

Chris Harris
Deputy Lord Mayor
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It's a handsome building on a busy corner. To the onlooker it presents lots of glass but it softens the corner of Knox St and New South Head Rd Double Bay with its rounded facades. The four storey commercial block sits comfortably with surrounding buildings and looks to be a natural development of the site but it contains some delightful secrets within.

The building's water needs will be met on site by collecting rainwater, to be stored in an 80,000L tank below the ground floor. Waste water will be treated on site and recycled to produce up to 140L of surplus treated water each day - this will be used to flush the toilets and water the rooftop garden.

A light, open and glass-walled design lets air and light flow freely through the building so tenants won't often need air-conditioning. The rooftop garden will help cool the building by absorbing direct heat. The garden will grow productive, edible plants and inside the building hardy indoor-friendly plants (including 'Silver King' and 'Janet Craig') will absorb typical office air-toxins.

The building will also provide no car parking on site. Tenants can take advantage of the frequent bus services that stop right outside the door and Edgecliff station nearby.

The project came to fruition through the vision and the persistence of Lesli Berger, the General manager of the Fivex Group, which focuses on the development and management of its own properties. Lesli wanted to create a building that was as sustainable as possible and minimised its impact on the environment but at the same time was financially viable and attractive to premium tenants.

Was he successful? I think that he was. It's a beautiful building and the first tenant to put up its hand was a major Australian Bank.

What's more, the building will leave over 400,000 litres of water in Warragamba Dam annually. And because the rain falling on site will be captured rather than running off into drains, 400,000 litres of stormwater is prevented from polluting the harbour. In addition the sewage treatment system will stop over 700,000L of sewage discharging into ocean outfalls each year compared to the 'business as usual' option.

The energy efficient design of the building alone is expected to save around 150 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year and this is on top of the energy saved by not pumping water from Warragamba Dam and sewage out to the ocean.

What's in it for tenants of this building? The healthy work environment created by natural light and fresh air will boost the productivity of employees in the building by 10-15%. Plus there will be reduced running costs for tenants - energy bills are expected to be 10-15% lower than in a similar building without sustainable features. Further, if tenants follow the developer's Green Building Guide and install energy-efficient lighting and appliances, running costs are likely to be reduced by 40-50%.

Congratulations Lesli on a well designed, efficient and sustainable building. Lets's hope that your vision becomes a template for urban development all over Sydney.

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