

Green design first for new city landmark

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THE Australian Institute of Architects has unveiled plans to build one of Melbourne's first carbon-neutral office buildings, complete with basement water tanks, solar panels and a host of other energy-saving features.

The City of Melbourne granted planning approval for the 21-storey building at 41 Exhibition Street late last month, describing it as a "landmark development".

Ross Clark, the institute's chief operating officer, said the building would be carbon neutral throughout its 30-year lifespan through a combination of energy efficiency, waste management, transport strategies and sustainable materials — accounting for 40 per cent of the carbon reduction — and the purchase of certified carbon offsets.

The carbon-neutral status would include the fabrication and transportation of the building materials to the site and the operation of the building over 30 years, he said.

Although it comes after the start of construction of Grocon's Pixel building in Carlton, billed as Australia's first carbon-neutral office building, architect Carey Lyon said the institute's project was set apart because it would be built within strict commercial parameters. It would include 16 levels of strata-title office space and all tenants would be subject to a "sustainability charter".

"Our project would be the first Melbourne office building offering a strata-title office that will be sold on the basis of achieving carbon neutrality," Mr Lyon said.

Mr Lyon was awarded the project after winning an institute-sponsored design competition.

The design features a distinctive staircase on its facade, which Mr Lyon described as being "chiselled out of the structure, referencing the traditional Spring Street public buildings of Melbourne that were literally carved out of blue-stone".

The City of Melbourne's Future Melbourne (planning) committee chairman Peter Clarke said the development would add to the city's "green design" credentials.

The building will also feature a "micro" retail space, an architecture gallery, bookshop and industry conference spaces.

GOING GREEN

- Heavily insulated facade
- The use of "passive chilled beams" which pipe cold water, instead of air conditioning
- Low energy lighting
- Storm water to be collected and stored
- Bike storage areas
- Solar panels for hot water
- On-site waste managing and sorting
- Considering the use of wood windowframes rather than carbon-intensive aluminium
- Considering the use of components that can be re-used after the building is demolished

