

SYDNEY'S Darling

Darling Harbour is anchoring a citywide, large-scale redevelopment.



Sydney, Australia, home to 4 million people, is located around one of the largest natural deepwater harbors in the world. With a surface area of 21 square miles (54 square kilometers) and a shoreline of 150 miles (240 kilometers), Sydney Harbour is punctuated with massive sandstone headlands, sheltered coves, and sandy beaches. When Sydney was host of the 2000 Olympic summer games, images of its Opera House, Harbour Bridge, and its extensive waterfront endowment were beamed around the world. However, Sydney's waterfront, until the latter part of the 20th century, was taken for granted and in some cases defiled.

One such case is Sydney's Darling Harbour, a 133-acre (54-hectare) site that forms part of Sydney Harbour, adjoining the Sydney central business district. Until the early 1980s, Darling Harbour was used as a railway marshaling yard, dockland, warehouse, and industrial area. The catalyst for its redevelopment was Sydney's 1984 failed bid to be host of the World Expo in 1988. (Brisbane successfully bid for the World Expo—see page 64.) At that time, the premier of New South Wales, Neville Wran, was concerned that the national focus of Australia's 1988 bicentennial celebrations would move with the World Expo from Sydney—the birthplace of the nation—



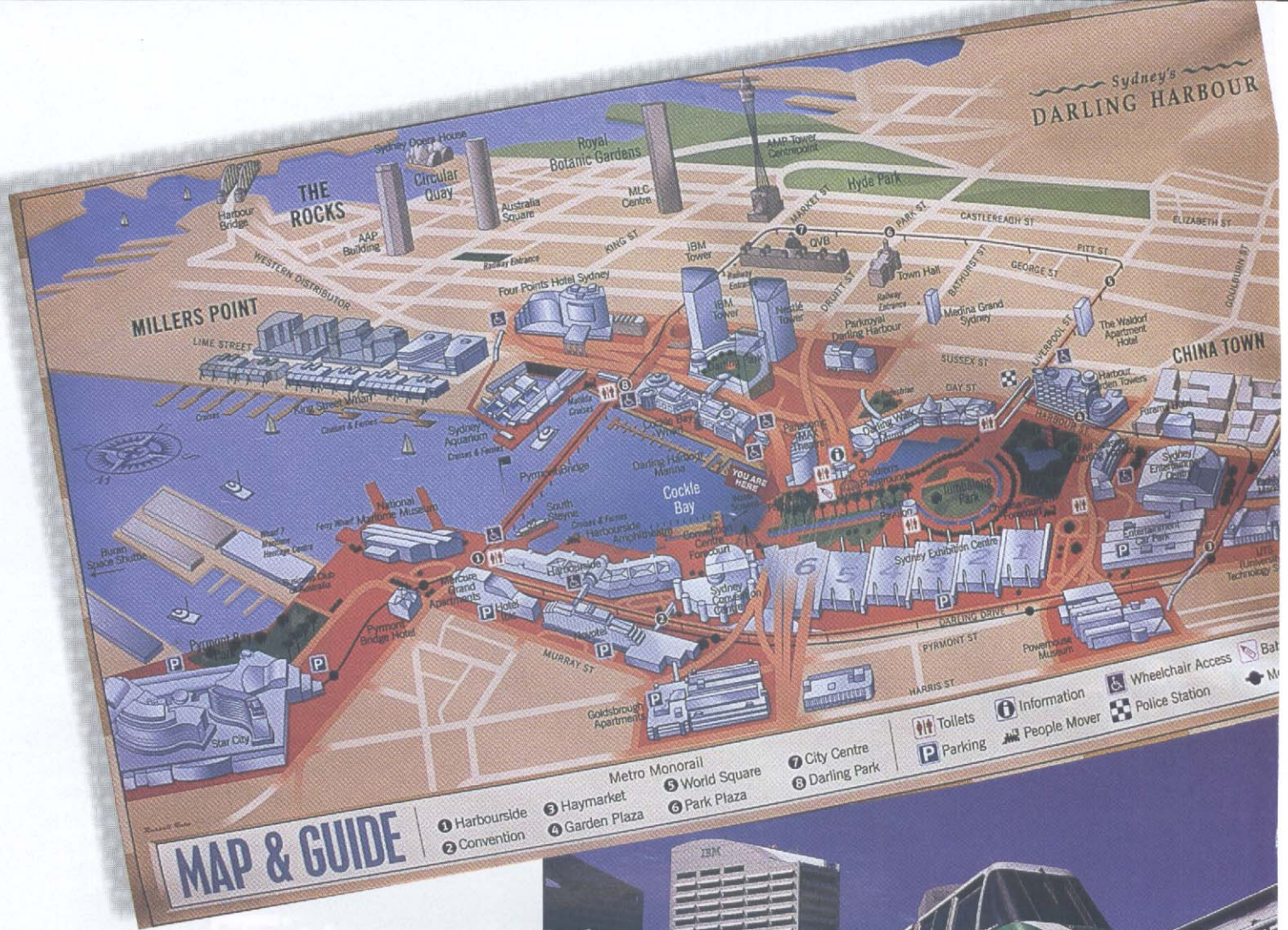
HOWARD KOZLOFF

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to Brisbane. Together with his minister for public works, Laurie Brereton, the premier created an ad hoc government agency, the Darling Harbour Authority, and charged it with delivering a major mixed-use redevelopment project that would be the focus of Australia's bicentennial celebrations.

The project was to be anchored by a mix of public and private developments that would capitalize on the waterfront location and would depend on a range of transport infrastructure improvements intended to draw patronage from employees and visitors to Sydney's central business district—all in all, both an ambitious and controversial project that involved the construction of a much-maligned monorail connection to the central business district. With less than four years to take the project from conception to completion, Brereton took to heart Wran's words, "If you want to do something big, important, and lasting, then you get rid of the bureaucratic red tape and you go for it." And go for it he did, creating a storm of public protest during which conservationist Milo Dunphy christened Brereton, "one of the great destroyers of his age—the minister for public jerks, the monorail, and monuments."

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Notwithstanding, the project was completed in record time and became a centerpiece of Australia's 1988 bicentennial celebrations, a major venue for the Sydney Olympics, and a significant driver of Sydney's citywide development plan. Some 150 million people have visited Darling Harbour since 1988; it draws more than 15 million people each year, 56 percent of whom are Sydney residents who make, on average, five visits per year. More than 3,800 people are employed at Darling Harbour's hotels, restaurants, museums, offices, gardens, and convention center. The initial \$450 million (A\$900 million) public investment became the catalyst for major private real estate investment projects within the redevelopment area. Almost \$290 million (A\$570 million) in revenue is generated per year by Darling Harbour.

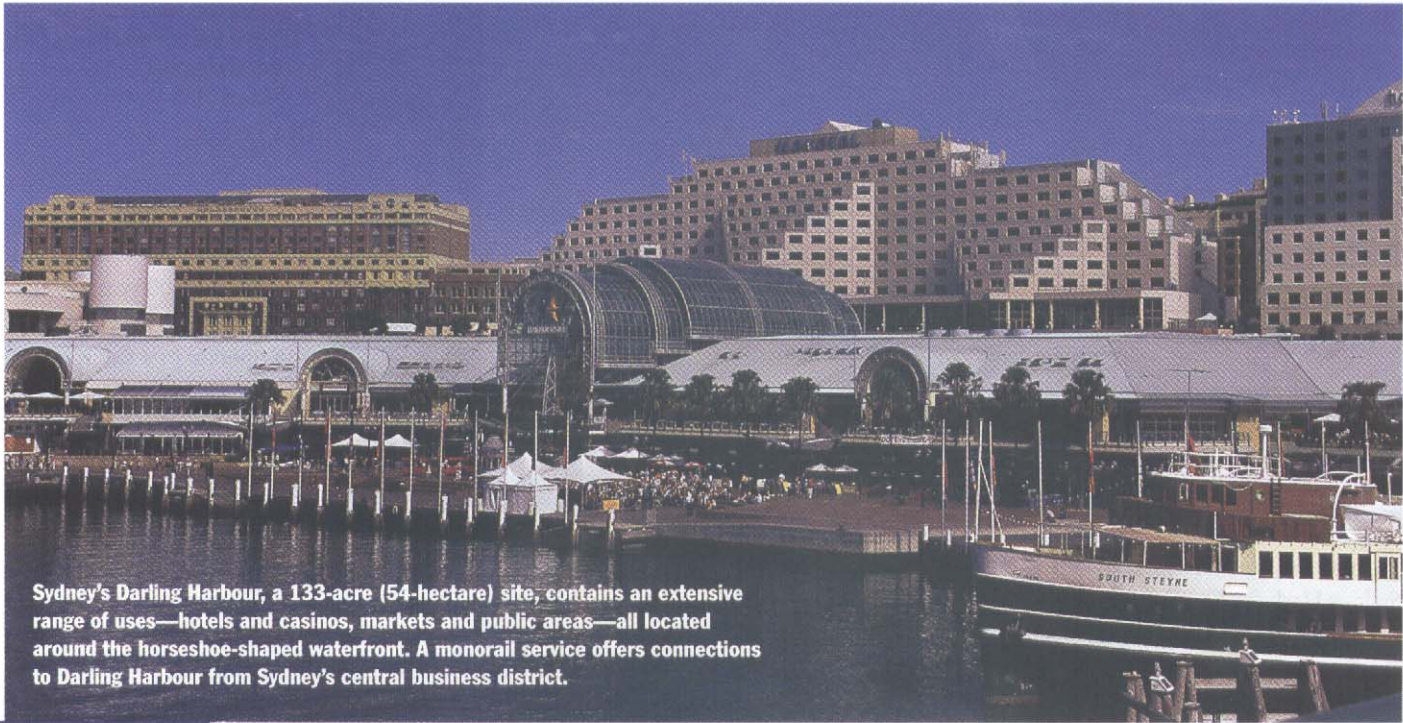
Darling Harbour now contains an extensive range of uses—hotels and casinos, markets and public areas—all stretching from the horseshoe-shaped waterfront area south underneath a highway overpass. Although commercial uses are necessary to make the project financially viable and to create a desirable pedestrian environment, a number of public uses and parks also are included, such as Tumbalong Park, which reflects the area's Aboriginal heritage; an interactive area at the center of Darling Harbour identified as Children's Playground A; and several outdoor theaters, including Palm Grove and the waterside amphitheaters at Harbourside and Cockle



Bay, the latter of which seats 3,000 people. Darling Harbour also stages numerous annual festivals, from the Jazz Festival and Circus and Street Theatre Festival to the Winter Music Program.

"One of the key elements in the continued success of Darling Harbour is its broad appeal. By providing a variety of leisure and entertainment facilities for Sydneysiders, it has avoided becoming a tourist trap and has created an atmosphere tourists, convention delegates, and others delight in," says Di Talty, general manager of Darling Harbour.

In all, Darling Harbour hosts more than 700 events per year. In addition, it offers cultural facilities—Australia's Northern Territory & Outback Centre, which doubles as a tourist office for the Northern Territory, includes interactive exhibits and performances of in-



Sydney's Darling Harbour, a 133-acre (54-hectare) site, contains an extensive range of uses—hotels and casinos, markets and public areas—all located around the horseshoe-shaped waterfront. A monorail service offers connections to Darling Harbour from Sydney's central business district.

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digenous music, art, and culture; the Gavala Aboriginal Art & Cultural Education Centre—Sydney's only Aboriginal-owned and -operated art and cultural education center—focuses on music, art, and culture; the Australian National Maritime Museum, with various ships moored at its front door, reflects Australia's long-held bond with the sea; the Sydney Aquarium, which replicates authentically Australian exhibits, such as a Great Barrier Reef exhibit and an underwater tunnel that winds through a shark tank; and the Powerhouse Museum, Australia's largest and most popular museum, which chronicles human achievement, from steam engines to space exploration. Venues used for various events in Darling Harbour include the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, which recently underwent a \$31 million

the port to become a loading and unloading point for munitions and other combat supplies. As an immigration arrival point, Darling Harbour was the "Ellis Island" of Australia, being the first place upon which refugees and immigrants set foot in Australia. During the 1960s, a period of rapid decline plagued Darling Harbour. The old wharves were demolished and rebuilt in an effort to modernize, but nearby Botany Bay surpassed Darling Harbour as Sydney's busiest port and major container terminal. Both the accompanying industry and further trade shunned the area in favor of Botany Bay's larger capacity and more modern facilities, leaving empty warehouses and abandoned rail yards along the shores of Darling Harbour.

Within 12 months of the announcement of the 1980s redevelopment project, almost all of the existing development within the 133-acre (54-hectare) area had been demolished, making way for construction to begin on the first major project—the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre. Within three years, the government had invested \$450 million (A\$900 million) in the redevelopment project. By 1999, the ratio of private sector development to publicly funded development had reached a three-to-one. Although Darling Harbour had celebrated its 12th birthday as an urban waterfront destination, it was the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics that served as the precinct's official coming-out party, showing that Australia had set benchmark standards for the conversion of a brown-field site into a world-class waterfront district.

Darling Harbour hosted six Olympic sports—boxing, fencing, judo, volleyball, weightlifting, and wrestling—attracting more than a half million visitors daily and earning the distinction of being the sixth-largest venue in Olympic history. "In addition to being a sporting venue, Darling Harbour had free entertainment and giant screens where people without tickets to Olympic events could watch live broadcasts and share in the Olympic atmosphere," notes Talty.

(A\$63 million) expansion and renovation, and the Sydney Entertainment Centre, which is often used for concerts and can be configured to hold 500 to 12,000 people. Both were used extensively in hosting events during the 2000 Olympics.

The history of Darling Harbour is not unique; it echoes that of other urban waterfronts transformed from once-thriving ports. In 1788, settlers gave the area now called Darling Harbour the name Long Cove. Before settlers arrived, however, Australia's native population, the Aboriginal people, named the area Tumbalong, meaning "meeting place." Darling Harbour, so named in 1826 in honor of Sir Ralph Darling, governor of New South Wales, became the country's busiest port, with industry and steam mills lining the shores. In the early 1940s, Australia's role in World War II allowed



Cockle Bay Wharf includes pedestrian promenades, restaurants and cafés, plus an IMAX theater.

Statutory authority over Darling Harbour now rests with the Sydney Harbour Foreshores Authority (SHFA), which has brought together a range of ad hoc state and city agencies, including the Darling Harbour Authority, into a single authority that is responsible for protecting and preserving the natural and cultural heritage along Sydney Harbour's foreshores as part of one integrated and interconnected public asset—amounting to 1,000 acres (400 hectares) of waterfront property. As the second-largest landowner in Sydney, the SHFA, according to its own reports, controls about \$1.8 billion (A\$3.5 billion) worth of assets, with an annual income of approximately \$75 million (A\$148 million) from property sales and leasing. In all, the SHFA and the organizations preceding it have sold approximately \$100 million (A\$200 million) worth of land in the past five years; over \$3.2 million (A\$6.5 million) was contributed to affordable housing in residential areas surrounding Darling Harbour. In addition, according to the SHFA, of the annual \$15 million (A\$30 million) in capital works expenditures, almost \$10.5 million (A\$21 million) is being used for community-related facilities, including parks, lighting, public art, and historic preservation.

While the role of the public sector in creating and expanding the public domain obviously is crucial, major commercial components are considered the lifeblood of successful urban waterfronts. Included at Darling Harbour is an IMAX theater, with an eight-story-high screen; a motion-simulation theater, called Cinemagic; and Sega World, an indoor theme park intended for children, offering attractions, entertainment, and rides, including a roller coaster, an adventure playground, and a 360-degree theater. However, the greatest revenue generators at Darling Harbour are not entertainment based. While the entertainment uses undoubtedly contribute to the ability of Darling Harbour to attract families and individuals of all ages, it is the retail and restaurant uses that are considered the driving force behind the economic progress of the area. The Harbourside Shopping Centre, which links the maritime museum to the Sydney Entertainment Centre, offers 150 shops on two levels and a food court with 40 vendors. Retail uses range from everyday convenience needs to souvenir shops, as well as fashion outlets.

City also contains substantial residential development and connects adjacent Chinatown to Darling Harbour. The recent completion of Cockle Bay Wharf as a restaurant and café complex also has contributed to the character and draw of Darling Harbour, with over 50 eating establishments and a number of bars and clubs.

Located only a ten-minute walk from the center of Sydney, Darling Harbour is easy to reach. Pedestrian bridges cross major arterials bordering the site, and direct ferry and monorail services from throughout the downtown serve to give visitors easy and convenient access to the site. Regional light-rail and bus services bring them within walking distance of the precinct. Once visitors are at Darling Harbour, a people mover transports them from one attraction to the next at regular intervals. Ten pay parking lots and garages can accommodate more than 7,500 vehicles. Two of the biggest structures hold nearly 3,400 vehicles and are open 24 hours.

The proximity of the downtown and the presence of a major convention center make Darling Harbour an attractive location for hotel development. The Darling Harbour hotels offer, in aggregate, 2,700 rooms, and report occupancy rates of 85 percent, surpassing those downtown. Included are Star City, a five-star hotel that also houses a casino and several bars and restaurants; the Four Points Darling Harbour, another five-star hotel and Sydney's largest hotel, with 649 rooms; and the 256-room Hotel Ibis Darling Harbour, with all-weather pedestrian access to the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre.

"It's all about creating a special place for people that combines the natural beauty of Sydney Harbour with a critical mass and choice of interconnected activity, all of which is made both accessible and attractive to residents and visitors alike," says New South Wales Premier Bob Carr. "A great deal of political and public capital has been invested in returning Darling Harbour to the people, but no one doubts the strength and value of the place-making dividend Darling Harbour now delivers to Sydney." ■

HOWARD KOZLOFF, WHO LIVED IN SYDNEY WHILE STUDYING THE OLYMPIC PLANNING PROCESS AS A FRANK KNOX TRAVELING FELLOW FROM HARVARD UNIVERSITY, IS WORKING TOWARD A MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AT THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING, AND PRESERVATION.

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Urban Land



Taking Off Airport Cities

Mixing Uses

Water Views



Features

36 Industry Aftermath

TRISHA RIGGS

Debating the effects of terrorism on real estate development.

42 Airport Cities

JUDITH RUBIN

Many airports around the country are becoming major city centers.

48 Taking Flight

SARAH STANLEY

An airport-related development plan is being proposed for downtown Jamaica, Queens.

54 Urban Disney

CHARLES LOCKWOOD

The city of Anaheim and the Walt Disney Company create an urban destination resort.

60 Mixed Brew

LEO MACLEOD

Portland, Oregon's largest private redevelopment is envisioned as a city within a city.

64 After Expo

JOE ROLLO

South Bank Brisbane, site of World Expo '88, has been transformed into a mixed-use urban precinct.

70 A River Blueprint

STEVE DURRANT AND JOE BIERNAT

Transforming a city waterfront into a modern urban amenity is credited with bringing the shores of the Mississippi back to life.

76 On the Pier

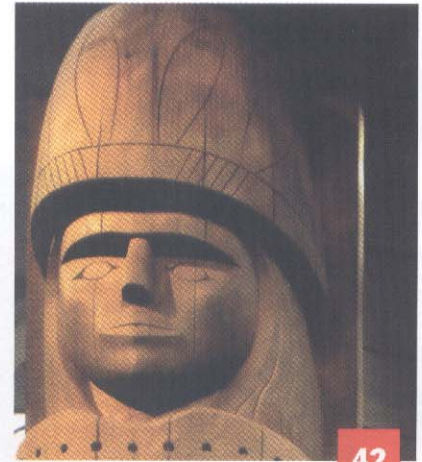
CHRIS BARNETT

A rehabilitated warehouse-turned-office building is seeing the rebirth of San Francisco's Pier 1.

82 Sydney's Darling

HOWARD KOZLOFF

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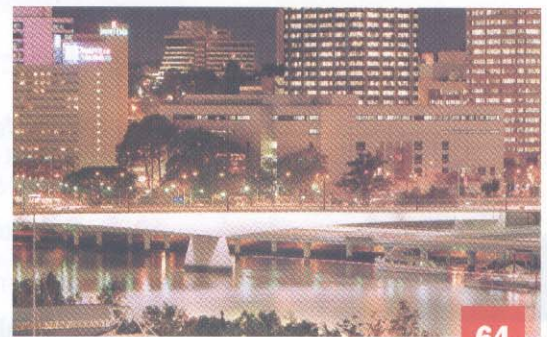
Flight centers.

42



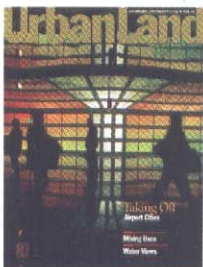
36

What next?



Brisbane banks.

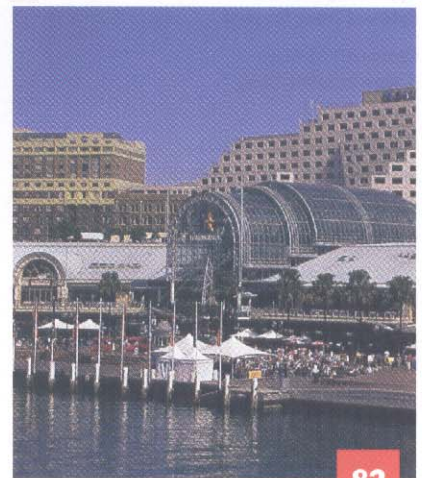
64



ON THE COVER:

"Sky's the Limit," a lumeric sculpture designed by Michael Hayden for United Airlines Terminal One at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago.

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Water works.

82

MORE CONTENTS ON FOLLOWING PAGE >