

Retail precinct comes to life

To be a part of designing the city you live in is a rare opportunity. Through chance or fate, this is the position that Jasper van der Lingen and the team at Sheppard & Rout Architects find themselves in.



The BNZ Centre courtyard forms part of the Stage II development that is currently under construction.



As the city of Christchurch rises post-earthquake, the work of Sheppard & Rout is one of the foremost on the landscape, with the BNZ Centre the first large scale retail space to be completed in the new central city retail precinct.

"You never dream you'll end up designing significant parts of your own city," says Jasper, who sees the BNZ Centre as a starting point for the city's direction long term. "It's brilliant to be involved."

The development is no small undertaking in design or scale – more than 22,000m² of prime office and retail space over half a block, fronting both Cashel and Hereford streets, which is being constructed in two stages.

Stage I development on Hereford St is now complete.

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of the development in total. The design

includes first-floor parking, with retail and hospitality tenancies on the ground floor, and large office space in the remaining four floors, which will be occupied by government departments.

BNZ will find their new central city

home in Stage II of the development, a large five-storey building which fronts onto Cashel St. This 18,600m² U-shaped building will sit in front of Stage I, and forms a central courtyard on the site of the old Whitcoulls building and, more recently, the previous home of Re:Start container mall.

Designs of this scale are not new to Sheppard & Rout, whose previous work has included Christchurch International Airport, the award-winning Stranges and Glendenning Hill building and accompanying Stranges Lane, and current work on Burwood Hospital.

"We were thinking of the really nice spaces in Christchurch before the earthquakes," says Jasper, who as project design architect worked closely with colleagues Martin Henkes and James Simpson.

There were some features which they knew had to be included to create not only a great design but a welcoming public space – sun-filled areas out of the wind, carparks away from view, buildings with character and a great contemporary retail area.

As a structure on its own, it is impressive and even more so when it is woven into other developments nearby. Two major laneways run from east to west and north to south, from Colombo St to Oxford Terrace and Cashel to Hereford sts, and continue through neighbouring development The Terrace.

"We liked the idea of a pedestrian network weaving its way through," says

Jasper, describing narrow laneways which burst out into larger internal courtyards. He had the exact feel of the old Art Centre in mind, with the central courtyard design of the BNZ Centre based on the size of its south quadrangle.

The laneways and three covered arcades all connect to this central courtyard, complete with greenery, steps and kiosks, and 37 ground-level retail spaces. The first-floor carpark is unrecognisable in its functionality, and balconies from the offices above overlook the courtyard space.

For those who watch as they pass by, the changes in the central city are subtle. Buildings ever so slowly rise and change,



in four new purpose-built tenancies.

With Statistics New Zealand as lead agency, this particular fitout is the first to be completed. This co-location will also be home to the New Zealand Transport Agency, Internal Affairs, Te Puni Kokiri, the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, the Human Rights Commission, Creative New Zealand, the Health Promotion Agency and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority.

Four hundred staff will be accommodated across three floors and 6000m² of modern flexible office space offering a range of collaborative work areas, quiet spaces and meeting rooms. The largest of the three floors will incorporate a shared public reception and large staff hub designed to encourage the interaction of staff from different agencies, and thereby maximise the potential benefits of this co-location.

"We have tried to be as efficient as possible in what we've done," says Jasper, with the overall design of the BNZ Centre looking to the future of the city in providing bike parks with adjoining showers to encourage eco-friendly transport options.

And, of course, it makes use of new technologies in understanding how to build a structure which is earthquake-resistant – one that will still be standing in centuries to come.



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earth is moved and filled and road cones come and go. Take a walk along Hereford St and you will see growth of a building.

The Stage I design again reflects the Christchurch of old, with Sheppard & Rout taking historic tall narrow windows with deeply recessed glass as inspiration. In contemporary form, aluminium fins liven up the façade and create a vertical pattern, as well as providing sun-screening to the north-facing windows.

The interior workspace design has been completed by Wellington-based Pelorus Architecture, with Stage I of the BNZ Centre one part of the Christchurch Integrated Government Accommodation (CIGA) project, which will see approximately 1700 government employees from up to 20 government agencies return to the Christchurch CBD