

DESIGN COMMONS

Annual Residency



Expression of Interest Guidelines For 2027 Residencies

The Design Commons Annual Residency program offers local designers a dedicated workspace and a supportive environment to develop their practice each calendar year.

Located within Geelong Town Hall, Design Commons is a shared space for research, experimentation, prototyping and exchange across design disciplines. Residents will have the opportunity to work alongside peers, share knowledge, test ideas and connect with Geelong's broader design community.

As a UNESCO City of Design, Geelong provides a unique context for designers to explore ideas connected to place, community, sustainability and innovation.

The residency supports Geelong's commitment to using design to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and to building more sustainable, inclusive and resilient communities. It supports designers to develop their practice while contributing to a vibrant and connected local design ecosystem.



PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Design Commons Annual Residency Program provides local designers with access to dedicated workspace, a supportive peer environment and opportunities to develop their design practice.

The program aims to:

- support designers to develop their individual practice through research, experimentation, prototyping and the development of new ideas;
- provide access to a dedicated workspace within a shared design environment;
- create opportunities for peer exchange, collaboration and knowledge sharing across different design disciplines;
- connect designers with the broader Geelong design ecosystem, including community, industry, education and Council where appropriate;
- provide opportunities for designers to test ideas and explore local questions, opportunities or challenges through design;
- strengthen the visibility, capability and connections of Geelong's design sector; and
- contribute to Geelong's ongoing role as a UNESCO City of Design and the use of design to support more sustainable, inclusive and resilient communities

RESIDENCY MODEL

Residency length: 12 months

Location: Design Commons, Ground Floor South, Geelong Town Hall, 55 Little Malop Street, Geelong VIC 3220

Number of residents: Approximately 4–6 local designers will be selected each year.

Residency focus: The residency provides dedicated time and space for designers to develop their individual practice through research, experimentation, prototyping and the development of new ideas, projects or work.

As part of the shared Design Commons environment, residents will also have opportunities to:

- connect and collaborate with fellow residents and designers across disciplines;
- exchange knowledge and ideas through peer learning and informal critique;
- explore local questions, opportunities or challenges through their design practice;
- connect with community, industry, education and Council where relevant to their practice; and
- participate in public-facing activities or collaborative projects, such as talks, workshops, open studios, exhibitions or other design activities.

As part of the residency, residents will be expected to contribute to opportunities for exchange, collaboration or public engagement. The form this takes will be developed during the residency in response to each resident's practice, interests and the opportunities that emerge, rather than being prescribed as a fixed outcome at the outset.

Residents will have access to studio space and shared facilities at Design Commons, providing a supportive environment to experiment, develop their practice and build connections within Geelong's design community.

WHO CAN APPLY

Applicants may apply as individual designers and creative practitioners whose practice has a clear design focus , or collectives where one lead applicant is nominated.

Applicants should be based in, connected to, or able to demonstrate a meaningful relationship with Greater Geelong or the broader G21 region.

Eligible practices may include, but are not limited to:

- architecture and urban design;
- landscape architecture;
- public space design;
- product and industrial design;
- materials innovation;
- circular economy design;
- digital and interaction design;
- communication and graphic design;
- social and service design;
- environmental or regenerative design;
- fashion, textile or craft-based design;
- creative technology;
- design research;
- participatory community design.

The Design Commons Residency welcomes designers and creative practitioners whose practice has a clear design focus and can contribute to an interdisciplinary cohort.

The program welcomes designers at different career stages. Selection will be based on the strength and potential of the applicant's practice and proposal.

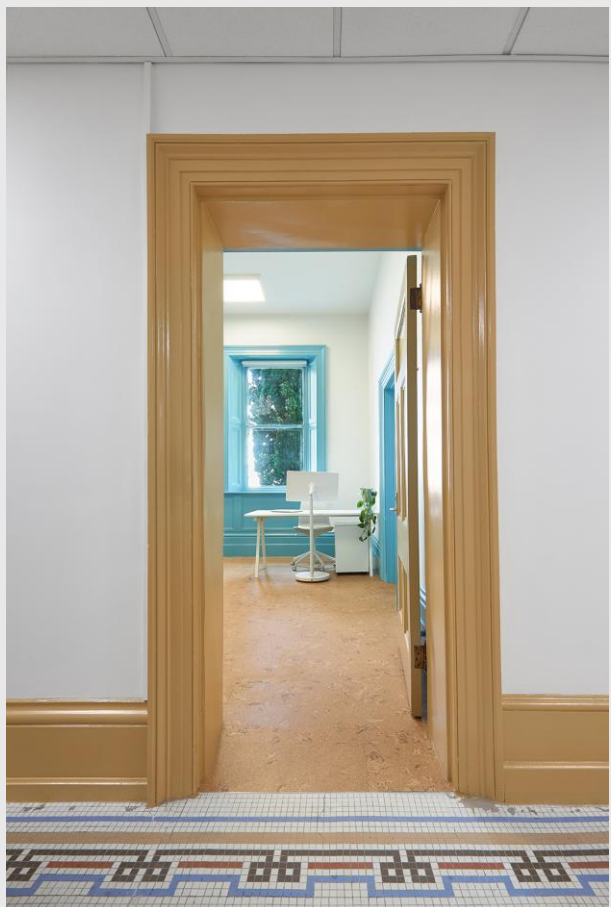
RESIDENCY SUPPORT

Successful residents will receive:

- 12 months' access to dedicated studio space at Design Commons;
- access to shared maker space and collaborative work areas;
- a **\$2,500 annual allowance (GST not applicable)** to support practice development;
- opportunities for peer exchange, collaboration and informal critique;
- access to facilitated professional development;
- opportunities to connect with relevant local community, industry, education and creative sector networks;
- a nominated City contact and program coordination throughout the residency;
- opportunities to participate in relevant design events and activities, including potential opportunities associated with Geelong Design Week; and
- opportunities to present or share work through talks, open studios, exhibitions or other public-facing activities where appropriate.

The City may facilitate connections with relevant internal teams and external partners where appropriate.

Opportunities for collaborative projects and public-facing activities will be dependent on the program and the interests of participating residents.



RESIDENT EXPECTATIONS

Successful applicants will be expected to:

- make regular use of their Design Commons studio space throughout the residency;
- participate in agreed cohort activities, peer sessions and program check-ins;
- use the residency to actively develop their design practice through research, experimentation, prototyping or project development;
- contribute to a positive, respectful and collaborative studio environment;
- participate in opportunities for peer knowledge sharing and exchange;
- contribute to program documentation and evaluation;
- participate in agreed promotional activity, including reasonable use of images and information about their practice and residency;
- comply with City of Greater Geelong site, access, safety and operational requirements; and
- provide evidence of appropriate Public Liability Insurance, where required.

Residents will also be expected to contribute to collaborative or public-facing activity during the residency. This may include workshops, talks, open studios, exhibitions, presentations, Geelong Design Week, design events or other forms of sharing and exchange.

The nature and scale of this contribution will be developed with residents during the program and should be appropriate to their practice and the direction of their residency.

EOI TIMELINE

A suggested EOI timeline is outlined below. Dates can be inserted once the program launch schedule is confirmed.

Milestone	Timeline
EOI Applications Open	Tuesday 6 October 2026
EOI Applications Close	Wednesday 4 November 2026
Notification of Outcome	By Friday 20 November 2026
Site Induction	At least 2 days prior to install
Evaluation Due	Within 14-days of completion

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants will submit an online EOI form. Alternative formats should be available for applicants who experience barriers to written or online submission.

APPLICANT DETAILS

- Name, Address, Phone, Email
- Organisation / business / studio / collective, if applicable
- Website / portfolio link
- Primary design discipline
- ABN, if required
- Access requirements, optional
- Confirmation of ability to participate for 12 months

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Q1. Applicant background - max 300 words

Provide an overview of your design practice, including your discipline, areas of expertise, key projects or achievements, and current focus.

Q2. Proposed individual residency focus - max 500 words

What would you like to explore or develop during the 12-month residency?

Describe the idea, project, research or area of practice you would like to focus on, including what you hope to research, experiment with, prototype, test or develop.

What new ideas, approaches, methods or possibilities would you like to explore, and what makes your proposed area of exploration innovative or experimental?

Your proposal may evolve throughout the residency as your ideas and practice develop.

Q3. Connection to Geelong - max 300 words

How does your practice or proposed area of exploration connect to Greater Geelong?

This may include connections to local communities, place, environment, industry, culture, materials, history, technology or other aspects of the region.

Q4. Collaboration and cross-disciplinary exchange- max 300 words

Design Commons is a shared environment where designers from different disciplines and practices can work alongside one another.

What other industries, disciplines or creative practices would you be interested in connecting or working with during the residency?

Describe what you could contribute to these exchanges, what you would hope to learn, and how working alongside other residents could support the development of your practice.

Q5 How would you benefit from Design Commons? max 200 words

How would access to Design Commons support the development of your design practice?

Consider how you would use the studio, maker space and shared environment, and what having dedicated workspace and access to a cohort of other designers and practitioners would enable you to do that you may not otherwise be able to do.

Q6. Outcomes and opportunities max 300 words

What would you hope to achieve or learn through the residency?

This might include new skills, research, prototypes, concepts, new work, partnerships, publications, exhibitions or other developments in your practice.

You may also identify opportunities for community engagement, public presentation or collaborative projects where relevant to your practice. These do not need to be defined as fixed outcomes at the application stage and may evolve throughout the residency.

Q7. Residency participation - max 200 words

How would you participate in and contribute to the Design Commons environment throughout the 12-month residency?

Consider how you would engage with other residents, share knowledge and skills, and contribute to a positive and collaborative studio environment.

Supporting material

Applicants should provide:

- portfolio, PDF or link, up to 10 pages or 10 projects;
- CV, maximum 2 pages;
- up to 5 images or examples of previous work, optional;
- links to relevant projects, optional;
- letters of support or partner confirmations, optional.

Applicants should provide enough detail for assessors to understand their practice, methodology, proposed project, connection to Geelong and potential contribution to the residency cohort.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applications will be assessed by a panel against the following criteria:

Criterion	Weighting
Quality and potential of design practice	25%
Practice development and benefit of the residency	25%
Connection to Greater Geelong	15%
Collaboration and cross-disciplinary exchange	15%
Innovation and experimentation	10%
Residency participation and feasibility	10%
Total	100%

1. Quality and potential of design practice – 25%

Assessment will consider:

- strength and quality of the applicant's design practice;
- quality and relevance of previous work;
- originality and creative thinking;
- clarity of the applicant's design approach, methodology or practice; and
- potential for the practice to develop further.

2. Practice development and benefit of the residency – 25%

Assessment will consider:

- clarity and strength of the proposed area of exploration or development;
- how the residency could meaningfully support the applicant's practice;
- potential to make effective use of the Design Commons studio, maker space and shared environment;
- potential for research, experimentation, prototyping, testing or development of new work; and
- the potential value of the 12-month residency at this stage of the applicant's practice.

3. Connection to Greater Geelong – 15%

Assessment will consider:

- connection to Greater Geelong's cultural, environmental, social or economic context;
- understanding of local place and context;
- relevance to Geelong's identity as a UNESCO City of Design; and
- potential to contribute to the local design community and broader creative ecosystem.

4. Collaboration and cross-disciplinary exchange – 15%

Assessment will consider:

- willingness to engage with other residents and practices;
- interest in working across disciplines or industries;
- skills, knowledge, perspectives or approaches the applicant could contribute to the cohort;
- potential for meaningful peer learning and knowledge exchange; and
- potential for collaboration to support the applicant's practice development.

5. Innovation and experimentation – 10%

Assessment will consider:

- originality of the proposed idea, approach or area of exploration;
- willingness to experiment, test or challenge existing approaches;
- potential to develop new ideas, prototypes, processes, tools, methods or insights; and
- potential to contribute to contemporary design practice.

6. Residency participation and feasibility – 10%

Assessment will consider:

- realistic and achievable use of the 12-month residency;
- ability to participate in the shared Design Commons environment;
- appropriate and practical use of the available studio and maker space; and
- willingness to contribute to a positive, respectful and collaborative environment.

Design Commons – The Space

Design Commons has been intentionally designed as a flexible and adaptable workspace that can support a broad range of creative and design-based practices.

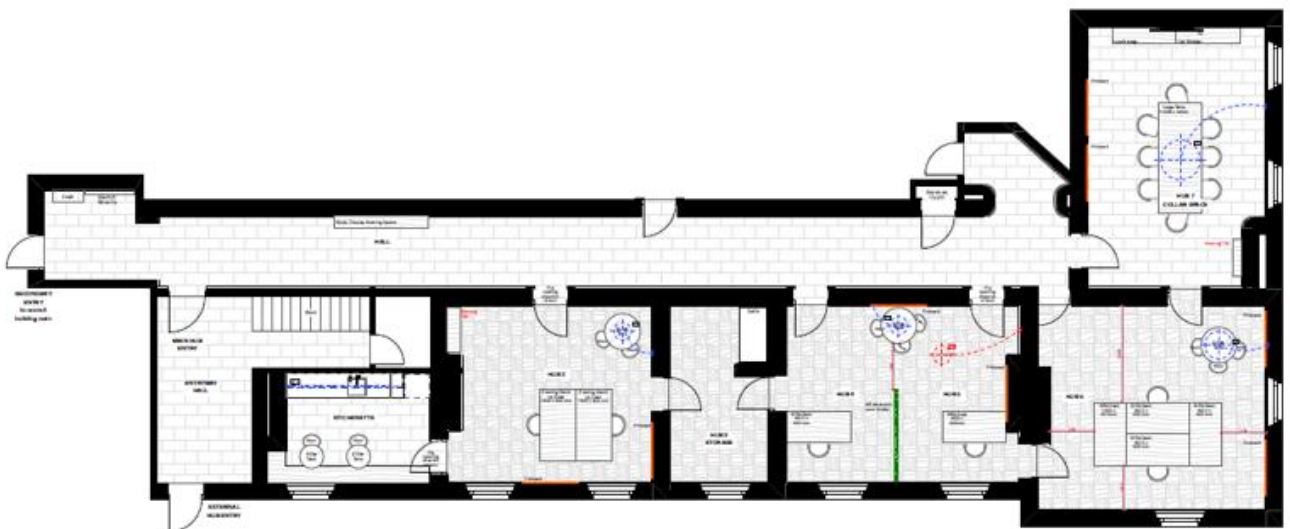
Access to Design Commons is limited to Residents and the City of Greater Geelong Creative City team. Located within Geelong's Arts Precinct, the space sits adjacent to Council Chambers and neighbouring commercial premises, and is surrounded by some of the region's leading cultural organisations, including Geelong Art Gallery, Geelong Arts Centre, Platform Arts, Back to Back Theatre and Geelong Regional Library.

The fit-out has been deliberately kept simple and functional, providing Residents with the opportunity to shape and personalise their workspace to suit their practice and project needs. The Design Commons model aims to balance individual work requirements with opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing and creative exchange.

The facility currently includes four dedicated workspaces designed to accommodate individual practitioners through to small collectives of up to four people. Residents also have access to a range of shared amenities, including a kitchenette, circulation areas and a collaborative workspace.

All workspaces are lockable, self-contained and benefit from natural light. They are equipped with desks, chairs and meeting tables. There's a projector in the meeting space and a roaming smart screen for shared use.

The Green Hub provides access to the shared kitchenette and may experience additional movement through the space as a result. Internal connecting doors are located between the Purple and Blue Hubs, and between the Purple Hub and the Collaboration Space, offering opportunities for expanded or connected use where appropriate.





The Hallway: a space for sharing concepts and seeking feedback. A place for stepping back and looking at work from a distance



The Kitchenette: a space for timeout and recharging



The Collaboration Space: a space for Residents to work collaboratively





The Purple Room: a Hub for up to 4 people; a collective or an individual needing larger space





The Blue Room: a shared Hub for up to 2 people with a room divider for privacy and separate doorways





The Green Room: a shared Hub for up to 2 people facilitating access to The Kitchenette



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Further Information

If you have any questions regarding the guidelines or application process, please contact the Creative Team via creativecity@geelongcity.vic.gov.au