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Spencer Street tower to cast Yarra in poor light

Two adjoining properties at the super-prominent south-west corner of Melbourne's Hoddle grid are the subject of speculation that they are selling to a high-rise builder for about \$50 million.

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The buildings - between 2 and 16 Spencer Street, on the corner of Flinders Street - cover 1960 square metres and are expected to be the subject of a skyscraper application, which, like several other proposals this year, will overshadow the Yarra's north bank.

The mooted **sale** includes the All Nations International Backpacker **Hotel** - formerly the Nomads All Nations - which last traded for \$10.7 million in 2012. It also includes the neighbouring Pensione **Hotel** Melbourne, formerly the Explorers **Hotel** Melbourne, which is owned by a separate investor and last traded for \$13.7 million in 2007.

Capital Gain reported that a campaign to sell the sites together was under way in July. CBRE selling agents Josh Rutman and Mark Wizer were unavailable to comment about the off-market deal.

Last week, the Melbourne City Council approved a 295-metre tower for 447 Collins Street, despite concerns it would shade the Yarra.

This month, Singapore's Fragrance **Group** unveiled plans for a building about 90 storeys high, which, like the nearby Rialto, would overshadow the north bank.

Also recently, the Malaysia-based owner of the former Fletcher Jones building at 1-5 Queen Street lodged plans for a 90-metre (26-level) building, which would cast shade around the Banana Alley Vaults and Sandridge Bridge from 11am to 2pm.

On the riverside World Trade Centre block at 7-23 Spencer Street, developer Asset1 last month lodged plans for four towers, the tallest being 34 levels.

Pakenham parcel

A private business is speculated to be paying about \$9 million for a 35.4-hectare development **site** in the south-east suburb of Pakenham.

The **property** - currently a farm but zoned Industrial 1 - was offered with an approved plan of subdivision, the first stage of which would see a portion sliced into 24 blocks. It is expected the new owner will retain a section for itself.

The land, at 1110 Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road, is about 800 metres from an interchange to the Pakenham bypass. Dandenong is 30 kilometres away via the freeway; the city centre about 60 kilometres.

Facey Industrial **Commercial**'s Josh Kendall and Mark Bond marketed the Pakenham parcel, which is near the SouthEast Business **Park** - a joint venture between the McMullin **Group** and the Casey City Council. High-profile occupant Car MegaMart this week has announced a move to SouthEast.

#### Masonic **sale**

Interests associated with the Freemasons Victoria Masonic Centre have quietly **sold** a community hall in one of Melbourne's most exclusive suburbs and streets. Chatham Lodge - also known as Emulation Hall - is an imposing 87-year-old Masonic Centre at the southern end of tree-lined Rochester Road, opposite the Canterbury train station, in Melbourne's ritzy east.

The distinctive building is Australia's last remaining example of Egyptian Revival architecture, according to selling agents Peter Batrouney and Campbell Ward of Jellis Craig, who were also marketing it to prestige **residential** buyers with price expectations of \$1.5 million.

The **property** is speculated to have **sold** to a developer, who will reconfigure the building for **commercial** use.

Last August, Freemasons Victoria unveiled plans to replace its prominent Dallas Brooks Hall **site**, opposite the Fitzroy Gardens in East Melbourne, with two **apartment** buildings rising 11 and 17 levels and offering 275 flats. It would retain a 1000-square-metre portion for function space.

#### Billionaire buys in

A **Chinese** billionaire has agreed to pay a Werribee farmer \$4.4 million for a 54-hectare block before a scheduled October auction.

Formerly green wedge-zoned land, the **residential** development **site** known as Lot 1 Browns Road in Werribee is on the north-east corner of Wests Road, which is a service lane to the busy Geelong Road and Princes Highway.

Though not offered with a permit, it is expected that the land, about 38 kilometres from town, will make way for a housing **estate** in the longer term, being three kilometres from the Werribee retail and **commercial** centre.

Last year, the state government also announced plans for a major employment hub in East Werribee, which includes infrastructure improvements.

John H Castran director John Castran said the Browns Road **sale** price was a record for rural land in Werribee's urban growth boundary.

Last May, the 81.5-hectare neighbouring block at 15 Browns Road **sold** for just over \$4 million.

#### Carlton grows up

Carlton may not be looking so low-rise in years to come, with two applications for major **apartment** towers lodged this month - including one that will shut down a budget accommodation institution.

Australian Unity has applied to build a nine-level, 91-unit aged-care facility on the **site** of a former housing **estate**. With 106 car parks, 14 bike spaces, and green spaces, the proposed building will replace sites known as 508 Rathdowne and 21 Reeves streets.

The government-owned block is one of several around Melbourne's inner-city being replaced with a mix of new public and private housing.

Meanwhile, not far away at 66 Lygon Street, Zagame Corporation will shut the Downtowner **Hotel** and replace it with an **apartment** building more than four times the height. More details of the proposal are in Domain.

#### Fire **sale**

A fire station near the busy T-intersection of Dandenong and Waverley roads in Malvern East has **sold** to a developer for about \$8 million.

The 1376-square-metre block was offered with a permit for a five-level complex with 64 flats, two shops, and 66 car-parking bays. The proposed complex is within walking distance of Monash University's Caulfield campus, Caulfield train station and Caulfield Racecourse.

Gross Waddell's Michael Gross and Jonathon McCormack marketed 80-90 Waverley Road for an investor who bought it from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade a couple of years ago and then leased it back while obtaining the permit.

This year the MFB listed two 1750-square-metre development sites in Essendon and Coburg. The MFB will shortly relocate Waverley Road services to a new facility in Malvern Road, Glen Iris.

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