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JV Francis



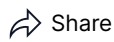
'Glass boxes' or heritage? Rival idea to 'sterile' vision sparks debate



By [Freddie Moffat](#)
June 3 2026 - 5:00am



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Is town character being lost to "glass and concrete boxes"?

An architect's answer is, perhaps unsurprisingly, yes.



 Jiri Lev has sparked discussion for his bold reimagining of what an urban

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Jiri Lev has sparked discussion with his alternative ideas for [Devonport City Council](#)'s Formby Road renewal plan.

Mr Lev's concept swaps out the "sterile cookie-cutter" design from the early visualisations the council put forward in February for one that preserves the "authentic maritime and industrial character" of the city.

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He said his visualisation is not an actual proposal for a new design, but he wanted to "arm people with an idea" and enable residents to "demand more of their public architecture".

"There's always a good lot to be said about the new developments, particularly civic structures that are functional and the community needs them," he said.

"But, particularly in small towns, there is an attitude building at cost of anything and just innovating for the sake of it, but it really all just ends up looking the same.

"If you look at the [paranaple Convention Centre](#), or the hotel across the road, that could be in Melbourne, it could be in Newcastle, it could be in Geelong, it doesn't say anything about a town."

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Mr Lev said he drew upon [older buildings in Devonport](#), such as schools and warehouses, which used local brick which have a specific unique colour.

He said that colour carries a sense of place which keeps a local scene unique.

The concept [released by the council in February](#) depicts two parcels of land planned for redevelopment on Formby Road.

The early concept art for one of the buildings depicts a multistory office building wrapped in glass and plastic panelling.

"Some people commented on my visualisations saying 'this is not going to fit with the new developments down the street', and that's intentional, if you made a mistake you're not going to continue it just to hide it," Mr Lev said.

Mr Lev said the glass-and-plastic designs often come from a low-effort design process and a belief they are cheaper to produce.



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He thinks designs should have an "evidence-based" approach.

"Show the design to a test group, don't give them a written explanation, ask them what the design reminds them of and does it look like Devonport," he said.

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"It should be somewhere where you can easily imagine a bunch of tourists coming to Devonport, having a coffee there and taking a photo.

"I really doubt people are taking pictures in front of the paranple, that's pretty self-evident."

Devonport City Council chief executive Matthew Atkins said the council's [living city masterplan](#), which guides new developments, is "founded on building upon the unique character and strength of Devonport's CBD".

"Maintaining and enhancing Devonport's identity remains an important consideration in planning for the [Formby Road] site, and council is confident the eventual development outcome will make a positive contribution to the city's public realm," he said.

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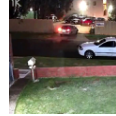
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