

APARTMENTS domain

THE PROPERTY GUIDE

Walk on water

Sydney's newest wharf development

INSIDE

Redfern loft smart buy
page 5

Pittwater palace
page 7

DOMAIN RENTALS

A-Z LISTINGS

PLUS

Feature:

Tenants and pets


Turn to centre pages

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COVER STORY Julia Nekich

Piers de resistance

The Sydney Wharf residential project will take luxury living to new heights.

Oh so grand ... (clockwise from top right) artist's impressions of a dining room in a wharf 8 three-bedder; a living room in a mezzanine three-bedder; wharf 9 exterior with marina; a wharf 8 main bedroom; the kitchen in a two- or three-bedder.



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Simple, sophisticated "living structures" that shimmer in response to the sun, the water and the lifestyles of its residents. This is the vision the architects, designers and developers have for the last wharf development on Sydney Harbour - and that's just the exterior design.

There's a certain excitement about Sydney Wharf. It's one of the last finger wharfs of its kind and the team behind it are going all out: the design promises the high-end finishes and attention to detail rarely seen in large developments.

This wholly residential project at wharves 8 and 9, Pyrmont Bay, will comprise two buildings with 104 apartments and a private marina. The project is a response by the developer, Charter Hall Group, with partners Babcock & Brown and AMP Capital Investors, to a 1997 City West master plan for the precinct. The big thrust was to bring in more residential and commercial developments and create a vibrant community in what was a largely industrial precinct.

The consortium commissioned Peddle Thorpe & Walker - the architects behind Jones Bay and Woolloomooloo wharves, Darling Island and Walsh Bay - to produce a design concept. They won the development tender in 1998. Charter Hall and its partners bought wharves 8, 9 and 10 (which is being rebuilt into a commercial building), but weren't able to build on 8 and 9 until the end of Foxtel's lease in December.

"The delay has worked for us," says Mark Jacobs, Charter Hall's development director. "Pyrmont now is a more robust residential area, so this last development is going way beyond what others have done."

LAND AHoy

Plans for Sydney Wharf are for two new five-storey buildings with roof decks (achieved via a split-roof system) on land.

"The location is entirely unique," says John Bilmon, managing director of Peddle Thorpe & Walker. "It's a true, open peninsula that can't be built out and will be surrounded by true



boardwalks on piers over the water." Views span the water from Balmain to the city. "It's different from Darling Island, which has a large, shared open space," Bilmon says.

Woolloomooloo and Jones Bay wharves are existing structures that have been modified. Walsh Bay wharf is a new structure, but its design had to be sympathetic to the adjacent finger wharf.

The existing wharf 8 sits on land, while wharf 9 is supported by pylons. They will be knocked down and rebuilt, but will be shifted a little so that both sit on land and align with wharves 7 and 10, creating a new private street with a view corridor to the harbour.

Artists' impressions of the buildings show extensive use of louvres, glass and timber in the exterior. Bilmon says the louvres, which will clad the buildings, are to control light and air flow.

"Residents can modify their environment at any time, so the buildings are always reflecting the lifestyles of the residents," he says. "It becomes a living structure."

FITTINGS AND FIXTURES

The interiors are by SJB Interiors. "The brief was as if we were doing one of our upscale houses," says SJB director Andrew Parr.

Natural materials contrast with the industrial exterior. Floors will be timber and travertine; marble or onyx, stone and bronze detailing will



feature strongly in bathrooms and Italian-style kitchens. Each kitchen has an integrated oven, cooktop and dishwasher. There are recessed pelmets and reflective finishes. "Sydney hasn't seen this level of detailing in apartment developments," Parr says, "and it's what you get in every apartment."

There are 16 one-bedders (63sqm to 100 sq m internally) from \$875,000 to \$1.25 million. Two include a mezzanine, office and second bathroom. There are 16 two-bedders (110sqm to 180 sq m internally) with ensuite from \$1.45 million to \$2.5 million. Three include a mezzanine and four have studies.

Seventy-two apartments are three-bedders (145sqm to 335 sq m internally) with two ensuites,



from \$1.75 million to \$6.85 million. Three are two storeys; 18 are "premium", with a mezzanine and roof terrace in most; 10 are "platinum", with the best views, a mezzanine, bluestone-wrapped fireplace and two living areas - two of these have a roof terrace with spa. Prices include security basement parking - two spots for two- and three-bedders - with lift and storage.

Balconies average 30 sq m. Apartments in wharf 8 are larger than those in wharf 9, and wharf 8's two- and three-bedders have two balconies. "The city-side wharf 8 has a feel of vibrancy; the west side 9 is tranquil," Jacobs says, claiming there's a lot of appeal for empty-nesters and that owner-occupiers will be attracted to the luxury finishes. Every apartment has extensive water views.

EXTRA FEATURES

There will be a 10-metre indoor heated pool, a fitness studio and a cafe on the boardwalk.

Approval has been given for 36 berths (the developers are seeking approval for another 20) on a private marina. They're on separate titles, priced from about \$350,000 with a 20-year leasehold, plus strata levies. There are plans for a concierge service for berths and boats.

There are also plans for Pyrmont's first Coles supermarket in a commercial development, at 50-72 Union Street, expected to be completed in September next year.

Construction of Sydney Wharf will begin early in the new year and be completed by early 2008. For expressions of interest, call Colliers International on 9257 0222.

RESALE VALUE

Sydney wharf apartments are generally reselling well. Morton & Morton agent Noel Jenkins says resales of the Woolloomooloo Wharf apartments have really taken off in the past two years. He says the larger apartments have done better. A three-bedder that sold off the plan in 1998 for \$1.26 million sold in early 2004 for \$2.65 million, and again in March this year for \$3.5 million.

Meanwhile, resales could be better at Darling Island, according to a city agent: "People bought in high. And now there's a development being built here, so people aren't keen to live in a construction zone."

A three-bedder bought in 2001 for \$2,195,000 sold in June for \$2.4 million. A three-bedder bought in September 2004 for \$2,295,000 was sold for \$2.9 million in May.

So what about at Walsh Bay? City Living agent Bruce Fallshaw says: "Sales at piers 6 and 7 are steadily increasing. The market has been in a stall for the last five months, so prices have levelled. Now that the market has picked up, inquiries are increasing."

However, figures still show strong sales. A Walsh Bay penthouse bought for \$2.5 million in April 2003 sold in June for \$3.55 million.