

History in the remaking

Steeped in grandeur, stately Yungaba House will return to the market as prestige apartments, writes **Paula Shearer**

STROLLING down to the new riverside sales office for the redeveloped Yungaba House site, the tranquillity of the Kangaroo Point location is striking.

Despite being nestled under the Story Bridge and not far from the city's imposing skyline, it is intriguingly quiet.

Standing on the sales centre deck, which will convert to a riverside cafe once the masterplanned development is completed, the 360-degree view is spectacular – a choice between the stately Yungaba building, the new sensitively designed Promontory apartments, the city skyline or a panoramic river expanse looking across to New Farm.

With the Promontory nearing completion and work poised to start on the renovation of Yungaba House, this is a development that has been nearly a decade in the making.

After acquiring the historic building in 2003 through an adjacent land ownership offering, developer Australand embarked on what it describes as its most complicated development permit in southeast Queensland for almost 10 years.

The design underwent a stringent approvals and consultation process with various community and heritage groups including the Department of Resources Management.

A team of more than 40 consultants worked on the design.

Head architect Scott Peabody of

Arqus Design says that throughout the planning process the team was conscious of maintaining the public's

connection to Yungaba House, ensuring its cultural significance was preserved for the future.

Built in 1887, Yungaba was Queensland's first immigration office but over the years its purpose changed and during the past century it served a number of uses including becoming the supervisory and drafting offices for the Story Bridge construction.

It was also used to welcome soldiers back from the Boer War. More recently it provided office and meeting facilities for Brisbane's multicultural community groups and was leased as commercial space.

"Yungaba House is valued as an important part of Brisbane's history and it's important that residents as well as the public can appreciate that," Peabody says.

"It's a collective vision, how this grand old lady of Brisbane is to be retained, preserved and improved for both residents and the community."

The \$150 million development on the 1.9ha site includes spending more than \$9 million on restoring Yungaba House and converting the internal structure into private residences.

"We have made the best use of space – dividing it into 10 residences of a generous proportion that also respect the overall context and history of the site," Peabody says.

"It was about creating space within

a space, while keeping the building in touch with its original fabrics."

Australand Queensland residential general manager Richard Fulcher says the company plans to restore the unique character of the building and

maintain the significance of the site in one of the most innovative and prestigious developments the group has undertaken.

"Australand is continuing to work with the Department of Environment and Resource Management, and heritage consultancy firm Urbis to ensure the continuous protective care of Yungaba as well as restoring and maintaining the facade," he says.

"It's about restoring, not reconstructing, so we enlisted Brisbane-based Arqus to ensure the integrity of the building is maintained."

Australand development director Ronald Van Haren says exhaustive research was undertaken to ensure the redevelopment involved minimal intervention to the building's structural detail. Where possible, historical elements that have remained intact will be restored or preserved.

The 10 homes created from the project will each be individual, designed around the unique character of the building.

Although Yungaba House is considered two-storey, two lucky new homeowners will live in four-floor

apartments. Private spiral staircases

will take residents to their own imposing turret which will be converted to a sky library. Underneath the home the basement, lined with large limestone blocks, will be converted to a wine cellar and entertainment space.

Van Haren and Peabody have been involved with the project from the early design process.

"After all the blood, sweat and tears, and what we've been through with the authorities, it becomes quite a passion to stand and deliver," Van Haren says.

"We spent countless hours working with heritage architects and heritage bodies in understanding why certain aspects were important, what their significance to the project was and understanding the significance of the site and what it was used for originally.

"There was a layering of 140 years of stories of how the site was developed to where it is today and it's been a huge challenge for us.

"To our knowledge, what we are about to embark upon in terms of extensive and individualised restoration works has never been done

before, certainly not on Australia's eastern seaboard."

Sitting alongside Yungaba House, the Promontory incorporates 68 one, two and three-bedroom apartments in a building that steps from six to eight levels.

There are 10 apartment designs, including four penthouses with large entertainment terraces and river views.

The building is due for completion next month.

Future stages include two additional apartment buildings. Construction on the Arbors South will begin in 2013 with Arbors North starting the following year.

Each six-level building will consist of 44 apartments.

The buildings have been designed to work with the heritage of Yungaba House and its gardens. Attention to detail includes using the same external colours as Yungaba House plus a grey to match the Story Bridge.

Restoration work on Yungaba is scheduled to start within a couple of months.

Brisbane used to be a city that

showed a blatant disregard for its history.

But there are now signs this is changing.

In addition to the Yungaba House development, current rejuvenation projects include the RNA master-planned community at Bowen Hills plus conversion of the old Gasworks at Newstead into public space as part of a residential project.

Let's applaud the developers for their sensitive work and hope this new trend towards heritage preservation continues.



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Scott Peabody, architect



BRIGHT FUTURE: Historic Yungaba House (above) will be restored as part of a \$150 million project which includes a riverside cafe (left).