

WORLD

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THINKING OUTSIDE A BOX

SANCTUARY GROUP'S GARY GROVES SHARES THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL APARTMENT BUILDING IN AUCKLAND.

After 30 years in the property development industry in Auckland I saw an opportunity to create something of an international standard in the city.

When it comes to inner-city living, Auckland has come of age in recent years. I think the turning point was the Rugby World Cup in 2011. Up until then I don't think Aucklanders were particularly proud of what their city had to offer. You have to remember that Auckland is still a young city, but it's a great little town. It's never going to compete with New York, Sydney or Tokyo, but we have other things to offer. We've got the Hauraki Gulf and world-class vineyards on our doorstep. We've got beautiful beaches and the wild west coast. In the city we've got new developments like Britomart, Works Depot and Ponsonby Central. The city is alive with people now and you need people to make a city hum.

As a developer I feel a duty to build something that Aucklanders, as well as a building's residents, can be proud of. The International was inspired by travelling to other cities around the world. I visited beautifully built buildings with an uncompromising commitment to quality and attention to detail. My goal from the start was to develop a landmark building.

Once I'd come up with the concept, I tried to find a location that would do it justice. Princes Street is pretty unique in Auckland in that almost every building is a heritage building. I studied at the University of Auckland, so I have fond memories of skipping lectures to enjoy leisurely afternoons in Albert Park. Government House is another little hideaway a couple of hundred metres from the front door of The International. The location is second to none, with the CBD, Britomart and the ferry building all within easy walking distance.

The building was never on the market but I'm good at hunting and gathering. Once I saw it I knew I'd found what I was looking for. It was perfect for a conversion because it has



really good bones. It was built by Fletchers in 1990 and has really high floor-to-floor measurements. We're going to strip it bare and start again, but the bones, seismically and structurally, are better than what you would build new and we're going to make it beautiful again.

We're delivering to the market something that hasn't been done in Australasia before. We've had interest from buyers who weren't necessarily looking to buy an apartment. They are well-travelled, educated and affluent people who like nice things. We've also had interest from buyers who've been looking for an apartment in the city but struggled to find something that satisfied their need for the best of everything.

I talked to a buyer who owns a penthouse on Fifth Avenue and he told me there were very few places in New York that offered this level of quality and amenity. That's something I'm proud of and it's a building I hope Aucklanders will be proud of. **W**

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