

# INNER CITY ELEGANCE

*On this uniquely challenging site, the owners created their ultimate dream home – a stunning, modern oasis in the middle of the city.*

WORDS BY NICOLE SAUNDERS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL WILLETTS

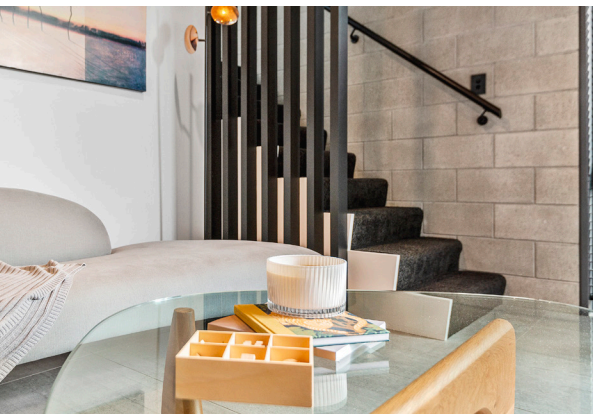


**This page:** Inner-city living doesn't have to mean giving up outdoor entertaining as Whalan and his partner discover. In fact, the pool was the first part of the house to be completed.

**Opposite page:** The incredible floating staircase wraps up from the living area to the mezzanine-level master bedroom.







**P**ete Whalan, chief executive officer of Bayleys Canterbury, is the first to admit that it was possibly a little bit of lunacy that kickstarted his and his partner's dream home project. "We had lived in the inner city for a short period of time after leaving a home in the suburbs," he says. Whalan and his partner quickly fell in love with the inner-city vibe. "It's quite a stunning CBD now, especially since the redevelopment of Christchurch," Whalan says.

Once the seed was planted, the hunt for the perfect space began. "We were constantly looking but we couldn't find anything we liked," he recalls. After failing to find an inner-city home to call their own, Whalan and his partner decided it was time to take matters into their

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own hands and began the search for an inner-city site. "They're hard to come by, but we stumbled across one that had a late-1800s workers' cottage on it quite some time ago."

Whalan remembers the first time that he and his partner, Chris viewed the site.

"He just looked at me and said 'Don't you dare!'," Whalan laughs. With almost 20 years in real estate behind him and Chris' background in landscaping, the pair knew that the narrow 7.5-metre site was going to cause a few headaches along the way. "But we both got amongst the challenge."

Without a collaborative team effort, Whalan says it would have been near impossible to achieve what they did. "It was a true collaboration of architect, builder and at the later stage, an interior designer," he says. While Whalan says that they had a fairly good idea of what they wanted, he praises architect Kent Roper from ADQ Ltd for helping make their vision a reality.

The builders – Christchurch's Blue Summit Construction – were brought in very early on in the process. "It's all very well designing something that looks great, but because we were dealing with a site where millimetres counted, it was a case of Blue Summit being involved almost from the get-go so we could make sure what we were dreaming of and what we were putting on draft drawings could actually be built."

The property's indoor-outdoor flow is made possible with glass bifold doors. The main pod features a well-equipped, open kitchen while the guest pod (below left) includes conveniences you would expect with a B&B.

Today's finished property, which was about two years in the making, comprises two concrete and glass 1.5-story pods that are connected by a single-level glass causeway. Whalan says that while the pair initially thought they might like an apartment, they quickly realised they wanted a space where they could entertain. "We wanted the pool, the sauna room, and we thought as time goes by, we'd like a bed and breakfast arrangement," he explains. "That was how the ideas blossomed."

The south pod, which faces the street, has two guestrooms both with an ensuite – one upstairs and one downstairs – and a guest lounge with all the conveniences you would expect with a B&B. There's a guest courtyard between the pods and guests are able to access the pool area.

The north pod is at the rear and has been Whalan and his partner's home since late December. The ground floor consists of an airy, open living area with large scullery. Floating stairs, that are more like a work of art, wind up to the mezzanine-level master bedroom complete with dressing room and ensuite. Whalan says the ideas for the stairs

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“THE STAIRS ARE  
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came from the fact that everything was being done in millimetres. “To get that open-air effect and the light in the pod we couldn’t have traditional stairs,” he says. “So the architect, Kent, conjured up this wild plan of these floating stairs. Obviously we loved it as soon as we saw it but we thought, ‘How is this possible?’ It really was an engineering feat.” The stairs are held up by about 400kg worth of steel, suspended from the ceilings. “It took three goes at getting the stairs in, and they had to be brought in by hand.”

Whalan credits interior designer Amber Hamilton for helping them inject colour and personality into the space. “I’ve always had a passion for the rawness of industrial buildings and this had that feel to it – concrete, steel and exposed timber. I love the



simplicity of it.” Although some industrial spaces can feel austere, theirs has a homely feel to it. “The colour palette is ... concrete and steel; it’s very earthy, industrial and raw. So Amber helped us to bring other tones in, but not tones that will scream at you. The finishing touches were a family affair too, with Chris, a landscaper by trade, doing the hard landscaping and indoor tiling, and his brother doing the soft landscaping.

While there were undoubtedly challenges along the way – the northern wall which is all glass took

**From top to bottom:** The mezzanine-level master bedroom overlooks the spacious living room and outdoor area that was created with entertaining in mind. As well as the master bedroom, the mezzanine level also features a generous ensuite and dressing room.

three attempts to get into the site – Whalan says they love the property to bits. “Even though we had to make some compromises because of the narrowness of the site, it evolved to be exactly what we wanted,” he says.

Whalan says perseverance and collaboration was key to the success of the project. “If we’d had a conversation half-way through the process, I probably would have said, ‘I don’t even know why we started this.’” But working with a team that they trusted made all the difference. “Whilst Chris and I can take credit for the concept



and the craziness of pressing the button of actually building it, we couldn’t have done it without those three parties,” he says. “It’s quite a daunting experience [building your own home] and this was an entirely different kettle of fish. But it was a great team effort that we’re now very proud of.”

Whalan’s advice for others who find themselves building their dream home is simple: “Be patient. Be prepared to be challenged.” He says finding a team that you trust is essential. “You’ve got to work with

**From top to bottom:** Beside the pool at the rear of the property sit the sauna and spa room. The property consists of two concrete block pods that are joined together with a glass causeway. The guest pod boasts its own courtyard.

the people you want from early in the piece.” While compromise is often unavoidable, Whalan says stick to your vision.

“There were times when we were challenged. But our architect didn’t give up on it, we just had to go about things a different way.”

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