |       | A tribute to Paul Robeson concert held commemorating the 1960 visit to the Workshops by the famous singer and human-rights activist.  
 |       | MRA’s first land auction in The Crescent is a success with all lots sold for up to 20% above reserve price. |
 |       | All 13 lots in the first release at Woodbridge Lakes sold.  
 |       | Midland Railway Workshops Interpretive Centre opened.  
 |       | Release of the MRA’s heritage strategy that guides all work on the Railway Workshops site.  
<p>|       | WA Government announces plans to build a new state-of-the-art 326 bed general hospital at the Workshops. |</p>
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<td>The opening of Juniper Gardens, including unveiling of its centrepiece, a $5 million sculpture by renowned artist Robert Juniper.</td>
<td>The MRA and the City of Swan join forces in a major planning review called Midland 2017 – The Challenge to ensure the city-centre’s sustainable growth and development over the next ten years.</td>
<td>Work commences to progress a proposal by the Singapore-based Raffles Education Corporation to establish a university at The Workshops.</td>
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<td>Stage one of the Midland Atelier design studio in the Pattern Shop opened.</td>
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<td>Completion of the $14.245 million Heritage Conservation Project to prepare the main Railway Workshops buildings for adaptive reuse.</td>
<td>Permanent listing of the Midland Railway Workshops on the State Register of Heritage Places.</td>
<td>The Workshops newest and largest piece of public art the “Tower of Memory” launched.</td>
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<td>Coal Dam Park at Woodbridge Lakes wins several top landscape and design awards.</td>
<td>Woodbridge Lakes wins Urban Development Institute of Australia (WA) annual awards for excellence.</td>
<td>Agreement reached with the City of Swan on the ‘normalisation’ and transitioned hand over of public open space to the local authority.</td>
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"You wake up in the morning you look out, it’s just beautiful. The people who live here, I talk to them, they say ‘You can’t get better than this.’

What more could you want?"
It sounds dress circle, and that’s exactly what it is. The prestigious Woodbridge Lakes Estate development has created an entirely new community of over five hundred people in a cluster of top quality family homes, just walking distance from the railway station and amenities in the new look city-centre.

Conceived from the outset as the jewel in Midland’s housing crown, it is no longer necessary to leave Midland to have a quality property in beautiful surroundings. The development has introduced prestigious two-storey homes to Midland, the small lots creating medium density living within the largely unaltered treescape.

Now a picture-postcard settlement with million dollar homes, the houses nestle around the quaintly named Coal Dam, a water feature originally created to store combustible coal stocks during the railway works heyday. Instead of trying to mimic a natural water feature, the developers opted to retain the industrial heritage features of the lake – an inspired decision that makes Woodbridge Lakes an integral component of the urban renewal, rather than just an isolated housing pocket.

With a serene ambience traditionally associated with established properties in the expensive western suburbs, the estate is part of a program to create a much more diverse range of housing choices within the city – a range that now also includes modern and attractive apartment-style opportunities coming on stream nearby.
“I was excited because we were growing our business and we needed a dedicated training facility, so here was an opportunity to not only bring back to life a heritage asset, but to do so in a way that was very respectful of its past.”

NIGEL OAKEY
CEO DÔME CAFE GROUP

Insight 7
The heart of a city isn’t something you’ll find marked on the map, but everyone knows where it is. It’s that area where people come together to meet, to eat and drink, to celebrate, or to just sit and take stock. Historically, a series of by-pass operations had severely damaged Midland’s heart.

Redevelopment of The Crescent and the creation of the Juniper Gardens precinct have reunified Midland’s traditional main street with the high-performing retail precinct to the city-centre’s east, traffic has been slowed and the area made friendlier for pedestrians. Midland now has a new heart that mixes inner-city apartments with green spaces, cultural life and activity around the clock.

Named after the artist who created the dominant central sculpture that defines the space, Juniper Gardens exhibits a carefully fashioned balance of conservation and urban renewal – a mixed-use area of coffee shops, restaurants, businesses and inner-city dwellings which is beginning to put the pulse back into Midland.

Finding imaginative new uses for the heritage buildings fringing the site was the key to creating a space that had relevance and authenticity – a space that has evolved with an intact history rather than being imposed.

Transformation of The Crescent from a soulless car park and a focal point for antisocial behaviour into a beautiful tree-lined boulevard with wide pavements, narrow frontage, contemporary mixed-use buildings of three and four storeys and shop-top housing has reunified the “old” and “new” parts of the city-centre.

Juniper Gardens and The Crescent have shown just what can be done in the city-centre, achieving residential densities never dreamed of a decade ago for Midland. This urban renewal project has given local developers the canvas to prove their abilities and has led to the resurgence of investment confidence in Midland.
"You have to understand these buildings – once you understand why they are, what they are, only then can you can begin to tackle them from an architectural and engineering perspective. You look at the limitations and you say, how can we use these to the benefit of a future development? What are the positives here?"
The heritage value is unquestioned, but finding new uses for a tall single-storey building with the dimensions of a small cathedral is no easy task. When there are three large workshops and a number of ancillary structures to be considered, the challenges can be daunting.

They can’t all be turned into museums, galleries and interpretation centres, and the brief is to create lively and inspiring places for the city, not mothballed relics. The essence of the infrastructure needs to remain, but a resourceful architect will look for ways to turn that into a benefit, rather than seeing it as a constraint.

The approach has been considered and respectful, but not so tentative that the outcomes are unworkable. These are buildings that are meant to be used, to work on the inside as well as the outside.

Solutions have been subtle and sensitive – ‘the refitting of the Pattern Shop as Stage one of Midland Atelier, a creative hub for young designers and artists – or radical, as in the new Police Traffic Centre, where a three storey modern office facility has been installed inside the original brick shell of the Flanging Shop.

But whichever route was taken, the objectives and outcomes have been consistent throughout; breathing life back into these beautiful buildings, maximising their use and creating wealth and enterprise through new economies, attracting the people to make Midland their city.
“My vision is of a creative catalyst for the State – a place that is enriched by its working class roots and the quality of its human capital. It is diverse in nature, playful, resourceful and ultimately innovative in its outlook...”
Creativity is an elusive concept. It can’t be measured or packaged, it can’t be bought and sold. And yet, almost every successful enterprise depends upon it. The employees at the Midland Railway Workshops probably didn’t think of themselves as creative workers, but each innovative solution, each new design, each technological development helped establish the Workshops reputation as a centre of excellence. Today the essential contribution of creativity is acknowledged and valued. In seeking new uses for the Workshops, and in recognition of the processes that contributed to their earlier success, there evolved a commitment to go further, to actively seek out and support individuals and groups to create a new creative nexus in the city.

Creation of Midland Atelier in partnership with FORM has been one of the MRA’s most significant contributions to creativity. The Midland Atelier brings together local and international furniture designers, jewellery and metal craft workers, photographers and multimedia practitioners in a collaborative workshop environment, echoing the strong trades focus of the building’s earlier occupants. The MRA’s efforts to locate the Australian Opera Studio in the city-centre added to the broad range of public and community arts and creative activities helping to define the new Midland. Though now disbanded, the studio set a tone for the redevelopment and has been replaced by the City of Swan operated Midland Junction Arts Centre, providing exhibition, rehearsal and practice spaces for the region’s many artists.

Creativity runs deep through the veins of the redevelopment project, evident in everything from landscaping treatments, to public art, choice of uses and support of community ventures.

Recognition of the creative potential is also a strong element supporting the desire to attract tertiary education providers to Midland. A strong tertiary education presence could transform the city, bringing in young people and generating a flow of inventive and resourceful knowledge workers to satisfy the needs of new industries and services.
“Come and see what we have got and I guarantee you’ll be surprised. My fellow officers visit and they are jealous. It’s a beautiful building with great surrounds.”
Midland lost a large employer when the Railway Workshops closed – consequently one of the principal objectives for the MRA has been the creation of new jobs for Midland.

A key strategy has been to develop new infrastructure. Establishing the Helena Street level crossing and the Keane Street extension have created opportunities for a diverse range of development sites. Midland now has the foundations upon which to build a robust 21st Century economy. Already a combination of new government and private investment has generated major projects and opportunities.

Now two thirds of the way through the project, work in the Midland city-centre is almost complete with new road and pedestrian networks, beautiful landscaping, delightful public art, a civic garden and the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings.

The focus of the MRA’s work is currently the Railway Workshops site. Remediation of the site is substantially complete and new road networks and rail crossings have been built. The fundamentals are now in place for reactivating The Workshops.

Midland’s newest large format retail precinct and the State’s largest Police complex anchor the eastern edge of The Workshops. A major new 326 bed hospital and a super GP clinic are also about to commence construction, providing Midland with a strong health precinct and a foretaste of the vibrant and dynamic economy that is emerging.
“Now is an appropriate time to look back and a wonderful time to look forward.”

Dr Fred Affleck, MRA Chairman
The fruits of the MRA’s efforts are becoming visible, and the city has changed in both form and culture. There is a new-found confidence and energy, with all stakeholder communities enthusiastically embracing the opportunities on offer and working together to create this revitalised city-centre for the region.

The next phase of development will bring in the Midland Health Campus together with a super GP clinic to The Workshops, giving the region not just the medical facilities that a modern city needs, but also valued employers and job opportunities.

Looking further ahead, the redevelopment of the former Midland Livestock Saleyards will create new investment land within the city and stimulate further commercial development, including bulky goods retail outlets and light industrial land uses.

The potential location of tertiary education facilities at The Workshops could also see significant numbers of students living in Midland and studying at The Workshops within the next two decades. The MRA continues to pursue tertiary education providers that will assist to establish Midland as the location of choice for both public and private-sector employers seeking to attract a highly motivated, highly skilled workforce, and creation of a strong knowledge-based economy.

Midland will be a flourishing metropolis catering to a much wider demographic than it has in the past – a cultural destination in its own right with a café dining lifestyle, a night economy and a creative heart. There will be thriving businesses servicing a well-paid workforce with money to spend. Health care for the local community will be of the highest possible quality and there will be world-class educational opportunities on the doorstep.

There will be more reasons to stay in Midland, and fewer to leave. People will talk not just of its proud history, but also its sustainable future, a future that will continue to generate new opportunities and investment for a very long time to come.

It’s a vision that the whole community has taken to heart. There’s a phrase you’ll hear again and again in the city, especially if you make a polite enquiry concerning the hour.

“What’s the time? . . . It’s Midland’s time!”