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Interview Location Sydney Australia

Subject Central Park

Interviewee



Mark Giles (MG)
Senior Associate with PTW Architects

Interviewer

Dr Josh Byrne (JB)
Research Fellow, Curtin University and the CRC for Low Carbon Living

Transcript

JB: So start by telling us your name your profession and your roll in this project?

MG: I am Mark Giles I am a Senior Associate with PTW Architects and my role on One Central Park was the east tower, which is the 34 story the big tower and I was the project architect.

JB: Tell us how you came to be involved in the project as the Lead Architect?

MG: So, with this project there's a lead architect, Ateliers Jean Nouvel, and they had an involvement in the very early days. And that then came to a point where there is a need for a local architect to participate with them, to work through with the Frasers Property Group and Sekisui House about what it means to procure a big project like this in a Sydney environment.

Obviously, Ateliers Jean Nouvel are based in Paris and we had conversations with them and then in time they had people come sit in our offices here, so our involvement happened where there was some initial documentation. It happened to commence discussions with the planning department and then we came into assist in facilitating more of that documentation, and to work to articulate more of the vision and the development aspirations that came from the Frasers Property Group. And then how we could tangibly build this up to make it something that would make sense, probably from a commercial point of view, as being some of the of the most important aspirations here, and of course there is cost implications. And then with the work with Ateliers Jean Nouvel they were very much involved with the external appearance and how that would work.

Our work with Frasers Property Group and Sekisui House was to make sense of the apartments as well, so then we would look to the internal arrangements and how we could structure the two towers, how we could make sense about apartment mix and apartment sizing and to carry that through into the podium that we can see here, that gives us the retail spaces as well.

And then also to extend that down into the basement so whilst we did the basement for 1 Central Park we also interconnect that with 5 Park Lane which is the building that you can see here, so there is a significant lot of work that happens underground here too.

JB: What role did you play in the broader precinct and how this building fits within the connecting spaces?

MG: 1 Central Park was the signature development. The first point of development that was to happen within the entire precinct here, so we were worked very closely with a lot of the landscape intentions that were happening here. About the interconnections that were being created between what was happening with Chippendale to the immediate south and into the urban sense of Sydney. And that those connections and those interplays in 1 Central Park being this first critical place that allowed the building to be placed and then us to be making sure that we had very strong connections, and that we could allow all those interplays to track down into the ground and then up into the building as well.

So, the area that we are sitting in here as well which we call the southern courtyard was a major part of where we are and that extends a good way out and down out into the Chippendale Green Space too, so our connections were very a strong and their relationships helped to build up very quickly and very effectively with a great number of people. There's an enormous team when we do such big projects like this and whilst it's great that I am here talking with you there's literally 100s of people.

JB: So, a site of this significance there must have been some major expectations on the developer and the project team to deliver something really special tell us about that?

MG: The 1 Central Park precinct, if obviously you are familiar, there's the Carlton and United Brewery site that occupied here before then and this is 5.8 hectares a very significant. Also has a history that dates back to at least 1835 with the Tooth family with breweries from that time as well. Being such a significant 5.8 hectare site so close to the city, there was a lot of interest from the Department of Planning, and there was a lot of interest from the City of Sydney about what would be intended here and about how that would happen. So, there was a lot of attention and there was a lot of a stakeholders and there was a lot of discussion that we could hold with various people whether they be in Department of Planning, City of Sydney various other authorities that were particularly interested in what would happen here.

We live in a very, and I think this is where 1 Central Park and the entire Central Park precinct, this is a pretty special opportunity when you get such significant size so close to the city, and then when there was the brewery site and there was contamination issues which required a lot of remediation of land. So when you get such significant place, or position relative to the city, there's a lot of interest there's a lot of strong critique and it means that we had to be very careful and methodical and go through a lot of process to sequentially build up the approvals and the planning processes and to attain a the go ahead to get to where we are today.

JB: And I understand there were some fairly progressive sustainability aspirations from both the City of Sydney and the NSW State Government?

MG: Yes exactly, so again, with such a significant area like this, with the precinct there was, and again I would think this also goes through to the vision and the aspirations of with Frasers Property Group and Sekisui House, is that with 1 Central Park being that first signature development, and again this very large basement and the connections that we have established from there, there was the need from those very, very early days to consider what it means to be

considering energy and water in those days. And so the central thermal plant was a key instigator that was that was created at the one at the same time as 1 Central Park and so was the recycled treatment plant down in our basement as well. So, all those things were coming on line at the completion of this project and that would establish the links that would happen here to then formalise how future and more developments happen around the entire precinct.

JB: So as a project Architect what were some of the challenges around the new technology and integrating that into the precinct and the building?

MG: Yes, I think there were challenges and I think they worked out incredibly well on a project like this. These challenges happen from when the assembly of a team, and again when there is 100s of people that they, whether they be consultants, or engineers, or they be from designers to landscape architects, to architects, to just various other people, suppliers and then the subcontractors. This is where there's are a lot of people and a lot of conflicting interest and a lot of requirement that will inherently contradict each other because someone sort of needs something else and someone needs something else that then nullifies what we've just resolved with those other people, so this is a very long ongoing sort of project.

There sort of is, when we think about a workshop that might resolve some design development, this is a workshop that goes on a number of times a week for a good year and we have that slow long process where some things go forward but many, many times things go backwards.

But it's just trying to hold to the vision and hold to what we are trying to achieve and trying to sequentially process things, so that we can make sense of what the people are contributing to us in terms of our team at the moment and to allow that to develop itself and then we can bring in other people as they become involved with the project. And then use those times where the project goes forward in terms of its design, it might step back or it might step to the side and then progressively it's getting better and better and better, but it's trying to sort of work through as the team about what it means for everyone's conflicting pieces of information to get to something that's now representing a bit more of a harmonious solution.

JB: What contribution do you think this project made to the conversation around urban renewal and densification of our cities.

MG: Completion, almost 3 years ago, with 1 Central Park is that this is a project for a private developer with very, very demanding commercial objectives that we've been able to meet and we have been able to deliver a lot of apartments with a lot of retail space and a connected way that met their requirements for how they need to operate as a successful developer it also means though....

JB: *Repeats question*

MG: So one of the aspects here that remain so strong is that this has worked very well.

JB: What are some of the lessons for others, other developers, planners, professionals to try and hit this kind of design excellence elsewhere when there are so many crappy infill development projects going on. What can we learn from this?

MG: So I think this is a project we look at it now, it's got a heliostat, which reflects sunlight. It's got a massive amount of green space, it's got water recycling, it's got a central thermal plant, all these things are quite big ticket items in what we consider in development.

When we were really going through this at the time it was quite the momentum and the energy of what we get from this entire big team of people was enormous, and it was real full dedication and that's where I find that the time frame or the process that we were working through. Then it was like well ok here's a central thermal plant so we make sure we make him some space and we can allocate and we can understand how that impacts.

Here's a water recycling treatment plant which is three stories high in our basement a significant area and again we are trying to place all those things and there's a certain manner in real retrospect if this all was sort of quite sequential and we just build with this and we bring in certain aspects of that, then we would be able to set ourselves up to expand and develop the project more and more. And it was more, that sort of richness that develops when sort of you are working with things over a year to two years to three years again.

Then when we were working with the builder and they bring in all their various subcontractors and we go through this whole development process again with those subcontractors. That sort of process builds up the strength, I think of what we can achieve here and again it's that sort of dedication that we can process with this.

It brings me back to really some of the prime values that were held very dear with a project like this, and then when we think about the people that will live in a development that we're designing for, when we think about what this means in terms of people that also surround and live within what we are doing here. We think about the communities that we can build, as we are establishing these developments and also of course we thought about what this means as a contribution to the city. When we hold those values and when we hold those very dear and they are a strong, they inform to how we create our design and what we want as that final vision projects like this happen.

JB: How do you feel now the projects completed and so successful and recognised how do you feel about that?

MG: Yeah it's a good question and its one I come back to quite a lot of times now, and that as an Architect and having a career in engineering before then and being very conscious about what I would like to achieve with my work.

When you achieve a project that has such a recognition and that's something so well received both within Sydney but within Australia and now internationally, they are very humbling experience, and its one that reinforces in my mind those sorts of ideas about why I wanted to go into a career like architecture. And that I hope, and that a project like this, and when I show other people around you can sense the inspiration I suppose that rubs off onto people, is that hopefully that a project like 1 Central Park is so important now, but I hope to feel that in time there will be other projects even more magnificent, and hopefully I have just made a little bit of a contribution to how those things can happen.

JB: So do you feel you have left your mark on Sydney's landscape as a profession on this project?

MG: Right, its sort of a slightly awkward question, where for me I always feel so much, this is about so many people and I was just very, very fortunate to be a small part of it. And yes I am the Project Architect for a big tower here, but as well there was so many people, these engineers that we worked with, and designers and the dedication of everyone. It feels like it's so good to work with something like this. So, whilst I feel yes I've made my mark it feels like I am really one part of many people making their mark.