

Chair
Independent Planning Commission

Dear Chairperson.

Harbourside Shopping Centre Redevelopment SSD-7874

I am writing about the new material you provide and thank you for asking to comment.

I live in Jones Street Ultimo. My family are frequent visitors to Darling Harbour Harbourside shopping centre. We enjoy the open space along the water front and celebrations around Darling Harbour. We are extremely concerned about Mirvac's redevelopment proposal to turn much of the Harbourside into commercial and residential which are closed to public, and the remaining retail section open to public has been much reduced. The food court and the middle part of the waterfront promenade outside Harbourside is the most family friendly area. We do hope IPD could ensure Mirvac could provide equivalent public amenities in their proposal.

Please see below my response to Mirvac's latest response to IPC's requests in providing public amenities:

1. Rooftop Park on top of the northern podium

I refer to the latest alternate option proposed by Mirvac with so many flights of steps on various levels on the supposedly public open space on the top of the northern podium. They are problematic for older people with walking frames and unfriendly/unsafe for young kids running around. The use of the park is very limited.

Darling Harbour is a popular place for celebrations and events with over 26m visitors a year before COVID. At every festive event, temporary gates need be installed at various entrances to limit the human flow into Darling Harbour. Fences along the waterfront have been installed to ensure safety at times of big crowds.

The Harbourside location is the most popular section at Darling Harbour where people gather, enjoy snacks and enjoy the best view of the celebrations with the magnificent city view in the backdrop. It is more popular than the Cockle Bay side. With the announcement of the new Pyrmont Metro station, there will be even more people coming to Darling Harbour via the Pyrmont Bridge Road in the west. I strongly opposed to the reduction of the middle section of waterfront promenade from 29m down to 20m (in reality 15m excluding planting) proposed by Mirvac, the promenade will become just a walkway with limited space for people to "stand". The Event Steps are merely for walking access as the area is too small and dangerous for people to stand or sit, and it skews towards Pyrmont Bridge and not to the centre of the bay where most activities take place. As a result, the roof top park on the northern podium would be the last and the most important area for general public to gather and enjoy the entertainment that Darling Harbour has to offer during celebrations like Australia Day, New Year's Eve etc. So the park must be designed and constructed properly so it can stand the test of time.

I strongly support the IPC suggestion for RL 11.8 flat space right up to the tower for the northern podium. That would create a 135m X 30m park space on one level with no access challenges for families and elderly. The park could be easily connected to Pyrmont Bridge Road without any overwhelming effect of the historic bridge.

2. Public Amenities versus Corporate Profits - Viability of the project.

When Harbourside was bought by Mirvac in 2013 for around \$250m, the same CEO said it delivered attractive returns in excess of their company's stated targets. Nevertheless, we feel the shopping centre has not been managed to its full potential in the last few years, which leads to Mirvac's intention to vastly increase the floor space for commercial and residential to maximise its corporate profits.

Now Mirvac claims if IPC request of RL 11.8 is to be followed, it would result a loss of commercial floor space of 16,000sqm (from its originally proposed 45,000 sqm) and would make the project unviable. Mirvac has to provide the substantiation to support their claim. My questions are:

- a) The inclusion of a residential tower of some 42,000 sqm would generate substantial extra revenue from the site. The tower is located in a premium with east facing waterfront aspect in Darling Harbour, superior to that of Cockle Bay, King Street Wharf and parts of Barangaroo. One would imagine the 350+ apartments alone could command top dollars (refer Crown and Landlease towers) and generate substantial revenue, this is on top of the "reduced" proposed commercial/retail space of 29,000 sqm (i.e. 45,000 less 16,000sqm, which is still bigger than current retail space of 20,566 sqm).
- b) The approved Cockle Bay redevelopment only has a FSR of 3.57. If the same FSR is to be applied to Harbourside to be consistent, then Mirvac could only build a GFA of 73,400sqm, i.e. a reduction of 13,600 sqm from its proposed 87,000 sqm. This reduction could contribute to the RL 11.8 as requested by IPC so to produce a better long term public amenities on top of the northern podium as a useable public park.
- c) Ethos Urban questions the validity of the number of floors fitted within RL 11.8 in Harbourside. The proper question for them should be why RL 12 could work for the Cockle Bay redevelopment to fit in two floors. Perhaps the same RL could be considered by IPC so to be consistent on either side of the Pyrmont Bridge.

In summary, the alternative option Mirvac submitted is disappointing. They seem to have put their shareholders return as a priority higher than the long term benefit of public amenities. I do hope that the IPC can work with Mirvac for a more balanced solution for all the parties concerned, and not deterred by the threat Mirvac has made in their response.

Thank you again for giving us the opportunity to raise comments.

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Wu