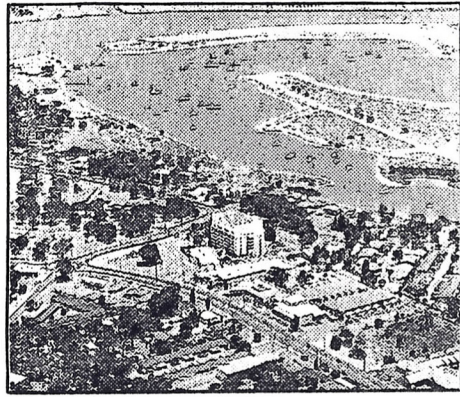


Towering project planned



MILLIONS of dollars are being poured into the development of Mandurah, which will change the face of Australia's second-fastest growing city forever. Real Estate editor CHARLES AMERY and journalist JIM ODGERS look at where the money is going.

A STUNNING tourism and retail development in the heart of Mandurah is set to change the face of the country's second-fastest growing city and hone in on the lucrative \$2 billion Australian convention market.

Mandurah Towers, a redevelopment of the city's prime CBD site, will be built in three stages with two storeys of retail and entertainment facilities, convention centre, multi-level car park and serviced apartments which will provide 200-room four-star accommodation.

The Mandurah City Council has approved the project in principle and building is intended to start, once all criteria are met, in the second half of the year.

The WA conference market has an estimated value of \$54 million, growing at 5 per cent a year.

According to developer and local businessman Terry Walsh, thousands of conventioners and people like golfers visit Mandurah but return to Perth because this coastal resort cannot offer them four-star accommodation.

"We have a city growing so fast in suburban sprawl, with only 50 minutes' access to Perth, we risk being regarded as just another outer suburb," he said.

Mandurah has always been regarded as a holiday and boating destination but a study by the Institute for Research into International Competitiveness has shown Mandurah has experienced a major 30 per cent decline in the number of overnight tourists in the past six years.

Beds

"We are also lagging behind Bunbury, which has a smaller population, in terms of total retail activity by \$60 million a year," said Mr Walsh.

"As wholesale and retail trading is our biggest employment industry, and with the State experiencing such a strong growth in tourism, we need to provide many more beds to satisfy inbound tourists.

"The Mandurah Towers development, to be built on the Brighton Hotel site, will not only provide four-star accommodation and convention facilities

but four 1000-seater cinemas, shops, health clinic, 24-hour medical centre and undercover parking.

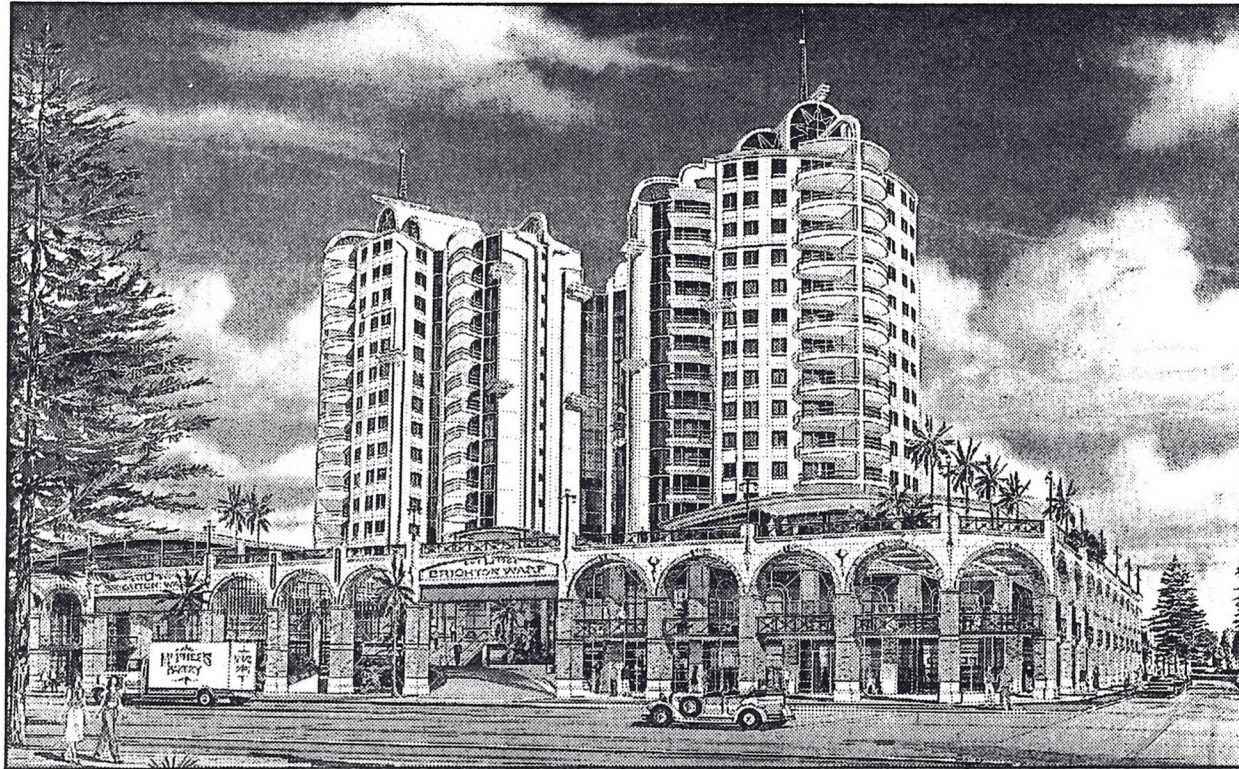
"It will also provide considerable local employment."

Many residents and businesspeople believe the development and other projects planned for the city could be both the key to the future of Mandurah which still lacks facilities to service the demands of both permanent and temporary residents.

Mandurah Towers development manager Linton Chapman said the complex would have a two-storey colonnade around the corner of Pinjarra Rd and Mandurah Tce near the old traffic bridge.

"We have provided a choice of two architectural styles - colonial heritage or Sydney Rocks - incorporating limestone recycled bricks and heavy steel giving a dock-side atmosphere in keeping with the existing historical cottage being retained.

Heritage considerations have been considered and Granny Coopers cottage, that was



□ The proposed Mandurah Towers development which is expected to breathe life back into the city's CBD.

owned by early settlers, will be restored and included in the development as an old-style English pub.

However, it will only cover 425sq m plus a beer garden facing the old bridge.

Mr Chapman said Mandurah was undergoing enormous growth.

Over the past eight years, it had an average annual population growth of 8.5 per cent, making it the second fastest growing centre in Australia.

As well as retirees buying homes in Mandurah to seek the quiet life, the new arrivals included those aged 30-59 - 36 per cent of the population - and a growing number of couples with young families.

Mandurah already has subdivisions and developments under way but still offers a considerable amount of affordable land and housing, providing a cheaper alternative to living close to Perth although within commuter distance.

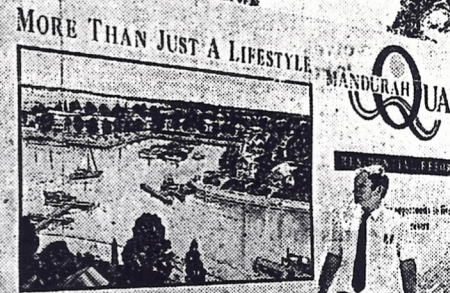
Land prices range from \$25,000 to \$350,000 and include prime canal and riverfront blocks.

The proposed railway linking Mandurah with Perth and the Kwinana Freeway extension have become important factors in the interest being shown in Mandurah property by a variety of people, including investors.

There is already strong interest in the Mandurah Towers and other projects in the city.

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□ Mandurah Chamber of Commerce secretary Nigel Irvine.