New lease of life for old car factory

By JOANNE BEVAN

BETWEEN its former life as a car assembly plant and its intended refurbishment to apartments, a New Farm warehouse found a role as a film set.

The former television drama *Fire* was played out in the vacated premises on the corner of Lamington and Welshy streets, which was built in 1928 for Austral Motors.

A yet to be screened children’s ABC show by Steve Vizard then moved in where Dodge automobiles and Graham Brothers Trucks were once put together.

Changing times for the motor trade drove the auto firm out in the mid-1980s with interim ownership by the Christian Life Centre, until developer Craig Lagerroth stepped in with new visions for the building two years ago.

Mr Lagerroth said he adopted a heritage-minded approach with the facade of the property protected for its architectural value as an intact example of early industrial brickwork and its social worth representing the formative years of Queensland’s motor industry.

He said a report by the Brisbane City Council heritage unit also found the building was an example of “a purpose-designed factory and office building specifically to cater for the changing technology and labour practices associated with mass production”.

The building also had historical links as an RAAF stores depot during World War II.

Brick walls, high picture windows and studded structural cross-beams are being used to draw the warehouse’s character into the 49 apartments, Mr Lagerroth said.

The building made of three long sheds will have an atrium cut into the middle to allow light and give courtyard garden spaces.

Mr Lagerroth said the unit designs targeted singles and young couples with apartments from one to three bedrooms ranging from 45sq m to 72sq m plus balcony, courtyard and carpark spaces.

He said some of the two-level, two-bedroom units were aimed at investor buyers with both bedrooms ensuite and a guest toilet downstairs. The design gave privacy for shared accommodation, Mr Lagerroth said.

Prices range from $129,000 to $224,000, with the units expected to be finished early next year.

Mr Lagerroth said 30 units had already sold within the first week of the plan, and he had purchased an adjoining building that was also part of Austral’s assembly plant for a proposed second stage.

The complex will have retail outlets, a cafe, gymnasium, lap pool and onsite manager. Its marketing is being handled by Prime Property Sales, of Toowong.
UDIA builds membership

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) has signed its 1,000th member after relaxing membership restrictions to allow commercial and retail developers to join.

The newest member of the institute is Craig Lagerroth, a Brisbane-based developer responsible for the $22 million redevelopment of the New Farm Powerhouse building.

Lagerroth also is developing Watermark Apartments at Caloundra, a $12 million, 40-apartment, beachfront residential project.

Lagerroth claims membership keeps him abreast of legislative developments including the Integrated Planning Act, the disposal of apartment management rights, investment marketing of property, affordable housing initiatives and amendments to the Vegetation Management Bill.

"The institute's key role is working directly with governments to secure more practical development processes," he says.

"It has a strong track record of developing initiatives that have allowed urban renewal projects, integrated residential communities and lifestyle-based developments to proceed."

Institute members include key developers and leading practitioners from support industries such as architects and lawyers.

The institute has branches in Townsville, Mackay, Toowoomba, the Gold and Sunshine coasts as well as Brisbane.