

# news

issue  
number: **05**



Character areas

**03**

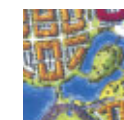
Boffa Miskell helps to protect urban areas that have a special character and unique New Zealand flavour – SEE PAGE 3.



Beyond the city -  
anticipating growth

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Good urban design is as important in the regions as it is in large metropolitan areas – SEE PAGE 4.



Brownfields

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Making use of brownfields – large, under-utilised sites close to city centres – is an opportunity for sustainable urban development – SEE PAGE 5.

**Boffa Miskell** NEWS  
& PROJECT INFORMATION

spring<sup>2001</sup>



## Editorial: urban design: a human approach

Great places seldom just happen: they require the careful integration of a range of factors including the natural and physical aspects of the environment, public infrastructure, private development, function and appearance.

We've all experienced environments that function beautifully but are inhospitable and, conversely, environments that look beautiful but are dysfunctional. Urban design bridges this gap.

Urban design is about building better human environments - whether at a regional, city, neighbourhood or site level.

The benefits of good urban design are clear - helping people to enjoy and value the places they live, work and play in; creating healthy and sustainable environments; stimulating investment and attracting tourism.

At Boffa Miskell we combine the skills of our planners, landscape architects and ecologists to thoroughly understand both the physical characteristics and the community of an area or site, and then develop solutions tailored to each situation.

This requires an integrative and collaborative approach.

We work closely with community and user groups to build consensus and support, and collaborate with other professionals including engineers, traffic planners and architects to create environments that technically function well while still being 'human'.

Boffa Miskell's urban design practice has broadened considerably since its first two award-winning projects in the mid-1980s: Frank Kitts Park, which was the first initiative in Wellington's waterfront redevelopment; and Manukau Court, the central open space in Manukau city centre.

In this issue of Boffa Miskell News, we bring you some recent examples of the diverse challenges and exciting opportunities in urban design.



**Doug Leighton**, Principal

*As part of Boffa Miskell's professional development, Doug - an urban designer who worked extensively in Canada before joining Boffa Miskell four years ago - attended two 2-day courses in urban design and professional development at Harvard University, in early August.*

# dispatches



## Caroline Bay

Caroline Bay is known as the jewel in the crown of Timaru, and Boffa Miskell was keen to take on the challenge of a development plan to update the popular seaside park.

As a much-loved and actively used open space, many people want to contribute to the plan. Boffa Miskell has arranged and facilitated workshops with key users and surveyed school children. In addition, a community consultation brochure and an 'Open Day at the Bay' have enabled full community involvement.

The final plan will be the result of an interactive process between Boffa Miskell, stakeholders, the community and the Timaru District Council.

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## Manners Mall

Manners Mall in central Wellington was created in the hey day of malls in the 1970s. As a pedestrian environment, it has worked well, but is in need of an upgrade.

It's in poor condition, there are safety issues that need to be addressed, and the mall's strategic location as a link between Lambton Quay and the now bustling Courtenay Place area is not being well utilised.

Boffa Miskell was engaged by the Wellington City Council to carry out a consultation programme with the Wellington public.

Key issues that need to be addressed have been identified, and the design - by Athfield Architects and Megan Wraight Landscape Architects - will be put to the test in a series of public forums in the mall.

Boffa Miskell project leader, Marc Baily, says a number of youth make use of the area, so it's important their views are heard.

"We are looking at projecting plans onto walls at nights, working with the fast food outlets to provide incentives for participation, and involving youth in gathering feedback," he says.

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## Boffa Miskell NEWS

& PROJECT INFORMATION

2001  
spring

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Why is it that certain places attract our interest, stimulate our senses and call on our loyalty more than others?

# Character areas

► The simple cottages and grand villas of Mt Victoria, Wellington, are unified by similar age, materials and height.



▲ Commercial buildings of similar scale, dating from the 1880s to the 1930s, are a feature of Newmarket's Broadway.

The ancients called it “genius loci”, a sense of place – the notion that each area has a unique character derived from its natural, historical, spiritual and architectural features.

New Zealanders are realising more and more that in addition to our famous natural areas, we are blessed with urban areas that have a special character and unique New Zealand flavour.

Visitors from overseas also recognise it – in fact, Auckland's Parnell, Wellington's Oriental Bay and Dunedin's antique charm were recently named as ‘must-sees’ in the August edition of Australian Vogue magazine.

Doug Leighton, Boffa Miskell urban design principal, says ‘character’ is notoriously difficult to define.

“While people may distinguish one character area from another, their individual perceptions of those areas can differ widely. This often generates debate and controversy, so it can be difficult to protect and plan for character areas – let alone make statutory provision for them,” he says.

Boffa Miskell's landscape architects, planners and urban designers have particular interest and experience in planning for areas of special character.

## Auckland's Parnell and Newmarket

In 1998, Auckland City commissioned Boffa Miskell to prepare character area studies for Parnell and Newmarket – both complex areas incorporating residential, commercial and industrial activities. Local communities and the Council were concerned that ‘insensitive’ development was threatening the character of both areas.

Doug Leighton and Rachel de Lambert of Boffa Miskell, together with heritage architect Jeremy Salmond, analysed and mapped the key values, identified specific character areas, and made recommendations for the commercial centres. Issues and solutions were further refined at a focus group meeting with local architects and developers in Parnell. The report, which recommended Centre Plans that incorporated urban design guidelines and other initiatives, was well received by the community.

Auckland City subsequently asked Boffa Miskell to analyse and make recommendations for improving Parnell's public open spaces, streetscape environment and pedestrian network.

The Council is now preparing streetscape improvement plans and a Centre Plan for Parnell.

“A fringe benefit of these projects is the opportunity for fieldwork in special places,” says Doug. “If you notice someone taking copious notes and taking numerous photos, it may well be one of the Boffa Miskell team at work!”

## Wellington's heritage neighbourhoods

Marc Baily, Boffa Miskell principal, recently assisted Wellington City Council with an information programme aimed at protecting and reinforcing the character of Mt Victoria and historic Thorndon.

Recognised as having ‘character’ in the District Plan, both areas are subject to specific rules and design guidelines. However, the Council was interested in ways to encourage residents to voluntarily retain character in the redevelopment of their property. With Marc's assistance, the Council produced a brochure with suggested guidelines for property owners in an effort to protect the significant character elements, some of which are not addressed by Plan rules.

“We set out, first, to help people recognise the special character of these neighbourhoods and the value of their own property,” says Marc. “Then we highlighted the key character elements in the areas – architectural styles and detailing, planting, parking and street frontages.”

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▼ Continuity in scale and form of built elements are important in retaining character.



# Beyond the city - anticipating growth

When people think 'urban design' they often think cities... but it goes well beyond the large metropolitan areas. Urban design can be just as instrumental in managing change in regional centres and small rural settlements - as demonstrated by Boffa Miskell's work in Whitianga.



▲ Whitianga's 'Waterways' development will occupy the area immediately inland of the existing town.

A small Coromandel Peninsula settlement in a sensitive coastal environment, Whitianga is a community that has embraced change, and developed a clear vision for managing its future growth. Boffa Miskell has been instrumental in helping create that vision through its involvement in a number of urban design projects.

Initially, Boffa Miskell was commissioned by the Thames Coromandel District Council to develop a set of voluntary design guidelines to ensure new development was in keeping with the existing small scale and coastal character of the town. A preliminary concept for upgrading the town centre streetscape was also developed, which capitalised on features of the harbour and estuary.

As lead consultant to Hopper Developments Limited since 1995, Boffa Miskell also helped develop a comprehensive plan to facilitate the future residential expansion of the town, and integrate the proposed new Whitianga Waterways development.



A master plan was prepared, development principles established, and various technical studies scoped and managed. A consultation strategy was also developed and implemented and necessary resource consents obtained. Despite statutory hurdles, which have been the subject of much media attention, construction work has now begun.

Boffa Miskell was also engaged by the Mercury Bay Community Board, along with Barry Rae Transurban Limited, to develop a future development plan for the central area.

"The community board showed foresight in recognising that residential expansion of the town would eventually place growth pressure on the town centre," says Boffa Miskell planner, Jim Clarke.

"Rather than let it occur in an ad-hoc manner, they wanted to develop a plan that recognised the unique qualities of the town and its setting. The intention was to enhance these qualities and create a vibrant focus for the local community."

A study was carried out in consultation with various sectors of the community - the Community Board, local business operators, residents and youth - and the results will be used to help guide and manage the town's future growth.

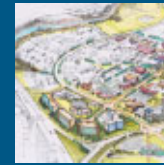
"Urban design has helped the community to understand the town as it is, envisage its future and work out ways to achieve its vision," says Jim.

Boffa Miskell is currently preparing a variation to the Proposed District Plan to set in place the statutory framework for future development in the town centre based on the study findings and proposals.

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◀ Whitianga's character will be strengthened by water and hill vistas, appropriate building development and quality streetscapes.

## dispatches continued...



### An urban concept for Lincoln Road

Lincoln Road, a major gateway to Henderson and Waitakere City, serves a developing employment cluster. But the surrounding area falls short of its potential in terms of efficient land use, infrastructure, employment and property values.

Waitakere City Council asked Boffa Miskell to develop an urban concept - a vision of what the area could become.

A win-win scenario for both landowners and the council was proposed which addressed the lack of an effective secondary roading network, the piecemeal development pattern of mixed businesses, poor quality strip development and worsening traffic conflicts.

Developing the concept was a positive exercise which focused attention on this important area and generated discussion about its long-term future.

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### Main Street, Greytown

Arbor Day in New Zealand started in Greytown in 1890 and the legacy of tree planting is evident in this picturesque town, characterised by mature trees and heritage buildings.

When local power company, Powerco, proposed to put the town centre's overhead power lines underground, the South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC) saw an opportunity, and engaged Boffa Miskell to develop urban design concepts for the town's Main Street.

The community's views and ideas were sought by Boffa Miskell from the outset. A steering group was established and public meetings were held to identify the town's important values.

Instead of a grand plan, Greytown's Main Street plan comprises a series of smaller, achievable projects at key sites. The undergrounding of overhead wires and installation of new street lighting was completed in September 2000 and Stage 2, redevelopment of the library site, is underway.

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# Brownfields

When the population grows, cities either spread outwards, through 'greenfield' development, or inwards, through infill and 'brownfield' development.

In the past 50 years, New Zealand cities have generally grown by sprawling outwards on greenfield sites. This has not been a great success in social, economic, or environmental terms. More recently, infill housing in established urban neighbourhoods has also faced resistance.

This leaves the brownfields option - which Boffa Miskell urban designer Rebecca Skidmore says is a commonsense approach to urban development. "Brownfields are large, under-utilised sites in valuable locations close to city centres, left behind when industry moved out to city fringes," she says.

"These sites represent an incredible opportunity. For local government, brownfield developments can help remedy environmental problem areas, create vibrant new neighbourhoods, and knit together existing areas. For developers, these sites are often large enough to justify comprehensive redevelopment, with significant returns. The key to success is good urban design."

Boffa Miskell is involved in a number of major brownfield developments in the Auckland area.

## Auckland railyards

Auckland City asked Boffa Miskell to consider future redevelopment options for Auckland's former railway yards. The proposed amendments to the "Railyards Precinct" incorporate offices, terrace housing, apartment sites and the historic railway station.

Boffa Miskell, with the assistance of architect Robin Riley, developed three-dimensional digital models to evaluate appropriate density, massing and height options for the precinct.

"It was a delicate balance," says Rebecca. "While it was clear that future development should frame and enclose public open space, it was also important to avoid creating 'canyons' with excessive shading, or visually overwhelming the historic station."



▲ The Mt Wellington quarry, in Auckland will be transformed for residential use.

▶ Digital modelling was used to help visualise redevelopment options for Auckland's Railyards Precinct.



The Council is considering a variation to the Central Area Plan, which utilises Boffa Miskell's recommendations. These include expansion of the precinct boundaries, amendments to District Plan rules and new assessment criteria.

## Transforming a quarry

Transforming the former Mount Wellington quarry into 'Lake Park' is another exciting brownfields project. The strategic importance of the site was recognised by Auckland City, who have initiated a Plan Change to facilitate redevelopment of the area. The city commissioned a design charrette led by ESD Pty Ltd from Melbourne, which generated two concepts based on 'New Urbanist' principles. These aimed to demonstrate a form of development that would be in line with the city's 'Liveable Communities' initiative.

Based on the charrette results, Boffa Miskell designed a concept plan, with an estimated housing yield and mix of land uses. A series of man-made lakes and a network of pedestrian trails will be a focus of the site.

Discussions are ongoing, but it is hoped the Boffa Miskell concept will form the basis for agreement between the city and the landowners on the key urban design outcomes.

PROJECT TEAMS: RAILYARDS PRECINCT - DOUG LEIGHTON AND REBECCA SKIDMORE, LAKE PARK - JOHN GOODWIN, DOUG LEIGHTON, MANDY ROUNSEFELL AND MICHAEL BAIN  
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# Auckland's colourful K'Road

"Old, bold, bohemian, sexy, artistic, interactive, multi-cultural, diverse, historic and entertaining."

These are just some of the words used to describe the character or point of difference of the Karangahape Road precinct.

'K'aracter' is the basis of the Business Association's marketing campaign and Boffa Miskell's recent design plan for this high profile area.

Using a collaborative approach, Boffa Miskell's urban design team kicked off the design process with a workshop involving a diverse focus group suggested by the Business Association and Auckland City.

One of the hardest challenges was how to reinforce the character and identity of the area. Elements of visual continuity needed to be introduced, while still retaining the precinct's diversity. The current proposal includes a family of alternative streetscape components, including graphic elements, colours, lighting, paving and planting.

A public questionnaire endorsed the initial planning and design approach, which was developed in much greater detail by a team which included urban designer Prof. Clinton Bird, lighting specialist Mike Grunsell, and Traffic Design Group. A draft precinct plan with a number of suggested refinements was also put on public display in a local shop front during the Christmas period.

CLIENT: AUCKLAND CITY AND THE K'ROAD BUSINESS ASSOCIATION  
DESIGN TEAM: DOUG LEIGHTON, BRIDGIT DIPROSE, JEREMY HOWARD AND CHRIS BENTLEY - BOFFA MISKELL, CLINTON BIRD URBAN DESIGN LTD, TRAFFIC DESIGN GROUP, PREMIER LIGHTING  
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▲ Paving incorporates the area's 'K' signature.

◀ Paving, planting and lighting will help unify K'Road while retaining the area's diversity.

# Celebrating difference!

Streetscape enhancement is an important component of urban design, and one which Boffa Miskell is very familiar with – having had more than 25 years experience developing such projects. Boffa Miskell project leader Rachel de Lambert says successful streetscape projects rely on two main factors: community ‘buy-in’ and local identity.

“We work with the local people – retailers and residents – to find a design approach that suits the locality. Streetscape proposals must respond to the community’s idea of their town and must work for the way the community uses the town centre, now and in the future.”

She says an unfortunate aspect of our global world is the tendency for places to become more and more similar, when what many small towns and suburban centres need is to retain and celebrate their individual difference.

“Streets, the public face of communities, are places to express that difference, and streetscape enhancement can revitalise ‘tired’-looking and run down commercial town centres,” she says.

Hauraki District Council recently employed Boffa Miskell as design consultants for a streetscape enhancement project in Waihi on the Coromandel Peninsula. From the outset, Boffa Miskell chose to ‘accentuate the positive’ about the town’s past and its particular asset – gold. This approach found favour with a large sector of the community, and led to a strongly local streetscape.



Street lights, which were once a central feature of Seddon Street, have been returned to the centre of the road. The Seddon Memorial has been returned to its original location on an important intersection and a fully scaled (18 metre) mine shaft head structure, or ‘poppet head’, has been placed on the axis of Seddon and Gilmour streets.

“We also looked for ways to express local identity and encourage local creativity,” says Rachel. “Waihi’s young people got involved by decorating tiles for a ‘millennium wall’, and a series of sculptures were commissioned to evoke the history and stories of the town.”

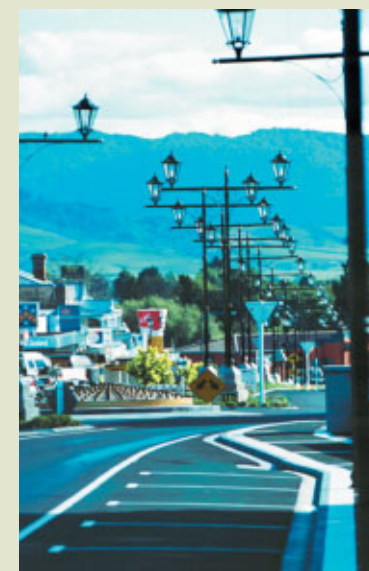
The town’s promotional organisation, ‘Go Waihi’ recently conducted surveys of Waihi’s business community and found 78 per cent of them experienced an increase in business since completion of the enhancement work.

“These figures support the contention that successful streetscape projects are good for business as well as for a town’s self image and sense of identity,” says Rachel.

She says the success of the Waihi project has led people of neighbouring Paeroa to ask for improvements to their town,



- ◀◀ Gold mining was the inspiration for the design of two roundabouts at each end of Main Street. The metal balls are used to crush ore in the modern day extraction process.
- ◀ The 18 metre ‘poppet head’ is a prominent reminder of Waihi’s gold mining heritage.



- ◀ The streetscape enhancements have reinforced Waihi’s identity and boosted business.

which is also within Hauraki District. Boffa Miskell’s Tauranga and Auckland design team is now working with community representatives from Paeroa to develop concepts for its enhancement.

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# dispatches continued...



## Wellington's promised land

Green and Promised Land, an exhibition currently on at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea, features Wellington's Town Belt and Botanic Garden.

Boffa Miskell has been associated with both these special Wellington places, assisting the Wellington City Council with the award-winning *Wellington Town Belt Management Plan 1993*, the *Town Belt/Vegetation Implementation Plan 2000*, and the Wellington Botanic Garden Management Plans of 1990 and 2001.

In recognition of this long association, Boffa Miskell is sponsoring the publication of a booklet about the town belt - also called *Green and Promised Land* - which explores its controversial history and introduces the main themes of its management today.

The exhibition, opened by Dame Sylvia Cartwright in June, will run through until November 2001.

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## Rural landscape workshops

Boffa Miskell recently held a nationwide series of rural development workshops on behalf of the Ministry for the Environment (MFE) and the New Zealand Planning Institute.

The workshops were based on a good practice guide published by MFE in July 2000, called *The Impact of Rural Subdivision and Development on Landscape Values*, which Boffa Miskell prepared for the Ministry.

Boffa Miskell staff used illustrations and case studies to give attendees a better understanding of landscape values, assessment techniques and the process of change in rural landscapes. A range of planning techniques to enable better integration of subdivision and development into rural landscapes were also covered in the workshops.

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## Profiles



### Gavin Kemble

Principal / planner, TAURANGA

Gavin Kemble, new manager of the Tauranga office, has recently returned to Boffa Miskell after two years as environment manager for TrustPower.

He says his decision to return was two-fold - the diversity of the work, coupled with the opportunity to help grow the Tauranga office.

Gavin's experience with consent authorities, corporate entities and environmental consultancies covers the full scope of planning work. He understands the environment, the legislative and political processes that influence the way resources are managed, used and developed, and the challenges faced by resource users and administrators alike.

Through innovative problem solving, Gavin manages projects to achieve key environmental and economic bottom lines, and find solutions acceptable to the majority of stakeholders and affected parties.



### Vaughan Payne

Planner, TAURANGA

Vaughan Payne is a senior planner who recently joined Boffa Miskell's Tauranga office.

From Opotiki, Vaughan is of Whakatohea and Ngai Tai descent. He has a strong interest in consultation, facilitation, Maori and Treaty issues.

He has lectured in Maori planning issues at Auckland University, and is currently lecturing in the Diploma in Iwi Environmental Management at Te Wananga o Aotearoa - a pilot project from the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund.

During the last 10 years, Vaughan has worked for Fletcher Challenge Limited, Auckland Regional Council, and Beca Carter Hollings and Ferner Limited. His wide planning experience includes resource consent applications, designations, strategic planning, and regional and district plan reviews. He has also prepared the tangata whenua provisions of statutory plans and facilitated working relationships for iwi.

## Danish urban designer visits NZ

Dr Jan Gehl, an internationally respected urban designer and author from Denmark, will visit New Zealand in September and deliver a keynote speech at the Town Centres' Conference in Hastings, September 8-11.

A professor of urban design at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Dr Gehl is also a partner in Gehl Architects, Copenhagen. He has received numerous urban design awards and has written several groundbreaking books, including *Between Buildings* (1971), *Public Spaces - Public Life*, and the recently released *New City Spaces*.

Co-sponsored by Boffa Miskell, the Town Centre Association of New Zealand, Auckland City and Christchurch City Council, Dr Gehl's visit will also include presentations in Christchurch (September 5-6) and Auckland (September 7).

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## Recent staff appointments

### AUCKLAND

Asha Tierney  
RECEPTIONIST

Eddie Sides  
ECOLOGIST

Phil Stickney  
PLANNER

### WELLINGTON

Meredith Sproud  
RECEPTIONIST





And there's more...

Visit the Project Gallery on Boffa Miskell's website, [www.boffamiskell.co.nz](http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz), or refer to previous issues of Boffa Miskell News to find out about the following urban design projects:



- ① Auckland International Airport - master planning and development guidelines. See BM News 01.
- ① Broadway Park, Auckland - award-winning subdivision. See BM News 02 or <http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz/project/broadway.htm>
- ① Canterbury University Campus, Christchurch - Boffa Miskell won the 1998 design competition for improving the outdoor campus. <http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz/project/canterbury.htm>
- ① Clearwater Resort, Christchurch - development of this comprehensive resort continues. See BM News 02, or <http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz/project/clearwater.htm>
- ① Omaha Beach, Auckland - development of this beach settlement continues. See BM News 03, or <http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz/project/omaha.htm>
- ① Orewa Town Centre, Auckland - Boffa Miskell is assisting this coastal community to plan for growth. See BM News 01, or <http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz/project/orewa.htm>
- ① Retirement Villages - Ryman Healthcare facilities throughout New Zealand. See BM News 03, or <http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz/project/ryman.htm>
- ① Reviews of housing intensification - in Auckland Region and Tauranga District. See BM News 03.
- ① Tumara Park, Christchurch - residential neighbourhood development <http://www.boffamiskell.co.nz/project/tumara.htm>



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## Tauranga office expands

Boffa Miskell's distinctive combination of planning, design and ecology services is now available at the Tauranga office, with the addition of four new staff. The office was first established in 1999 with a complement of only two landscape architects.

The planning team comprises Gavin Kemble, principal and Tauranga office manager, and Vaughan Payne, senior planner. Ecology skills are provided by Vaughan Keesing.

Gavin returns to Boffa Miskell after a two-year period as environmental manager with the Tauranga-based electricity generator and supplier TrustPower. Vaughan Payne joins Boffa Miskell from Beca Carter Hollings and Ferner, where he had been involved in a variety of infrastructural, rural and cultural planning projects.

Vaughan Keesing has relocated to the sunny Bay of Plenty from Boffa Miskell's Auckland office, where his position has been filled by ecologist Eddie Sides.

The two landscape architects, Rachel de Lambert and Rebecca Ware are enjoying being part of the new multidisciplinary team and have been pleased to hand over administrative duties to new office receptionist, Kelly Sunckell.

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## New premises for Wellington team

Boffa Miskell's Wellington office has relocated to larger and lighter premises.

The new premises are on level 9 of the Hewlett Packard Building, 190 Willis Street - just round the corner from the Ghuznee Street motorway exit. The office has been laid out to take advantage of the building's natural light and quintessential Wellington views of the Town Belt, inner city and nearby historic St Andrews church.

Telephone and fax numbers remain the same, but the postal address has changed to PO Box 11 340.

**BOFFA MISKELL**  
*planning • design • ecology*

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