

Blues Point Tower

Address 14-28 Blues Point Road, McMahons Point,
NSW, 2060

Practice Harry Seidler

Designed Completed 1962

History & Description

In 1957 the North Sydney Council proposed a rezoning of a large portion of McMahons Point for industrial redevelopment. The McMahons Point and Lavender Bay Progress Association, supported by outspoken architects, opposed the zoning, proposing an alternative residential scheme for the redevelopment of the peninsula. The scheme, designed by Harry Seidler, consisted of a hotel on Blues Point, seven high-rise; twelve mid-rise and nine low-rise apartments. The scheme was Corbusian in scale and proposed that views for residents would be maintained by placing low-rise apartments on the water's edge with high-rise on the ridge. The residents' campaign was successful. The New South Wales Government overturned the Council's rezoning proposal in 1958. However, as a result of rising property values and the subsequent credit squeeze in 1960, the alternative grand scheme was never pursued.

The only site to be redeveloped was the hotel site on Blues Point which had earlier been acquired by Lend Lease. One of Seidler's high rise apartment buildings designed for the scheme was constructed there in 1961-62 by Civil and Civic, the second of many collaborations between Seidler and G. J. Dusseldorp and structural engineer Peter Miller – the first being Ithaca Gardens.

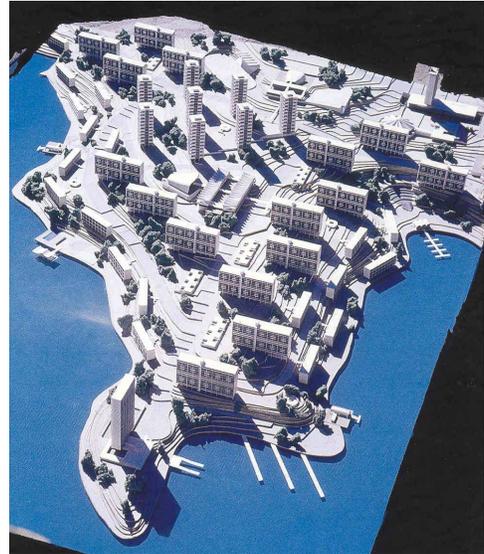
Seidler sited the building diagonally across the points of the compass, providing water views for all apartments. Almost square in plan with its shear walls expressed as vertical blades on the exterior, the balcony positions alternate from floor to floor, creating a variety of apartment configurations and a complex façade reminiscent of a Mondrian painting. The staggered balconies also achieved vertical fire separation. It was the tallest residential building in the southern hemisphere and the first high rise to be registered under the ground breaking *Conveyancing (Strata Titles) Act, 1961*. It was also the first sprinklered residential building in Sydney and influenced the subsequent Building Code – Ordinance 70.

Statement of Significance

Blues Point Tower is physical evidence of the Corbusian Villa Radius approach to urban renewal and the scheme was a forerunner of a whole movement in architecture and high density housing. Seidler's use of an alternate floor plan solved the problem of vertical fire separation of units and at the same time introduced a rhythmic, staggered fenestration. The structural systems for this building stretched standard structural engineering practice of the time.

Criteria Applicable

N1. Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design
N2. Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
N5. Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history
N6. Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period



Planning scheme of 1957 (Source: Harry Seidler: *Selected and Current Works*, 1997)



Entrance facade (Photo: Max Dupain)



Apartment living room (Photo: Max Dupain)