



Edgewater Towers Regeneration



Application No.	0002670
Date Submitted	17/11/2019 7:50:27 AM
Project Category	2. Multi-unit and mixed use development;3. Strategy or plan;4. Non-residential development;5. Integrated Art;6. Interior fit out;7. Sustainability;8. Heritage
Project name	Edgewater Towers Regeneration
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Date of Completion	Dec/2018
Project Street Address	12 Marine Parade
Project Suburb	St Kilda
Project Post Code	3182
Client name	Edgewater Services Pty Ltd
Project Cost	450000
Site Area (m2)	3416
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Organization overview

Opat Architects is a boutique design practice with experience in residential, commercial, community and educational projects.

Brief description

The rejuvenation of Edgewater Towers has revived Melbourne's first post-war, privately developed, high-rise residential tower resulting in increased accessibility, functionality, and an enhanced sense of community within the building. The building's International style honours its architectural heritage and functional design sensibilities, which informed the rejuvenation design process.

Response to key selection criteria

Edgewater Towers is an iconic and historic building within Melbourne's landscape. It is one in a string of built forms including the Esplanade Hotel, Luna Park, and St Kilda pier that form a distinct backdrop to, and memory of, St Kilda. The condition of the building had slowly deteriorated over a 40-year period. The work submitted here is part of a range of ongoing works, started around 2010, and intended to be restorative and minimal, referring wherever possible to the remaining original 1961 architectural drawings of Mordechai Benshemesh. Edgewater Towers forms a distinct feature in the landscape, a built form visible from all aspects, virtually uninterrupted with any future obstruction being unlikely. The works submitted here is conscious of its context, responding with a restorative and preservative approach. The new accessible roof activates the roof and conceals services of Edgewater Towers, cleaning up the appearance of the distinct roofline. The subject site is in a highly corrosive coastal setting. The rooftop regularly experiences extreme high wind conditions. Materials selection was focused around high durability, sustainability, and ease of maintenance. Various activities have been embodied in the rooftop master plan, including possibilities for solar panels across the northern edge beyond the balustrade. The intense coastal environment and under floor access requirements limited opportunities for plant and other landscaping. Edgewater Towers was honoured with a City of Port Phillip Heritage Recognition Plaque in 2017. The building is significant in the architectural development of St Kilda and of Melbourne post-WW2; and the residents, famous and otherwise, who have lived there. New work celebrates the functionalist manner of the International Style. Wherever possible, this new work has pared back to, or preserved, original materials, and covered over irreparable scarring. Dedicated residents located remnant finishes in the lobby and corridors, including paints and timber linings. In the initial stages, residents stripped paint off glass mosaic tiles and cleaned existing terrazzo flooring. The building is a stratum-titled building run by a Board of Directors. Client consultation involved repeat presentations to the Board, owners and stakeholders. The genesis of the rejuvenation process was the pressing need to remediate the concrete spalling. This led to the Board considering a long-term plan to further rehabilitate and uplift the condition of the building, internally and externally. This submission includes a range of works, mostly designed by Opat Architects. Ongoing rejuvenation work is being conducted in stages. The first stage of the project was to demolish the existing planter box and screen in the lobby, replacing it with a new privacy screen and letterbox housing. The original copper-sheathed letterboxes were restored and are incorporated into the screen to become a dominant feature of the lobby. Benching is shaped, literally, as a best fit, to cover damaged terrazzo flooring. A remnant of the original timber wall lining was used to mill new timber linings for the entry way, the screening and



the letterbox housing. Next, the original airlocks and heavy glass and timber doors were demolished and replaced with a consolidated accessible, DDA compliant airlock. The design of the airlock glazing and screening aimed to maximise views in and out of the lobby and to expose the existing Castlemaine stone curved wall feature. Raw anodized aluminium framing was selected to be a consistent yet modern interpretation of glazing elsewhere in the building. All work was designed to minimise contact with the original vermiculite ceiling. The third stage was to re-carpet and re-paint all the corridors. Many remnant paint finishes were found on the concrete floors of the corridors and these were used later in the stairwells. Laundry and fire stairs were cleaned out, repainted, with new safety lighting installed on all floors. The colour selection for floor numbering on the walls of each landing is based on the remnant paint finishes found in the corridors and was used to fade colours from red on the ground floor, changing through shades of orange and becoming yellow on the 12th. floor. Refurbished redundant laundries were fitted with bike racks for residents. The fourth stage was to plant twenty Chinese elms in the car park to provide summer shade for the black asphalt, reducing "heat-island" effect and ameliorating the wind. Deciduous trees were selected to allow the winter sunshine through. As part of this stage, the breezeblock fences and screens were repaired and restored. Breezeblocks identical to the original blocks were especially manufactured, to ensure a uniform appearance. The rooftop stage commenced with the demolition of a large unused building maintenance system, construction of new compliant balustrade, consolidation and relocation of mechanical units and relocation of pipes to achieve floor clearance. Screens were constructed to enclose water tanks and mechanical systems. A new raised floor was installed with BBQ units and table and chair units. The design process was an iterative one, designing around services to maximise the rooftop floor area and covering over services with benches and screening. The design brief was for a blank canvas. Some master-planning examined future uses such as solar. The rooftop chaise-lounge forms were detailed to be like oversized outdoor furnishing fit for extreme conditions. The new rooftop screening elements were deliberately minimal with clean lines. All new work is designed to minimise contact with the existing membrane roof. The design was conscious of the late mid-century roots and the work of the architect, Mordechai Benshemesh, thus emphasising a functionalism. Screening etc is considered designed with distant views in mind. Opat Architects was engaged around 2010 and has continued to be engaged across multiple small projects. That continuity has resulted in a clarity and consistency of design outcomes. The design process involved regular client review in an iterative process involving constant feedback, leading to bullet-proof design solutions. Design excellence came from careful consideration of the smallest detail across all projects. The focus throughout being on simplicity and longevity in palette selection. The projects benefited from residents and board members undertaking constant and deep research into Edgewater Towers history, building research and new work management methods.



Additional Information

â€¢ For additional information Edgewater Towers is discussed on Wikipedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgewater_Towers â€¢ Edgewater Towers has been a regular highlight of the Open House Melbourne program â€¢ The works have been staged over several years to minimise interruption to the 101 apartments and by components that work in scale for the Owners Corporation. â€¢ The Owners Corporation differs from modern strata title in that owners are shareholders, owning a share of a company. Being an Owners Corporation, the way decisions are made differs from strata title. Here, the Board is an active community of residents and shareholders. â€¢ Being a refurbishment of a significant and unique St Kilda icon, a mid-century residential tower, it has been submitted in Multi residential Development, Non-residential development, Integrated Art, Sustainability and Heritage. This submission has been written to address all those categories and can be re-read for each category â€¢ All the work featured in this submission is within common areas â€¢ The original building documentation has been lost, most likely during City of Port Phillip Council fires. As a result, rooftop work required new testing to prove the rooftops structural adequacy. A temporary pool was constructed on the roof and filled with water. The deflection under the pool was tested and the work was subsequently approved. â€¢ The new rooftop has returned a communal space to the residents. When the building opened in 1961 there was a short-lived restaurant in the lobby which was then converted into a milk bar and later became an apartment in the 1980s. Until the rooftop renovation was completed there was no communal space for recreational use by residents. â€¢ Extremely high owner occupier rate 57% vs a more typical 30% - Ageing population yet new young families. Longevity ; some of our oldest residents are living in their parent's flats. â€¢ When first opened Edgewater Towers was an "address" and then gradually declined through a period of neglect. Rejuvenation - From low points in the 80s having 5 massage parlours and drug dealers, Edgewater Towers has gone from the "Beirut Hilton" to a safe place for all. â€¢ Next Stage ; (not included in this submission) lift upgrades, bringing the lifts up to the rooftop providing 24-hour accessibility to the roof and access for mobility-impaired residents. â€¢ The building was designed with an accessible roof. Over time the space became populated with services including a large building management system residing on the east, mechanical systems and water header tanks. It became too unsafe to be accessible. â€¢ All photos by St Kilda resident Peter Bennetts â€¢ Additional photo from The Age showing Allan Zavod on the rooftop.



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