



Creating conditions
for growth

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news

issue
number: **10**

Boffa Miskell NEWS
& PROJECT INFORMATION

summer ²⁰⁰³



Editorial: Adding magic to the everyday

I've just returned from a short tour of an urban design textbook – the city of Copenhagen. This was part of a whirlwind trip made on a Boffa Miskell staff study grant which also took me to Harvard University (see p. 7).

Copenhagen was, for me, an obvious choice – it is a living textbook of town planning, urban design, and heritage preservation. It is also home base for renowned urban designer Jan Gehl. While there, I spent some time with Gehl discussing collaboration opportunities in New Zealand, and otherwise concentrated on analysing what makes Copenhagen so supremely liveable, and how we could bring that magic to New Zealand.

Although we differ in culture, weather, population density, and the propensity to fund city development, we share the same human characteristics, and the same global responsibility for sustainability. We enjoy towns and cities where certain conditions have been created – such as a well-placed and scaled open space, pleasing street proportions, well-planned private development that adds life to a public space, or a configuration of residential buildings that offers close but private living.

We also know that making cities attractive draws people to live in them and this can create efficiencies that improve our sustainability while reducing the need to take up new land for development.

I found it extremely helpful to see the way Copenhagen's inhabitants live closely together and yet relish beautiful, stimulating and rich everyday environments. New Zealand – a country which still sees 'openness' as fundamental to urban landscapes as well as to countryside – can learn a lot from a city where people enjoy the best of urban concentration through excellent design.

It's exciting to be able to introduce these principles to our urban planning work here (see p. 6). But I should be clear, that bringing the lessons home doesn't mean pasting from the textbook. Just as we don't expect Japan to copy our biodiversity preservation work holus bolus (see p. 7) neither do we want to simply duplicate overseas models here. Rather it's a process of working with our clients, adapting and applying the principles of 'urbanism', to figure out ways of creating liveable environments that will work in New Zealand.



Marc Bailly, Principal

Boffa Miskell NEWS

& PROJECT INFORMATION

2003

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dispatches

Wind farm approval

The Tararua District Council has approved Meridian Energy's Te Aputi Wind Farm at Saddle Road in the Manawatu Gorge. The new farm, made up of fifty-five 1.65MW turbines, will boost the region's established reputation for harnessing wind energy.

Boffa Miskell assessed the wind farm's potential landscape and ecological effects for the resource consent application and presented evidence at the planning hearing. The assessments assisted with the planning and design of the wind farm, allowing Meridian Energy to maximise energy generation while remaining sensitive to the underlying landform, drainage and vegetation of the 1,150-hectare site.

Visual simulations prepared by Boffa Miskell were an integral part of Meridian Energy's extensive public consultation.

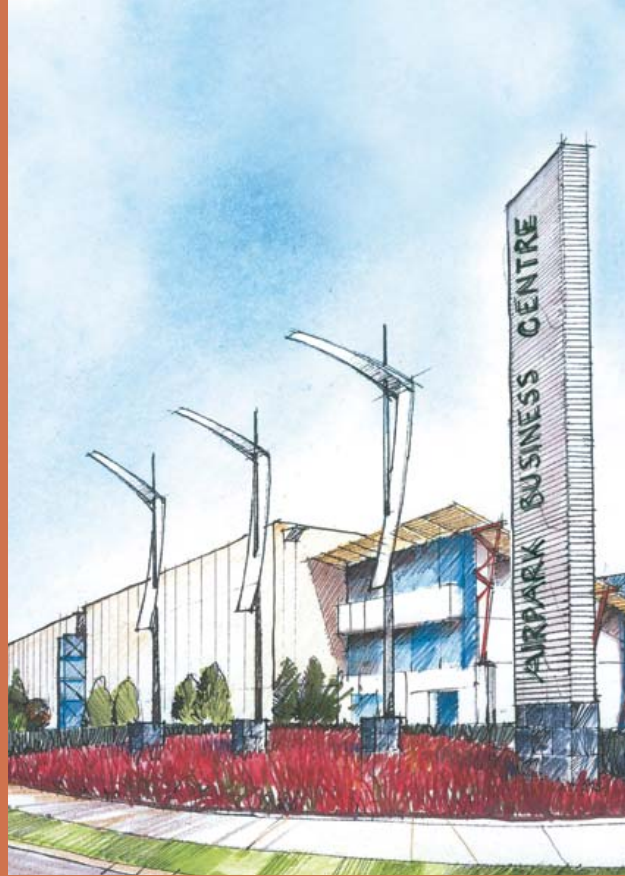
Construction is now underway.

CONTACT: BOYDEN EVANS boydene@boffamiskell.co.nz



New business centres: creating conditions for growth

► Gateways at Airpark feature sign blades, tilted mass planting beds and custom street lighting to help provide a sense of scale and drama.



Many of New Zealand's older industrial and warehouse areas no longer meet the needs of the changing business sector. The demand now is for commercial areas with better access and infrastructure, a higher quality corporate image, and a better working and business environment.

Boffa Miskell principal and urban designer Doug Leighton says companies find custom-built precincts provide the conditions they need for growth.

"Simply chopping up land, putting in services, and throwing up an industrial shed is not enough. Today's businesses and employees are more discriminating and footloose, and can choose where they want to invest or work. An excellent physical environment is essential to attract investment, as well as qualified staff and executives."

Doug says often the best approach is to design commercial areas more like integrated villages or university campuses than isolated collections of individual offices and warehouses.

"It is becoming common for these developments to include walkways, small parks, cafes, and recreation and childcare facilities. And often the business parks are sited close to public transport and amenities."

Airpark Business Centre

In 2002 Boffa Miskell was retained by Trans Tasman Properties Ltd to work on a state-of-the-art business centre near Auckland International Airport, along with Harrison Grierson and Holmes Consulting Group. Boffa Miskell's role was to use urban design to help make the development the best it could be.

Aimed largely at 'large footprint' users, the centre was divided into approximately 30 one-hectare sites. Boffa Miskell developed this basic layout into a masterplan, which identified high visibility sites, gateways and edges to be given special landscape and architectural treatment. Boffa Miskell also developed gateway features, lighting and signage concepts, as well as a planting scheme for the site.

Landscape architect Debbie Upton says this type of commercial development requires a bold approach to landscape design: "Bold entrance statements, strong clean lines, repetitive themes and elements, large trees and large areas of mass planting give an immediate sense of scale, drama and permanency. The landscape treatment is, without a doubt, the most significant component in creating cohesion and a clearly identifiable place or destination."

Boffa Miskell formulated design guidelines to ensure that Trans Tasman Properties' desire to establish a high quality subdivision and business centre was achieved by carrying through a high standard of design to each site. The first phase of Airpark, originally envisioned as a two-year project, has already sold out and the same team is now working alongside the client to create the neighbouring 52-hectare Airpark 2.

CONTACTS: DOUG LEIGHTON dougl@boffamiskell.co.nz
DEBBIE UPTON debbie@boffamiskell.co.nz



Boffa Miskell has also worked on these other business parks: Smales Farm Office Park (see *Boffa Miskell NEWS 09*), the Henderson Vineyards Business Campus (see "An urban concept for Lincoln Road" *NEWS 05*), and Auckland International Airport (see *NEWS 01*).

Building on nature



▲ Restoring the streams and riparian vegetation at the Springfield Park subdivision in Albany will protect ecological values and enhance the landscape setting.

Following the natural patterns of land and water can make the most of a site, reduce risks, save money and ease the granting of resource consents – all possible with ecologists' input to land development.

Boffa Miskell ecologists help the designers to use a site's soils, drainage, vegetation and micro-climate patterns to best advantage. And not only does their detailed study of the site contribute to resource consent applications, but it can also help reduce the works required to develop the land.

Streams, ponds and wetlands, for instance, can provide economic storm- and waste-water management options, as well as attractive settings for buildings. Similarly, connections with neighbouring properties, using waterways and vegetation, can help in the design of the new development, emphasising its individual character while maximising its efficient function.

A good understanding of the ecology is essential to this kind of design: that means study of the factors that influence water quality, the species involved, how these might be affected by change and how they might benefit from enhancements such as planting.

Albany subdivision

In Albany, on the edge of Auckland, Boffa Miskell ecologists have helped the Neil Group improve the worth of their subdivision, both in terms of property values and conservation values.

The site contained two streams discharging into a farm pond, which fed into a larger creek. The client wanted to make the pond a landscape feature of the development, while preserving the streams and their vegetation borders, and keeping existing farm crossings for the new access roads.

Sampling of macroinvertebrates (communities of small aquatic animals such as insects, snails and worms) and fish showed the streams to be in good condition, while the pond supported eels, damselflies and midges. Boffa Miskell advised on how to renovate the pond so that it became a natural focus for the new community, and so it could handle stormwater diverted from the more fragile stream environments. Culverts were designed to make fish passage easier, while increased planting along the streambanks would also lift the quality of the aquatic habitat.

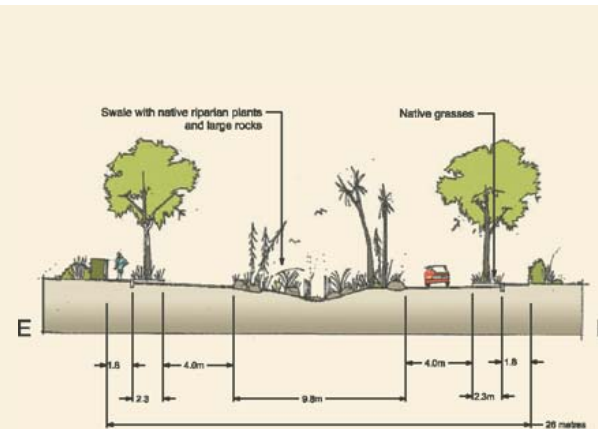
This approach potentially has considerable economic benefits for the developer: the total earthworks and in-stream works are reduced while creating an attractive and functional landscape framework for the overall development.

Canterbury 'lifestyle' development

Ecologists in Boffa Miskell's Christchurch office have meanwhile been working with various architects and rural landowners to create properties and subdivisions that have strong local character. They are using the subtle soil variations, flooding habits of rivers, and differences in groundwater to help select the most suitable places for roads, buildings and open space, as well as ways of best using natural drainage and suitable plant species.

This careful work with the underlying patterns of the Canterbury Plains and foothills helps give these developments individual identity (and improved biodiversity) amongst the expanding 'lifestyle blocks' in the region.

CONTACTS: EDDIE SIDES eddies@boffamiskell.co.nz
 DR JUDITH ROPER-LINDSAY
judithrl@boffamiskell.co.nz



◀ Active use of hill slope, stream and swamp environments contributes to stormwater management in the layout and planting of a Canterbury subdivision. The cross section shows a community street with a feature waterway.

Urban biodiversity

Two Boffa Miskell landscape architects recently investigated the potential for biodiversity in urban planting design – in the runup to the release of the draft National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity.

Nancy Simovic and Simon Fenwick filmed street interviews with 50 passersby in central Christchurch to record views about biodiversity. Perhaps not surprisingly, they found the concept of biodiversity was not well understood and was often regarded as a simple question of ‘native or exotic’ when it comes to urban planting design.

This was exacerbated by the influence of media – magazines, newspaper and television garden shows. Fashion trends they promote tend to drive planting design towards the latest look or to display the newest plant varieties rather than to select ‘the right plant for the right place’.

Nancy and Simon believe there are ample opportunities to improve biodiversity in urban environments despite the constraints that intensely built development can impose. They say that biodiversity is about environmental health and sustainability, principles that are important in city environments. In planting design this means selecting plants that will create ‘urban habitats’ – not just to meet functional requirements such as shelter or screening but also to provide habitat for city wildlife and to enhance natural features such as waterways. This aesthetic, which uses locally adapted plants and celebrates their distinctive character, can (and should) compete with fashion.

Simon and Nancy presented their findings in October at the 2003 Conference of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture, “Greening the City: Bringing Biodiversity Back into the Urban Environment”. Their conclusion was that urban design has a great deal to do with creating a sense of place and New Zealand’s unique palette of indigenous plants provides excellent opportunities to do just that.

CONTACTS: NANCY SIMOVIC nancys@boffamiskell.co.nz
SIMON FENWICK simonf@boffamiskell.co.nz



◀ Native plantings increase urban biodiversity – but exotic trees underplanted with native sedges can also work together to provide habitat and improve soil conservation.



FIGURE 4. CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT PLAN BOTANIC GARDEN FOCUS AREA.



Masterplan for rural botanic garden

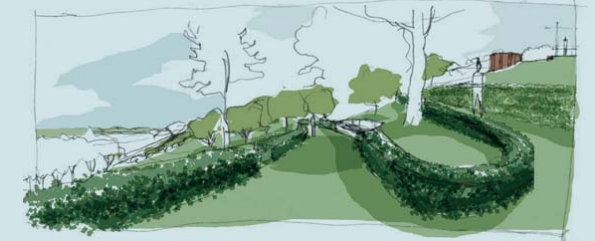
Boffa Miskell has reviewed and updated the masterplan for a unique botanic garden in the midst of Wanganui farmland.

The Bason Botanic Gardens were created after dairy farmer Stanley Bason gifted his 25.2-hectare farm to the Wanganui District Council in 1966. His vision was for the paddocks and homestead garden to be developed into a botanic garden for people to enjoy nature’s beauty. After 35 years the Bason property was transformed into a well-treed parkland but the governing trust board sought advice about how to better realise Stanley’s vision for a botanic garden.

The new 20-year plan, completed by Boffa Miskell in July 2003, updates a 1971 masterplan prepared by the then Lincoln College Landscape Consulting Service. The new plan addresses the trust board’s aim to develop a botanic garden of note, building on the established site layout and tree framework. The success of planting has been variable and some areas are over planted, so existing trees will be selectively thinned and pruned. Horticultural collections and displays will focus on interesting, rare and endangered species, in keeping with Stanley’s love of plants and belief in stewardship.

A new visitor arrival area will draw people into the heart of the botanic garden, and a long-planned ring road will be completed to encourage visitors to use the entire site. New paths and steps will lead to viewpoints of the surrounding countryside and on down Millennium Hill, a steep, sunny escarpment central to the site, where Mediterranean climate species will feature.

CONTACT: FRANK BOFFA frankb@boffamiskell.co.nz
SHONA MCCAHERN shonam@boffamiskell.co.nz



◀ Richmond has a current population of 10,000.



Richmond - a small town with a big future

The small town of Richmond in Tasman district is facing up to the future, and taking its role in sustainable management of natural and physical resources seriously.

The Tasman District Council has commissioned a 20-year Richmond Development Study from Boffa Miskell. Montgomery Watson Harza are partners on the study, with a specific focus on infrastructure issues.

Boffa Miskell urban planner Marc Baily says the challenge for Richmond is to accommodate a quickly growing population in a town where expansion could be in conflict with the productive, ecological and landscape values of the surrounding area. Predicted growth scenarios show Richmond may be short of appropriately zoned land for 2,000–3,000 households in 20 years. Marc says more low density housing would be added to the town's edges if the pattern of existing development was followed. Instead, the study looked at alternatives that would provide more room for housing within the town area while preserving clear boundaries between urban and rural zones.

“We were keen to explore options that gave people some choice of living styles. We worked on the assumption that people have different needs through their lives – say, a garden and place to play for kids, somewhere close to the action for young adults and somewhere smaller and central for older, less mobile people.”

Working on this principle, options for some intensification around the main street were proposed. These ideas have been well received in the public consultation processes which Boffa Miskell is running for the council.

Other options presented include boundary features, such as a town belt, to protect productive land from town expansion and protect farmers from reverse sensitivity (when town dwellers object to the effects of rural activities) at the town edge. Marc says the concept that “town is town and country is country” is being well received locally.

It's not always easy to get a community talking about its future, 20 years out. Marc says an important aspect of the study has been engaging the community's interest and communicating the importance of developing growth options: “If the level of interest is anything to go by, we seem to be hitting the right buttons.”

New models for urban development that increase the choices of housing available in Richmond are being discussed and Marc will be bringing new ideas to the table from his recent study trip (see pp. 2 & 7).

CONTACT: MARC BAILY marcb@boffamiskell.co.nz

dispatches continued...



Pohukura Gasfield

A new Taranaki gasfield will help meet New Zealand's gas and derivatives needs for several years.

During 2002 and early 2003, Boffa Miskell helped New Plymouth District Council process the resource consent applications by preparing planning reports on the various components of the new gasfield.

The field, made up of three offshore well platforms, marine pipelines, and onshore processing and pipelines, is expected to come on stream in the middle of this decade. It will help to offset for several years the decline in the Maui field and provide some breathing space for establishing alternatives.

The resource consents for the Pohukura project were granted in May after Environment Court appeals were resolved by consent order, following negotiation between various affected parties.

CONTACT: FRANK BOFFA frankb@boffamiskell.co.nz



Aquaculture and natural character

The importance of considering the natural character of the coast when developing aquaculture management areas was the focus of a recent seminar for regional councils.

The seminar grew out of a natural character assessment by Boffa Miskell of Kaipara Harbour and the Firth of Thames, which helped the Auckland Regional Council develop criteria for establishing aquaculture management areas.

This experience led the council to sponsor, with New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, the July seminar.

Speakers included Boffa Miskell's John Goodwin and Frank Boffa, who have considerable experience in assessing the natural character of coastal environments. They discussed the thorny question of defining 'natural character' and described assessment methodologies, citing as case studies the ARC assessment and another Boffa Miskell study of the remote Wairarapa coastline.

CONTACTS: JOHN GOODWIN johng@boffamiskell.co.nz
FRANK BOFFA frankb@boffamiskell.co.nz



▲ A series of aerial plans showing growth options were developed, including the central area intensification options illustrated.

Profiles



Elizabeth Read

Senior Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner, AUCKLAND

Elizabeth Read is new to Boffa Miskell and New Zealand, having recently arrived from Sydney, where she worked in a variety of large and small companies, mainly as a landscape architect.

In 2001 she completed a Masters in Environmental Planning at Macquarie University as a means of extending her interest in strategic environmental issues and sustainable development. She is interested in both the physical environment, and the ways people and cultures perceive and respond to their environments.

Elizabeth looks forward to further combining her landscape architecture and planning skills at Boffa Miskell, working towards quality design and planning that answers social and environmental needs.



Ivor McChesney

Urban Designer and Landscape Planner, CHRISTCHURCH

A visit from England two years ago led Ivor McChesney to join Boffa Miskell's Christchurch office, where he is now assisting with landscape planning, land development and urban design projects.

Ivor brings us over 20 years' experience in landscape work and planning in the United Kingdom. He was a Technical Director of Terence O'Rourke, a practice broadly similar to Boffa Miskell. He has a keen interest in urban heritage and the relationship of built form to rural and developed landscapes. He is experienced in landscape assessment, land development and urban design, and has a passion for innovative solutions to residential environments. Recent projects included UK urban expansion proposals, and major wastewater engineering infrastructure and commercial development projects.



Lynn Sorrell

Urban Designer, AUCKLAND

Lynn joined Boffa Miskell in July 2003 from the multi-disciplinary team at City Design Ltd in Auckland. Previously she worked in South Africa, where her responsibilities ranged from planning policy to detailed precinct and urban design frameworks. She was part of a consortium that produced a contextual framework for evaluating the redevelopment and expansion of the Cape Town International Airport and she was also responsible for coordinating the team that investigated and identified the site for the recently opened Cape Town International Convention Centre. Lynn is experienced in project management, policy plan preparation, public participation and stakeholder consultation.

Lynn specialises in integrated structure planning that brings together economic, social, urban design and environmental factors and is particularly interested in broad-scale urban design.

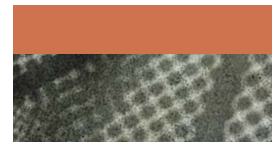
BREAKING NEWS: Lyall Bay Surf Reef

In September Wellington's Lyall Bay surf reef got the go-ahead from the Wellington Regional Council, the consent authority for the coastal marine area.

Boffa Miskell managed the consultation aspects of the resource consent application and prepared the recreation, social and economic assessment of effects (see *NEWS 09*).

The reef, which will help protect eroding sand dunes as well as boosting surf, is expected to be a catalyst for revitalising the Lyall Bay area. The Lyall Bay Reef Charitable Trust now needs to find a sponsor before it can proceed with detailed design work.

CONTACT: PAULINE LYONS
paulinel@boffamiskell.co.nz



Recent staff appointments

AUCKLAND

Paul Murphy
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Susannah Kitching
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

TAURANGA

Daryl Scott
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Jason Ward
PLANNER

Louise Clark
ECOLOGIST

WELLINGTON

Lesley Bayliss
RECEPTIONIST

CHRISTCHURCH

Nicky Black
RECEPTIONIST/
ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

Nikki Smetham
LANDSCAPE PLANNER

Victoria Mackay
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Overseas connections

Around the world in 18 days

Urban planner Marc Baily recently visited Copenhagen and Harvard University on a Boffa Miskell study grant. The grant is a new initiative to help staff pursue professional development opportunities not available in New Zealand.

See Editorial (on p. 2) for Marc's reflections on his time in Copenhagen.

At Harvard Marc attended a course run by Andres Duany, an urbanist with an unequalled international portfolio of retrofitting existing urban areas and building new towns. The course focused on 'traditional town planning techniques', an approach that aims for prosperous urban environments with high levels of community spirit, accessibility and quality public space. Deterioration of urban environments and ways to reverse this trend were also covered – highly topical in New Zealand where central government is turning its attention to urban issues.

CONTACT: MARC BAILY marcb@boffamiskell.co.nz

Conservation lecture tour in Japan

Stephen Fuller, Boffa Miskell ecologist, has just returned from Japan, where he was one of several speakers on a lecture series about New Zealand's community-based conservation initiatives. The series included the Hokkaido–New Zealand Biodiversity Symposium, followed by presentations in Yokohama and Tokyo.

The symposium and lecture tour were organised by Japanese businessman Akio Shoji, who is passionate about the need for better conservation and biodiversity efforts in Japan. Mr Shoji visited New Zealand in 2002.

Stephen, the former general manager of the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, was invited to present his experience of offshore island conservation projects and the more recent mainland island initiatives. He says Japan faces significant challenges in saving its biodiversity – for instance there are no controls on importing exotic species.

Stephen says the New Zealand experience, particularly the conservation success stories told, was inspirational to audiences hungry for useful models.

CONTACT: STEPHEN FULLER stephenf@boffamiskell.co.nz

Telecom@Tory:

Art and function have come together to transform an inner city forecourt in Wellington.

new angles on an old address

BOFFA MISKELL
planning • design • ecology

AUCKLAND

Level 3, IBM Centre, 5 Wyndham Street,
 PO Box 91 250, AUCKLAND
 PH: 09-358 2526
 FAX: 09-359 5300

TAURANGA

Ground Floor, 141 Cameron Road
 PO Box 13 373, TAURANGA
 PH: 07-571 5511
 FAX: 07-571 3333

WELLINGTON

Level 9, Logical CSI House, 190 Willis Street
 PO Box 11 340, WELLINGTON
 PH: 04-385 9315
 FAX: 04-384 3089

CHRISTCHURCH

7th Floor, 86 Gloucester Street
 PO Box 110, CHRISTCHURCH
 PH: 03-366 8891
 FAX: 03-365 7539

WEBSITE: www.boffamiskell.co.nz

EMAIL: info@boffamiskell.co.nz



Telecom, and building owner, Milhaven Investments, decided to improve the forecourt of their Tory Street premises, after Telecom relocated a significant number of staff to the building complex. They commissioned Boffa Miskell to redesign the area so that it would be more people-friendly and visually stimulating. Vehicle access and parking had to be retained and this confined the pedestrian area to the site's perimeter.

"This was an awkward shape to work with," Nada Stanish, Boffa Miskell landscape architect recalls, "so we decided to emphasise the urban nature of the space. We used a very simple palette of surfaces and materials – nothing fussy."

Linear paving patterns, based on the grid of buildings surrounding the site, guide people around the forecourt. The design grid was used to define an area for a coffee kiosk, seating and trees and was then offset at the Telecom entrance to emphasise the reception area.

The pedestrian canopy, a Telecom requirement, provided an opportunity to create architectural continuity, linking the surrounding buildings in a visually exciting way. Sculptor Kingsley Baird was invited to join the design team in developing the canopy as a piece of functional artwork that would express the temporary and elemental qualities in the site – light and shadow, rain and sun.

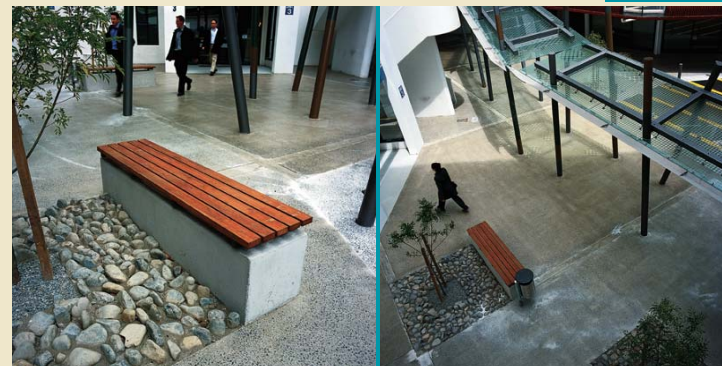
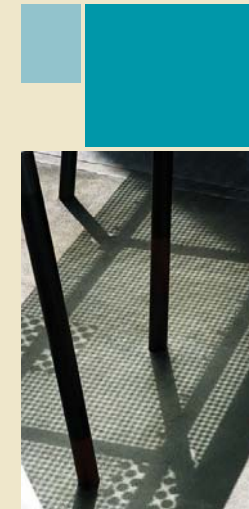
Slanting canopy planes and poles were designed to cast ever-changing patterns on to the forecourt below. The ground treatment was kept simple so there would be a plain surface to reflect the light and shadow.

Telecom's Corporate Finance and Property Manager, David Clark, says Telecom is delighted with the forecourt changes. "It has enhanced the whole area, providing a more open and attractive environment for all staff who work in the complex."

The simplicity of the ground treatment, where any inconsistencies would be obvious, together with the unusual form of the canopy, demanded a high standard of construction, which has been more than met by Fletcher Construction, the contractors for the project.

PROJECT TEAM: courtyard design, Boffa Miskell; canopy design, Kingsley Baird; engineers, Romulus Consulting; Truebridge, Callender, Beach; contractors, Fletcher Construction; project management, John Coll, Telco Asset Management.

CONTACT: NADA STANISH nadas@boffamiskell.co.nz



◀ The provocative canopy design plays with angles – juxtaposing oblique lines against the conventional grid of the buildings.

Simple design detailing provides an ideal canvas for light and shadow effects.