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ARCHITECTURE BULLETIN
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10 X 10

Part two in our series of ten
millennium public projects



1 Ballast Point Park in Birchgrove by McGregor + Coxall Landscape Architects. 2 The recently completed Workplace 6, Darling Island, awarded a 6 Star Green Star rating for office design by the Green Building Council. **Photography:** courtesy Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. 3 In 2007, 86–88 George Street became the first State Heritage-listed building to achieve a 5 Star Green Star Office Design rating. Architect: Terroir. Heritage Architect: Design 5. Green Star consultant: Steensen Varming with Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Sustainability Manager. **Photograph:** Brett Boardman.

10 x 10 MILLENNIUM PROJECTS

Sydney Harbour Foreshore

“Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings.” JANE JACOBS, *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES*.

THE SYDNEY HARBOUR FORESHORE AUTHORITY (SHFA) is one of the largest landowners in Sydney and is responsible for the management of some of the city’s most significant harbourside assets including Darling Harbour and The Rocks. Before we look at achievements, let’s begin with history.

SHFA was formed in February 1999 under the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Act 1998, which combined the functions of the former Sydney Cove Authority and City West Development Corporation. The Darling Harbour Authority was amalgamated with SHFA in 2001. Its responsibility extends over more than 400 hectares of Sydney Harbour foreshore land between Garden Island in the east and White Bay to the west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and other sites of strategic significance for the government including the White Bay Power Station, the Rozelle railway yards, and Ballast Point. The SHFA also ‘place manages’ the Circular Quay promenades, the Conservatorium of Music, King Street Wharf promenade and the Luna Park reserve.

A large portion of SHFA’s property portfolio is listed on the State

Heritage Register. The Rocks, in particular, is considered to be the most significant heritage precinct relating to European settlement in Australia; of special significance are its existing and potential archaeological sites, landscapes, buildings, engineering structures, monuments and movable heritage. The NSW Planning Minister has delegated to SHFA certain functions of the NSW Heritage Act that enable it to assess applications for minor works that fall within its jurisdiction.

SHFA is not centrally funded by NSW Treasury, but subsidises its own operations principally from rental and other property income. According to SHFA in a November 2008 report, “the Authority uses this income to provide around \$21 million in community service obligations annually with an additional \$10 million on property/heritage related capital works each year”. The report also states that SHFA operates a portfolio of \$1.38 billion of commercial and non-commercial assets, with around 82,538 square metres of retail space.

In its role as a development manager, SHFA is affected by external conditions such as the global financial crisis. The extent of its authority can also be diminished, for instance SHFA’s involvement in waterfront development at Barangaroo has been significantly reduced by the



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creation of the Barangaroo Delivery Authority. In recent times, significant reductions to its budget have curtailed its activities to a large extent, but the authority has initiated more inventive tenant-funded schemes to address this situation.

With respect to its intentions, the Authority’s first Annual Report (1998–99) noted that its: “...operations are underpinned by the need to balance environmental, economic, financial and social considerations, as well as to consider commercial and leisure demands and public and private requirements for harbour foreshores”.

By 2007–08 SHFA’s Annual Report reflected a greater commercial focus in the authority’s need to: “...capitalise on the economic and cultural worth of our places”.

SHFA acknowledges its responsibility to protect heritage buildings and their cultural significance, while aiming to improve amenity in ways that are sustainable and support heritage outcomes. The principles of sustainability and conservation are interlinked. In March 2009, the authority adopted a sustainability policy with commitments to reduce the carbon footprints of The Rocks and Darling Harbour precincts by 80 per cent by 2020 from 2000 levels, with a 20 per cent reduction by 2012.

The policy aims to achieve the carbon emission reduction targets through efficiencies, renewables and offsets, and re-use of buildings. SHFA has identified the need for sustainability, social responsibility and economic viability at the core of its place management. In 2007, The Rocks and Darling Harbour were the first precincts in New South Wales to target eco-footprint reductions, with SHFA the second NSW Government agency to pledge to have its operations carbon neutral by 2010.

A number of initiatives have been implemented including the use of harvested rainwater in all SHFA parks, the recycling of 80 per cent of all waste generated, the reduction of potable water consumption by 80 per cent, the creation of a sustainable procurement policy, and the creation of sustainability guides to help tenants reduce their carbon footprint.

The redevelopment of 88 George Street in The Rocks, illustrated on the cover of SHFA’s Sustainable development fitout guide, was awarded Australia’s first 5 Star Green Star rating for a State Heritage-listed building; Workplace 6, at Darling Island, is the first building in New South Wales to be awarded a 6 Star Green Star rating for office design by the Green Building Council.

The incremental place-management strategies that have been fostered over the past 10 years reflect new directions of urban design as opposed to wide-scale redevelopment, and a number of initiatives have been put in place to contribute to a greener Sydney for the next generation.

For instance, Pyrmont Bridge has operated successfully as a pedestrian and cycle shared zone since 1999, and has seen a substantial increase in use as Pyrmont’s population has roughly quadrupled.

Darling Island — 4.9 hectares of prime inner-city, waterfront land jutting from the Pyrmont peninsula — has a balance of residential, commercial and public space; the latter including more than 2 hectares of open space, including two public parks and a continuous foreshore promenade. Stage one, including three waterfront apartment buildings and a new public park and jetty built by Multiplex, was completed in 2004. Stage two, a six-level commercial building and a five-level residential building, was completed by Mirvac in 2005 and 2006. Stage three — Workplace 6, a six-level commercial building developed by Citta Group — was completed in 2008 and tenanted by Google in 2009.

Ballast Point Park, Walama in Birchgrove, sets a new benchmark for sustainable park design. Designed by McGregor + Coxall Landscape Architects, this 2.6-hectare park development, seven kilometres from the Sydney CBD includes wetlands to filter stormwater on site, extensive use of recycled materials, native plant species, and eight wind turbines generating power that feeds back into the electricity grid.

Darling Walk is a 1.5-hectare, \$560 million redevelopment, by Lend Lease. The project will combine 58,000 square metres, or up to eight storeys, of commercial office space with retail and leisure facilities. The NSW Government will retain ownership of the site. A key feature of the project will be a new pedestrian gateway linking Darling Harbour and the CBD, and improved pedestrian access across Harbour Street. The project will provide a 6 Star Green Star version 2 design rating and a 5 Star NABERS energy rating. Demolition of the site’s existing buildings has been completed. Excavation work started in early 2009 and the project is expected to be completed in 2011.

To reduce demand on Sydney’s potable water supply, SHFA selected Energy Conservation Systems (ECS) to design and install a commercial rainwater harvesting system at the Sydney Entertainment Centre car park site, located in the Darling Harbour precinct.

In broader terms, as a development authority, SHFA’s role has changed to one of primarily place management. Incremental place management in areas that highlight heritage and sustainability, such as The Rocks, forms an alternative model to broad-scale redevelopment. Over the 10 years to 2010, SHFA has provided a more robust mix of commercial and tourist facilities that provide a more substantive alternative to the pseudo-tourist experience of The Rocks.

Jennifer Hill, *Architectural Projects*