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Dexus strives for ‘busy and activated’ river precinct

By ROBYN IRNSIDE



Matthew Beasley is striving for ‘generosity of space’. Picture: Ray Cash.

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Dexus is on track to break ground on its \$1.4 billion Brisbane waterfront redevelopment by 2020 before a mid-2020s delivery of the transformation it has likened to the London Olympic village.

In a previous role, Dexus’s head of office development Queensland, Matthew Beasley, oversaw the design and construction of the athletes’ village at an industrial site 7km from the London CBD.

“It was probably one of the most deprived parts of London and so they set a plan to create a new part of the city that actually left a legacy of regeneration and lifting the living standards of people in London itself,” Mr Beasley said.

“That was the underlying agenda — to bring social change and improvement.”

He said that similarly, the plan for Eagle Street Pier was to create a place people wanted to go.

“That’s my test on a place — if it’s busy and it’s activated and it becomes part of the vernacular, then that will lead to it being successful,” Mr Beasley said.

“On a precinct scale it’s challenging but if you get that agenda right from the start, it can make a big difference.”

Much of the transformation was focused on establishing 1.5ha of parkland in the area around Waterfront Place and two new towers comprising offices and a combination of residential and commercial.

Mr Beasley said the public space would require closing part of Eagle Street.

Motoring advocacy group RACQ and Bicycle Queensland have backed the plan, which would also see the river walk expanded from 2m wide to between 6m and 10m.

“Cars are a thing in Brisbane but I think the focus will diminish over time as people realise there are opportunities to get on a bus, get on Cross River Rail, or a bicycle or I can walk, and if they have a good experience, that change will happen over time,” Mr Beasley said.

“It’s about giving that generosity of space to allow people to use it and enjoy it in a way that’s more reflective of our environment and lifestyle.”

Although the redevelopment is in its early stages, Mr Beasley said they were buoyed by the support of State Development Minister Cameron Dick, Brisbane Lord Mayor Graham Quirk and others.

There had even been talk of a new pedestrian bridge from the end of Edward Street to Kangaroo Point, but Mr Beasley said that was not part of their plans.

“We’re focusing on a diverse range of uses by the worker, the tourist, the family, the runner, the cyclist, the mum with a pram either passing through the site or coming to the site for special occasions,” he said.

“It’s trying to map that out and bring that together.”

