

Submission regarding heritage impacts and demolition plan

Request for modification to heritage impact statement and demolition plan to recognise the significance of the Harbourside Shopping Centre architecture and allow monorail station structure to be removed in a manner that it, or at least key components of it, could be sustainably re-used as a home in the outer suburbs of Sydney

I request that:

- The heritage impact statement be amended to acknowledge the significance of the Darling Harbour redevelopment of the 1980s, and in particular the Rouse-inspired design of the Harbourside shopping centre that was likely the only Australian manifestation of the Rouse “Festival Marketplace” idea on which numerous projects, including Harbourside, were based internationally during that era.
- The demolition plan for the Harbourside Shopping Centre, Darling Harbour Redevelopment be modified to allow for removal of all or part of the monorail station attached to Harbourside, scheduled for Stage 2 of the demolition, in a form suitable to be adaptively re-used as a personal home in the outer suburbs.

The 1980s Harbourside Shopping Centre development is more significant from the standpoint of architectural heritage than the project documentation seems to describe. In the 1980s, James Rouse created the “Festival Marketplace” idea that was realised for urban renewal in locations such as Boston and Baltimore in America. Darling Harbour’s Festival Marketplace, now called the Harbourside Shopping Centre, was an embodiment of that in Sydney. Interestingly, if you look at just the right vintage photographs of Baltimore HarbourPlace, you’ll clearly see the influence it had on Darling Harbour’s Harbourside Shopping Centre. In fact, with a quick look, you might even mistake those photos for photos of Darling Harbour’s Harbourside Shopping Centre and its forecourt.

This project represents an opportunity – the ONLY opportunity I am aware of, related to ANY significant Darling Harbour architecture – to conserve a manageably-sized piece of that architecture. I am willing, and in fact highly motivated, to put my time, money and energy – not just words or a petition against progress on a web site – on the line to make it happen.

Definition of “the station”

“The station” is defined as the cylindrical metal and glass structure plus the roof that extends outward from the cylindrical portion toward the west. It ideally also includes interior fittings such as wall signage and equipment. It specifically does not include the foundation on which the station sits.

Possible benefits of incorporating this into the demolition plan

Environmental/sustainability benefits

- Adaptive re-use is a superior form of material handling to recycling, because less energy is used to transition materials to their next use.
- The monorail station is made primarily of steel and glass. CSIRO says the following about the conservation of embodied energy of these materials (the energy used to create those materials), comparing re-used and recycled materials:
 - Re-using glass conserves 5 TIMES as much embodied energy as using recycled glass does.

- Re-using steel conserves more than 30% more embodied energy as using recycled steel does. This is significant because steel is one of the materials that requires the most energy to manufacture.
- Adaptive re-use leverages the manufacturing effort, labour, and expense that has already gone into creating those materials in their present form, and the labour that went into the station's original construction.
- In this case, re-use enables reconstruction of the station at another site, more quickly and efficiently than the structure could be recreated from scratch.

An aspect of sustainability is that a building's design facilitates flexibility in building use, functionality, and change¹, so that the building can have more than one "life". Implicit in that is that the building is built to last – and given the materials from which these monorail stations were constructed, that's certainly the case. A relative of a former co-worker who helped build that station described it as "bomb-proof". Having watched the demolition of similar stations at Galleries Victoria and the Convention Centre car park, I know that even the glass used for the stations' window walls is of surprisingly high strength and quality.

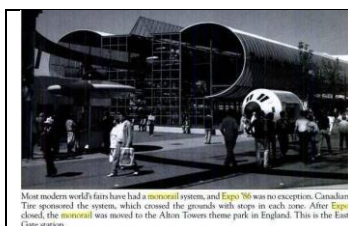
Although sustainability wasn't a buzzword in the 1980s, the proposed Harbourside station re-purposing project satisfies multiple sustainability criteria.

Architectural preservation benefits

These cylindrical monorail stations have been a unique, iconic feature of the Sydney streetscape and the Darling Harbour precinct for over 30 years. It would be culturally worthwhile and of historic value in the future, to preserve an example of this unusual architecture in which a futuristic industrial design aesthetic meets transportation infrastructure utility, in a manner seldom seen today.

Like them or hate them, the stations have inspired strong reactions on the part of people who've seen them, for decades. That's what significant architecture and design does! The Honourable Lord Mayor Clover Moore has even gone on record with her views.² I appreciate the industrial look of, and materials used in, the stations, their unusual shape, the 28m wall of curved glass, the ¾ circular steel beams outlining the two ends of the cylinder, and even the lengthwise split level interior.

The stations are representative of a design style for monorail stations used internationally in the mid-1980s to early 1990s timeframe. The other examples of which I am aware are the following:



A similar monorail station design, for Vancouver's Expo 86, won a design award for its architect, Karen Marler. That station was demolished at the end of Expo 86.

¹ "Understanding sustainable construction", Holcim Foundation, <http://www.holcimfoundation.org/AboutPages/what-is-sustainable-construction>.

² "Plans for Sydney's abandoned monorail stations include a giant fish tank", Jacob Saulwick, Sydney Morning Herald, November 9, 2013, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/plans-for-sydneys-abandoned-monorail-stations-include-a-giant-fish-tank-20131108-2x730.html>



One station seemingly inspired by the Sydney monorail station design still stands at the Merry Hill Shopping Centre in the UK, used for a monorail system that operated between 1991 and 1996. Its future is uncertain. Other cylindrical stations at Merry Hill even more similar to the Sydney monorail stations were demolished years ago.

Other monorail systems have tended to integrate stations into existing buildings (as seen in Sydney's former Galleries Victoria and City Centre stations), or use open theme park style platforms that are not nearly as visually striking and not amenable to re-purposing.

Additionally, the Sydney monorail stations were designed in the context of the Darling Harbour precinct's urban renewal, which was identified in newspapers at the time as the largest urban renewal project ever executed in Australia. The curved motif featured in the stations was used elsewhere in Darling Harbour as well – from the curved metal roof over walkways between the Convention Centre and the car park (demolished 2014), to the 1980s style glass barrel vault features of the Harbourside shopping centre itself. On a broader scale, it could be seen in the original Sydney Convention Centre and IMAX buildings in Darling Harbour as well.

Public relations benefits

The Harbourside Shopping Centre redevelopment project has had a somewhat controversial history, resulting in changes in tower design and location. It may be of value to the government and to Mirvac to have a feel-good story to tell, not just about preserving a part of Sydney's history, but about transforming it into a home.

This project offers a fantastic sustainability story for the Harbourside redevelopment project to tell, which shows that there is sometimes a market for the re-use of even very unusual pieces of material – similar to the good publicity Theiss John Holland received (and still occasionally receives) for re-using monorail beams to build a temporary bridge used during the construction of a railway line.

Indeed, based on a conversation I had with Peter Maddison of Grand Designs Australia a few years ago, it could even be featured on that program. A representative of Fremantle Media was intrigued and invited me to stay in touch as my original Paddy's Market station project progressed. The re-use angle featured prominently in her interest, and she was also intrigued by the uniqueness of the project and the back story of how it occurred to me to turn a disused monorail station into a home. Unfortunately, it ended up not proceeding due to my inability to acquire that station, but could be back in play if the Harbourside station can be acquired.

Community benefits (social and economic)

Sustainability is also about having a positive impact on the community, through responding to people's emotional and psychological needs – providing stimulating environments in which people work, live and play, that inspire the human spirit. Few things have inspired me to the degree that this project does. It offers a chance to combine artistic and engineering aspects of "creating", in the context of preserving an unusual structure related to the Sydney Monorail, with the ultimate result being the dream of many new immigrants – a home of my own.

The project also offers economic benefit to an older single female IT worker who currently rents her home, allowing her to get into home ownership. It's been much in the news that single women over 55 are a high risk group for homelessness. My obtaining a permanent dwelling would mean there's likely one less woman at risk for that. In fact, since my ideal plan is to create a duplex, with the

cylindrical section being a larger dwelling and the roof area out to the west of it being enclosed as a 1BR granny flat, it would likely provide a place for at least two such women to live.

It also offers the opportunity to demonstrate to others that “the little guy”, with enough determination and hard work, can accomplish things that others only talk about wishing “someone” would do. For example, **71% of the respondents to a poll in the Sydney Morning Herald indicated that the community should have a chance to repurpose the old monorail stations**, while only 29% advocated simply tearing them down³. My solution presents a constructive, forward-looking middle ground – remove a station carefully (meeting the area’s need to see it gone), and repurpose it elsewhere (meeting the community’s desire to see them repurposed).

Current status

To date, I have not had discussions with Mirvac about this re-use project.

In 2014, I did discuss similar plans with SICEEP regarding the Paddy’s Market monorail station. Because of Lend Lease’s rush timeline to build on that site, and my request being put aside until too late in the process, I was unfortunately not able to accomplish my goal with regards to that structure. The idea, however, did attract a degree of community interest and support at that time, with support expressed by multiple sustainability and re-use advocates, infrastructure project community engagement staff, and even some Lend Lease engineers who recognised that my vision for turning that unusual structure into a contemporary home had merit. My plan also received coverage in the Sydney Morning Herald⁴, and I was interviewed by multiple Sydney radio stations.

I had done my homework, and knew that the project was feasible and within my budget. After 6 months of effort and enquiries spanning from Sydney to Perth, I had obtained many pages of engineering drawings for the monorail infrastructure, including the Paddy’s Market monorail station – and the Harbourside monorail station – and chatted with the stations’ architect, Robert Perry, here in Sydney. The Paddy’s Market station drawings were reviewed by an engineer and a team I had tentatively lined up to start on the job if it was approved.

My ideal scenario, of moving the monorail station in one piece, was not feasible for the Paddy’s Market monorail station due to its location. It may, however, be possible to take the station at Harbourside out of Darling Harbour in nearly complete form, via water, on a barge. This would be my preference if the site environment during the removal window was such that this could occur in a financially feasible manner – including an appropriate site for any lifting equipment such as cranes or hoists required.

As an alternative to that, I would like to obtain the key structural components of the station – at a minimum, the structural steel members and curved steel panels making up the body of the station and the roof extension toward the west, and ideally the curved glass panels, in a form suitable for reconstruction.

The exact methodology, and indeed what could be retrieved, depends on discussions with the Mirvac project team, which would need to be set up in response to this submission.

³ “Plans for Sydney’s abandoned monorail stations include a giant fish tank”, Jacob Saulwick, Sydney Morning Herald, November 9, 2013, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/plans-for-sydneys-abandoned-monorail-stations-include-a-giant-fish-tank-20131108-2x730.html>

⁴ “Sydney woman wants to make monorail station her home”, Michael Koziol, Sydney Morning Herald, December 4, 2014, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-woman-wants-to-make-former-monorail-station-her-home-20141202-11yi26.html>

Why turn a monorail station into a home?

The Harbourside monorail station is of a suitable size and design to be repurposed as a stand-alone dwelling.

I'm a fan of the Sydney Monorail and the 1980s Rouse-inspired "Festival Marketplace" glass and steel Darling Harbour architecture. During most of the monorail removal project, I was out on the streets of Sydney and the Pyrmont Bridge photo-documenting the removal of that infrastructure, at night, on weekends, and sometimes before work and during lunch during the work week. I did it as a volunteer public service project, not for profit, with the permission of the company doing the demolition. I likely created the most complete pictorial record of that project that exists.

Since then, I have also followed and photographed numerous other transport infrastructure projects in Sydney – from the removal of toll booths in the city and the horseshoe pedestrian bridge over Victoria Road in Rozelle, to the construction of the Sydney Metro, with a focus on tunneling-related activities. (It was my privilege as a dedicated follower of the project to be invited to one of the CBD tunnel boring machine breakthroughs.)

I live sustainably with a minimal footprint – depending on public transportation, walking and cycling to get around town, not using air-con, and "living" re-use (items in my home from my computer desk to my wardrobe, kitchen crockery, my computer monitor and even my pro-grade musical keyboard are all second-hand). A repurposed, surplus piece of transport infrastructure would be a great fit as a home for a sustainability-focused person.

In Conclusion

In the years since my attempt to acquire the Paddy's Market monorail station, I have purchased Sydney Monorail carriages and Gold Coast Monorail carriages, and a small amount of beam for display purposes. This demonstrates that I am willing to back my serious interest in the history of the monorail with actual investment, to a degree unmatched by others in Australia.

I have also done extensive research about the 1980s redevelopment of Darling Harbour and hope to write a book about it as time permits.

Many heritage fans interested in preservation of a structure insist that the structure's location is a key component of it, and use that as a justification for insisting that it must stay right where it is. I am not asking for that. I am willing (and eager) to move the item of interest to me elsewhere, to a suitable home site, rather than stand in the way of progress.

Please help me make this happen.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen C OBoyle