

Areas for Improvement

One of the major problems with generating business activity in the hotel and tourism market is the ability to deliver new projects in a timely fashion. Currently the planning process for new projects takes between 8-12 months to get approved. This is just within the legislative period and does not include design or any appeals that are made. The BCC and State Government have made comments about trying to get this process more streamlined but to date this has not really occurred. There have been initiatives for new hotel developments in the form of infrastructure charges being reduced but this has not had the impact on the deliverability.

I think that the industry would benefit from some sort of planning task force that could be set up to deal with these types of projects and given the powers to approve projects that met certain criteria, this could be similar to the areas that are governed by Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) in Bowen Hills, Hamilton and Woolloongabba.

The flow on benefits from this happening is the increase in work for a variety of people during the construction of such projects and the ongoing jobs created from running the business on completion.

Positive Experience

The approval process for the TRYP Hotel, Constance Street rooftop bar (UP) was on the whole a positive experience with very few (if any) negatives to mention.

The success of the application is can be attributed to three major factors which are as follows:

1. The quality and cultural appeal of the proposed rooftop bar product itself.
2. Council's support for entertainment uses in this locality which enhance the overall cultural appeal of the Fortitude Valley Entertainment Precinct.
3. Cardno HRP's successful prelodgement negotiations with Council, which allowed for the application to be assed under the favourable Risk Smart application process.
4. The quality of the submitted development application material.

The success of the application process was in part due to our initial negotiations with Council in which we successfully argued for the application to be determined under Council's 'Risk Smart' application process. Risk Smart applications have significantly reduced timeframes and are essentially a self-certification process where approved consultants undertake their own assessment of the proposal and then submit this assessment to Council for approval. Cardno HRP previously underwent an extensive Risk Smart accreditation process with Council in order to be eligible to submit Risk Smart applications.

The application was one of the very rare occasions in which Council has allowed for an impact assessable application to be considered under the Risk Smart process. Acceptance of the application under Risk Smart was due to a combination of Council's encouragement of such uses in this particular precinct and our long standing relationship with the Manager of the Risk Smart Team.

Council's obvious support for vibrant and attractive entertainment uses such as roof top bars had a significant impact on the success of the proposal, as reflected in granting approval for the lodgement of a Risk Smart application. During the initial prelodgement negotiations, it was made clear that Council sought to consolidate this area as the entertainment heart of the City and rooftop bar uses were being actively encouraged in this locality.

The proposed character of the bar and the associated artwork also played an important role in the success of the application process. It was evident that Council viewed the proposal as being consistent with the youth oriented and vibrant urban character of the Fortitude Valley Entertainment Precinct.

From a design perspective, the combined indoor/outdoor layout of the bar ensured that the premises did not simply represent a new 'level' on the building and allowed for the premises to make use of the subtropical Brisbane climate.

Whilst artwork is not necessarily a relevant consideration as part of the town planning process, the inclusion of artwork on the façade of the building consolidated our earlier augments that the proposal sought to be a stand-alone contribution to the cultural landscape of Fortitude Valley rather than simply being an attachment to the approved hotel use.

Overall, the application process was a positive experience that was enhanced by the granting of a favourable application process, a supportive local Council and high quality design outcomes.