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AUSTRALAND

COVER STORY Julia Nekich

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Big-name architects are behind a plan to revitalise the heart of Hurstville.

Some unattractive pink high-rises may have sprouted and public areas might be in need of serious TLC, but Hurstville looks set to become the bright new hub of southern Sydney.

Recognising the area's need for rejuvenation and quality developments, in 2002 Hurstville council commissioned the then Government Architect, Chris Johnson, to help create a master plan. It includes upgrades of public amenities, greening of the area and more commercial development.

"Some energy is starting to develop here," says Johnson, now the Department of Planning's executive director of urban renewal. "Town centres like this need a mixture of developments. A balance of residential and commercial is essential."

And that's what Multiplex Living intends in a new master-planned development called East Quarter. It's on a 2.8-hectare slice of land, formerly the site of the packaging firm Amcor, on the corner of Durham Street and Forest Road, 400 metres from the Hurstville CBD.

It includes seven mixed-use apartment buildings - from six to 14 storeys - a public plaza and landscaped private and public areas. Construction will be in three stages, with 629 apartments accommodating an estimated 800-1000 residents.

Kann Finch Group, the architects, won the project in a design competition involving Bates Smart, Hassel Architects, PTW Architects and Turner & Associates. Kann Finch's concepts were developed in collaboration with Johnson.

"The vision is to create the equivalent of the Leichhardt Italian Forum in Hurstville," says Ian Armstrong, the project architect.

THE FIRST RELEASE

Stage one, on the western side of East Quarter, will comprise two mixed-use apartment buildings, Aqua (six storeys above ground) and Vantage (12 storeys). Each will be largely residential, with commercial spaces planned for the ground floor and mezzanine of Aqua and a mix of retail and commercial spaces on the ground floor of Vantage. The remaining floors will be for apartments - 168



Night life ... an artist's impression of East Quarter's public plaza, planned to come on stream in stage two.

in total. The surrounding streetscapes look decidedly industrial, but Multiplex Living national sales manager Kevin Driscoll, says: "It's a good site because it's set on a hill."

Driscoll expects most interest in Aqua to come from investors, because "it's a lower-rise situation, so we've made it one- and two-bedders. You would get very good rental. The higher you go, the more views you get, and you tend to get more two- to three-bedders." So Vantage, which aims at owner-occupiers, has bigger units. He guesses it's mostly locals who'll be attracted, "those who will really understand the benefits of the area, have lived here".

Artists' impressions of the apartments show sleek, contemporary spaces. They feature open-plan living, air-conditioning, central security, glass sliding doors and natural stone in lobbies. Ceiling heights are 2.7 metres. Kitchens feature reconstructed stone benchtops and integrated stainless-steel ovens and dishwashers. Vantage also has dual lobbies, with each lift servicing no more than five apartments.

"All apartments have large balconies and, where practical, these have been designed with operable glazing on the balustrades, creating winter gardens," Armstrong says.

Aqua has 47 one-bedders (45-74sqm internally),

from \$310,000; and five two-bedders (83-102sqm internally), from \$528,000. Vantage will have 15 one-bedders (46-64sqm), from \$315,000; 92 two-bedders (77-104sqm), from \$430,000; and nine three-bedders (108-127sqm), from \$645,000. Balconies range from 6-64sqm in Aqua and 9-155sqm in Vantage.

Prices include security underground parking - one spot for one-bedders and two spots for three-bedders and most two-bedders. Estimated quarterly strata fees will be from \$300 for one-bedders, from \$700 for two-bedders and from \$1000 for three-bedders.

The larger units are in Vantage, but Aqua has the larger terraces. Aqua also features a rooftop area with barbecues exclusive to selected apartments. Residents in stage one will have use of a private 25-metre lap pool, gym, lawns and landscaped gardens. Pets are not permitted.

STAGE BY STAGE

Construction of stage one is expected to begin early next year and finish in late 2007, with apartments available for sale off the plan from Multiplex Living on 1300 889 979. Construction of the final two stages will be completed within the next six years.

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Sleek living to come ... artists' impressions of Aqua's planned roof-top terrace and its pool.

Apartment configurations and prices haven't been released, but buildings in stage three will be more heavily residential than those in the first two stages, and will include a pool, gym and child-care facilities.

A 280-square-metre public plaza characterised by reflecting pools and sculptures and surrounded by shops and cafes is part of stage two. There are plans for a 304-space public car park and a 100-metre tree-lined path that will connect the plaza with Kempt Field, an adjoining 3.2-hectare public park that Multiplex is upgrading.

Paul Spyve of Hurstville City Council confirms that East Quarter received "significant opposition" from local residents and from the council, with regard to traffic impact, density, height and overshadowing, "but many concerns have now been addressed". Johnson says "careful studies were done on the shadowing and they found it was only over the railway line".

MORE PLANS FOR HURSTVILLE

There will be about 1700 new apartments among the area's recently approved developments. Hurstville council's Spyve acknowledges this and says "we want to bring in more commercial developments".

Approval has been given for a \$100 million medical centre on the corner of Queens Road and Dora Street.

Multiplex also plans a refurbishment of the rundown Supa Centre retail site. Plans for a new civic centre, also by Multiplex, with open spaces, community and commercial spaces, is in its formative stages. And a 15,000-square-metre commercial development on The Avenue has been approved.

Chris Lawlor, the property manager at Hurstville council, says that "more quality control has been put in place" to manage developments in Hurstville.

THE COMPETITION

Off-the-plan two-bedders in East Quarter start at about \$430,000. Elsewhere, Richardson and Wrench Hurstville (9570 3000) is looking for offers from \$329,000 to \$349,000 for a two-bedder with two bathrooms, car space and balcony in a four-year-old building at 12-22 Dora Street.

In a four-year-old Meriton block at 323 Forest Road, Hurstville (pictured), the same agency is selling a two-bedder with ensuite, balcony, private courtyard and garage on title for \$320,000. Facilities include a pool, gym and sauna.

In a high-rise at 107-109 Forest Road, Hurstville, Century 21 (9580 8860) is selling a two-bedder with car spot, balcony and distant water views for \$349,000 (see Domain.com.au). There's also a two-bedder with ensuite, stainless-steel kitchen appliances, two balconies and security video

intercom available at 546 Railway Parade, Hurstville, for \$368,000 through Elders, on 9579 5033 (also on Domain.com.au).

According to one agent, new sales in the area have been very slow in the past 12 months. He blames it on the strata levies in new developments, many of which don't offer communal facilities. "Can you imagine spending \$300 a month just for the use of a lift?" he says.

