

# New building promised 'to be to Parramatta what the Opera House is to the city'

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The proposed design for new civic building in Parramatta. Photo: Supplied

Parramatta has been busy telling everyone it is taking off as Sydney's second CBD – and now it is set to have a spaceship-like building right at its centre.

Councillors on Tuesday night voted to endorse the design of a \$50 million glass building, which will house new council chambers, offices, a library and technology hub.

[The building will be constructed as part of the multibillion-dollar Parramatta Square redevelopment](#) and features a stack of transparent glass with a large screen for public art projections.



The design includes a large screen upon which public art work can be projected. *Photo: Supplied*

Lacoste + Stevenson Architects principal David Stevenson said it will be a "canvas for artistic expression in a way we haven't seen before in a public building in Australia".

While a flood of artist impressions have been released for buildings due to be part of the urban renewal project, construction has only started on one.

But Parramatta Council is sticking by its deadline, with a spokeswoman saying the redevelopment is still expected to be completed by the end of 2019.

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Inside the proposed new building. *Photo: Supplied*



There is a big push within the council to keep the momentum going on the project, [which has been plagued by problems over the years and was initially called Civic Place](#).

While demolition has started on some sites, no major tenant has been finalised for the two main commercial buildings [after the council's courtship of the Commonwealth Bank failed last November](#).

The design of the new civic building was selected by a judging panel and is the work of French firm Manuelle Gautrand Architecture and Australian firms DesignInc and Lacoste + Stevenson.

The building, which will include a public roof garden, will connect with and extend above the locally heritage-listed Parramatta Town Hall.

Lord mayor Paul Garrard said: "It will be to Parramatta what the Opera House is to the city."

Designs have also been selected for two commercial towers with "floating public space in the sky", an at least 70-storey residential tower called Aspire and the 250-metre-long public domain that will [include a flowing water course](#).

Western Sydney University Professor Paul James, who was director of the Cities Programme of the United Nations from 2007 till 2014, said he liked the idea of juxtaposing landmark buildings as part of Parramatta Square.

However, he said, the city needed to ensure the buildings remained properly connected with public spaces.

"The CBD section itself is, I think, in danger of losing its sense of identity and just becoming one of the hollow shells that often cities become," Professor James said.

"Unless you've got connections between buildings and the walking space between them, and all those sorts of things, these become private buildings, nobody goes into them and they simply reach above the landscape."

Professor James said Aspire, [which will go to 90 storeys if it can gain approval from aviation authorities](#), would be unnecessarily tall and out of place in the city.

"The word ridiculous is a good way to think about it ... it becomes a landmark without meaning and its only aspirational dimension is that it reaches towards the sky in a world in which limits are actually a positive thing," he said.

"If all we can do now is aspire to reach the sky, we've lost our sense of what aspiration means."

A development application for the proposed new council building is expected to be lodged by the end of the year.



An artist's impression of the 90-storey Aspire tower.  
*Photo: Bates Smart*