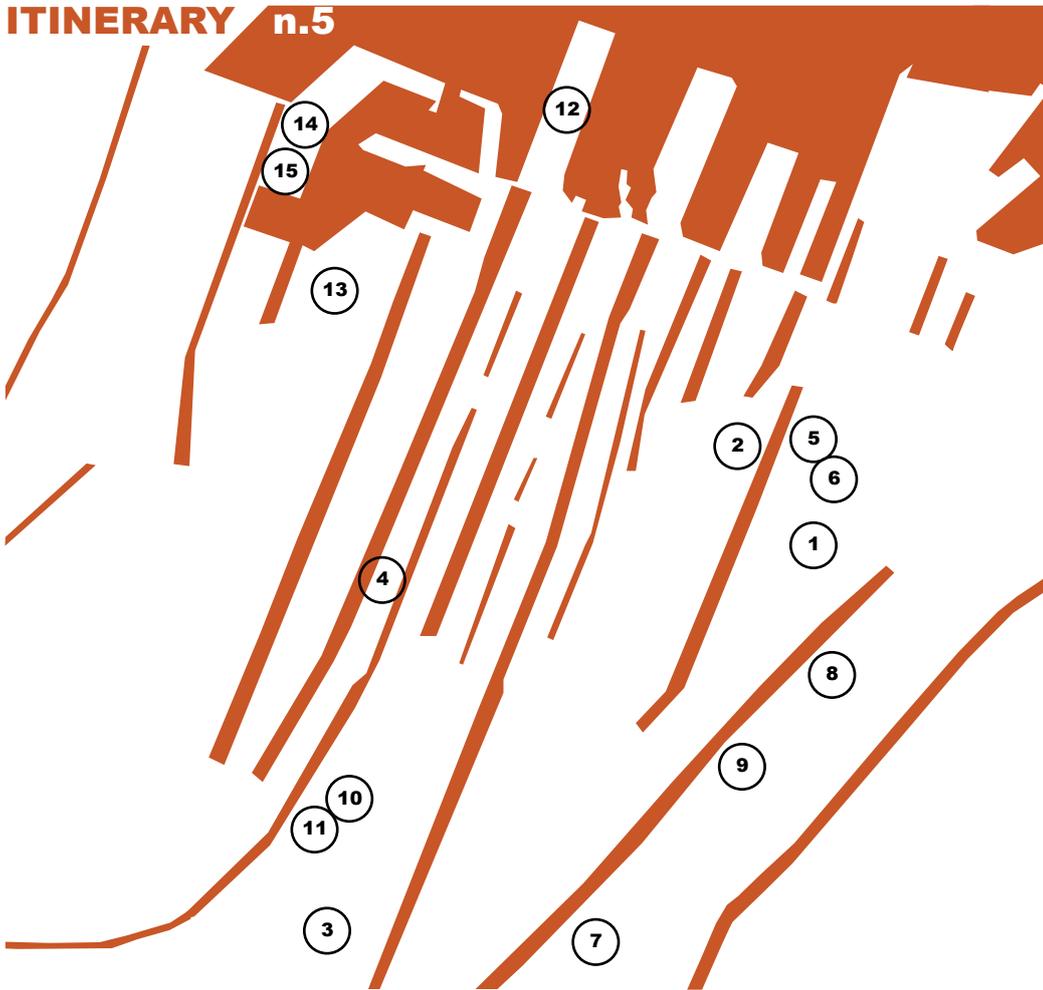


ITINERARY n.5



Auckland's Inner City Apartments

One of Auckland's most remarkable characteristics is the degree to which it is suburbanised. The outer city is an almost unbroken carpet of detached houses. Just a thin fringe of medium-density housing and low-rise commercial buildings prevents the suburbs from running right up to the base of our inner-city skyscrapers. A house on its own piece of land has long been 'the New Zealand dream' and it was seen as the norm to which Kiwis should aspire. For the greater part of last century, such inner-city living options as existed were largely the realm of suburbia's misfits – students, beneficiaries, artists, gays, musos, intellectuals, and other disruptive elements.

A purpose-built apartment in the inner city became an option from at least 1914, when Middle Courtville was built, and within a few years – notably following the Influenza Epidemic of 1918 and the over-crowding that was identified as a factor in its spread – developers had jumped on the apartment bandwagon in droves. A second wave of speculative development in the mid-to-late 1930s followed the Great Depression. These early apartment buildings were not crowded, congested tenements, but upmarket statements of progress and urban sophistication, encapsulating a chic modern lifestyle in a way that the broad majority of detached houses of the period did not.

In the 1940s and 1950s, central government became the country's most high profile builder of inner-city apartments. Privately-built apartments of the 1950s and 1960s tend to be in the inner suburbs rather than the inner city. This shift away from the city centre was unsurprising, given the fact that land in the CBD was heavily developed and empty sites were scarce. However, fear-mongering middle-class commentators were vocal about the standards of nineteenth century cottages and worker dwellings, describing such houses as 'slums' and a threat to social stability and associating them with crime and immoral behaviour. Only government, both central and local, had the power to transform such areas – 'slum clearance' and 'urban renewal' were the terms used – and the transformations of Myers Park and Greys Avenue both served as precedents for the Auckland City Council's vast redevelopment of Freemans Bay in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Speculative apartment building soon spilled out into the next ring of suburbs – areas such as Remuera and Herne Bay. However, in the 1990s, encouraged by a City Council that recognised the CBD's potential to absorb some of Auckland's rapidly growing population, developers returned to the inner city, first with the refurbishment of older commercial buildings and then with purpose-built apartments. The highest profile examples of these new buildings have resulted from developers responding to opposite ends of the demographic spectrum. Large and often surprisingly poorly designed apartment blocks simultaneously accommodated the needs of overseas students and absentee landlord investors. This growth at the lower end of the market attracted amenities long absent from the inner city (particularly supermarkets). The arrival of the America's Cup then spurred a redevelopment of the waterfront that made inner-city life glamorous. The high-spec apartment blocks that catered to this glamour end of the market introduced some of the first new inner-city lifestyle possibilities since the 1930s.

The City Council is planning for an inner-city population of almost 40,000 by 2021 – up from 13,000 in 2001. With controls in place to moderate the worst excesses of 'rabbit hutch' builders, technology offering new ways to combine work and play, and an increasingly sophisticated and adventurous populace, the next decade will offer architects opportunities to explore and develop exciting new models for inner-city living. *Julia Gatley & Andrew Barrie*

Sources:

Excluding Princes Wharf, the photographs are by Julia Gatley and Andrew Barrie. Thanks to Martin Jones of the Ak Regional Office of the NZ Historic Places Trust for his invaluable help.

Most of the early buildings are registered historic places and the Trust's Field Record Forms on the individual buildings are an excellent source of information. More generally, apartment buildings get some coverage in Peter Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture From Polynesian Beginnings to 1990* (Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991) and Douglas Lloyd Jenkins, *At Home: A Century of New Zealand Design* (Auckland: Random House, 2003). Julia Gatley has written specifically about state rental flats, first in her Masters thesis (VUW, 1997) and then in 'Going Up Rather Than Out: State Rental Flats in New Zealand, 1935-1949', in Barbara Brookes (ed.), *At Home in New Zealand: Houses History People* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2000), pp. 140-54. *Home and Building* became a regular publisher of apartment buildings from its first issue in 1936. The individual buildings continued to attract journal articles, at least for as long as the building type remained urban rather than suburban. See *Home and Building* May 1938 (Berrisville), and Jan/March 1948 (Symonds Street Flats).

1

1914 & 1919

Middle & Corner Courtville
7 & 9 Parliament Street
A. Sinclair O'Connor



Middle Courtville is thought to have been Auckland's first inner-city apartment building, followed five years later by its five-storey southern neighbour. To the north, Braemar ('Little Courtville') was built as a house in the late 1880s and was adapted for re-use as flats in the 1940s. The three make an excellent precinct, their names reflecting their proximity to Edward Rumsey's former Supreme Court Building (1860s). Of the three, Corner Courtville is the most impressive. Secondary sources draw comparison with the work of Edwin Lutyens, but the building also suggests a possible interest in the Viennese Secession.

2

1922-23

Shortland Flats
93 Shortland Street
Mullions and Smith



Architect Thomas Mullions, a partner of Sholto Smith in the firm of Mullions and Smith, was one of three developers responsible for the realisation of this apartment building. It is one of a small number to retain a company share ownership structure today. Vertical articulation, culminating in pinnacles atop the parapet, emphasises the verticality of the building which at just six storeys must rank as one of the world's shorter examples of Skyscraper Gothic. Windows have been replaced, but internal timber panelling remains intact, in the foyer at least.

3

1926-27

Espano Flats
20 Poynton Terrace
A. Sinclair O'Connor

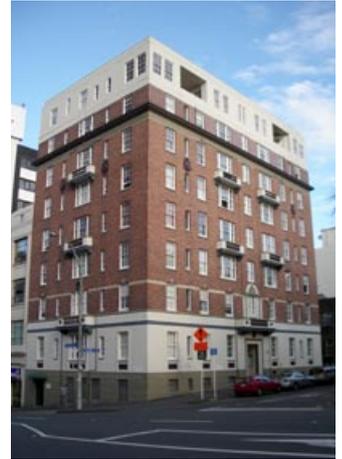


The redevelopment of this and surrounding sites followed specific initiatives in improving the character and accessibility of the southern Queen Street/ Karangahape Road area, including the creation of Myers Park (1914-1915) and the installation of an electric tram line from the CBD to Karangahape Road in 1916. As the name suggests, Espano had Spanish Mission aspirations and is thus in contrast to O'Connor's earlier Courtville buildings. Spanish Mission details include the plastered wall finish in conjunction with large clay roof tiles, round arches and barley twist columns.

4

1929-30

Hampton Court
62 Wellesley Street West
Surrey S. Allemen



Hampton Court was an NZIA Gold Medal winner in 1931. It is of a considerably larger scale than the earlier apartment buildings, thus demonstrating developer confidence in this building type just before the Great Depression. It is a Neo-Georgian building, characterised by restrained classical detailing, tripartite façade treatment, symmetry about a central entrance and the use of red brick in conjunction with white-painted multi-light windows. The rooftop addition was made in about 1960.

5

1929-30

Brooklyn Apartments
66 Emily Place
A. Sinclair O'Connor



In the late 1920s the Auckland City Council introduced new bylaws for multi-unit dwellings, including daylighting requirements. Brooklyn was the test case for the laws. Like Hampton Court, it is a big beast of a building and confirms O'Connor to have been not only a pluralist but indeed an eclecticist. Brooklyn is essentially another Neo-Georgian building, but with a smattering of decorative detailing that can only be described as Art Deco.

6

1935

Eden Hall
3 Eden Crescent
Reginald Hammond



Hammond had a long-standing interest in garden suburb ideology and design, and had an unprecedented opportunity to pursue this interest from 1936 when he was appointed Department of Housing Construction town planner and was responsible for designing schemes of 300-400 state houses. Eden Hall, completed a year earlier, demonstrates that Hammond also maintained an interest in medium density urban housing. The building signals an important shift towards modernism. Decorative detailing was all but rejected. That which remains serves to draw attention to the attributes of particular building elements, notably those of horizontality and verticality.

7

1935-36

Cintra Flats
7-13 Whitaker Place
Horace Massey



The first issue of *Home and Building* (published under the title *Building Today* in October 1936) conveys the excitement that Cintra generated when it was completed: 'And so the trend towards flat-dwelling was accentuated. To this is united, in Cintra, another powerful trend - modernism. . . . Cintra is modern - modern without being revolutionary, simply the logical use of materials adapted to the same requirements of living. . . . Cintra is a triumph of compact planning. . . . Cintra is a very fine practical home for modern living'. It received an NZIA Gold Medal in 1937. See *Building Today* Oct '36.

8

1937

Berrisville Apartments
152 Anzac Avenue
E. Rupert Morton



This building was designed in Morton's office a young Richard Toy, and demonstrates both local and international influences. At the time of completion, Berrisville was described by *Home and Building* as 'continental'. Brick cladding and plastered banding emphasise its horizontality, contrasted by the verticality of two chimney stacks and the projecting main entry and stairwell. A curving hood shelters the entry while the window above gives exterior architectural expression to vertical circulation. The two bedroom units comprised open living and dining with the kitchen just a door away. Large windows ensured plentiful daylight internally. See *Home and Building* May '38.

9

1945-47

Symonds Street Flats
44 Symonds Street
Fred Newman, Housing Div'n



Auckland was late to get its first blocks of state rental flats because the Auckland Branch of the State Advances Corporation favoured detached houses. Wellington had four blocks of state flats before Auckland had any. Support for this building type came from the Housing Division of the MoW. The Symonds Street Flats follow in the design footsteps of Wellington's Dixon Street Flats (1940-1944), but are differentiated and indeed distinguished by a T-shaped footprint and the subtle curve of the street façade, which echoes a bend in the road. Of the 45 flats, 26 were one-bedroom, 18 were two-bedroom and one was three-bedroom. See *Home & Building* Jan/Mar 1948.

10

1945-47

Lower Greys Avenue Flats
93-113 Greys Avenue
F. Gordon Wilson, Housing Div'n



In 1941, with financial support from Auckland City, the Labour government embarked upon a scheme of 'slum clearance' in Greys Avenue. Initially, the government hoped to acquire and clear both sides of the street. Housing Division architects prepared a vast scheme for the site, comprising 468 units. Construction was delayed because of the Second World War. From 1945 four blocks were completed to this original design. The architectural language was a continuation of that used at Dixon Street and Symonds Street. Of the 50 flats, five were one bedroom, 42 were two bedroom and three were three bedroom. See *Building Progress* Nov 1947.

11

1957-58

Upper Greys Avenue Flats
115-39 Greys Avenue
F. Gordon Wilson, Housing Div'n



Construction to the south of the Lower Greys Ave Flats was delayed because construction costs were disproportionately high in the wake of World War II. By the 1950s when the decision was made to proceed, the 1940s design was no longer considered appropriate and the Upper Greys Avenue Flats were redesigned to reflect technological developments. The later block is taller, slimmer and, with reduced mass and more extensive glazing, lighter, in both senses of the word. It comprised 70 two-bedroom maisonettes and 16 bed-sits. It continues to be used as state rental flats.

12

2000

Princes Wharf Development
Princes Wharf, off Quay Street
Leuschke Group Architects



In a city with a particularly poor record of adaptive re-use, this building stands out as a marvel of regeneration. The concrete structures of the wharf buildings were originally built in the 1920s as cargo storage, and adapted for use as car parking and a passenger ship terminal in the 1960s. Strengthening and re-using the original structures, the present scheme extended their footprint vertically upwards; the complex includes shops, restaurants, car parking, apartments, and a hotel; the apartments include Auckland's largest, occupied by Dave Henderson, the project's developer. See *Architecture NZ* July /Aug 2000.

13

2001 & 2004

The Point & Viaduct Point Apts
Cnr Pakenham & Customs St West
Craig Craig Moller



This complex consists of two L-shaped blocks – built several years apart – arranged around a triangular landscaped court. The second block, the Viaduct Point, received an NZIA Supreme Award in 2004, the citation reading: "Bold materials, and open entry atrium and carefully planned interiors optimize appeal and space. The landscaped courtyard provides a controlled outlook and oasis from the high-activity streets behind. The architects and the client are commended for a strong contemporary approach in developing an urban apartment typology." See *Architecture NZ* Jan/Feb 2001 and May/June 2004.

14

2003

North Lighter Quay Apts
Lighter Quay, Viaduct Basin
Studio of Pacific Architecture



Built on land vacated when the America's Cup departed for Valencia, the Lighter Quay Development involved the construction of four blocks squeezed fairly tightly around an enclosed marina. The most striking element of this scheme, produced by StudPac in association with Peddle Thorp Architects, is the northern façade. Sixteen-meter-high laminated timber columns give the building an almost civic presence, while the handling of materials and proportions maintains the privacy of the apartments in relation to the adjacent public promenade. The building received an NZIA National Award in 2004. See *Architecture NZ* May/June 2004

15

2005

Stratis Apartments
Lighter Quay, Viaduct Basin
Architects Patterson



Rising above an underground parking basement this stack of heavily sculpted GRC panels, concrete, and glass contains seventy apartments. Aesthetically ambitious, the scheme picks up a host of port themes – stacks of containers, stratus clouds, growth rings of logs, and banks of low sea fog – but manages to draw them together into a convincing composition. The scrambled koru patterns of the GRC panels were derived from the work of artist Theo Schoon. The building received an NZIA National award in 2006. See *Architecture NZ* Nov/Dec 2005 and May/June 2006.

Other addresses:

Metropolis now The Ascott (2000)
Courthouse Lane
Otto Taskovich / Peddle Thorp & Aitken

Forty-odd stories of apartments and hotel space rise from the once derelict shell of the 1913 District Court.

The Quadrant (2006)
7 Waterloo Quadrant
Clark Brown Architects
A block of serviced apartments and hotel rooms connect with the neighboring Hyatt Hotel.

The Connaught (1998)
9 Waterloo Quadrant
Clark Brown Architects



Stratis Apartments, 2005