NPIA

JOURNAL OF THE NATAL PROVINCIAL INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

TYDSKRIF VAN DIE NATALSE PROVINSIALE INSTITUUT VAN ARGITEKTE

4-1985

NEW OFFICE BUILDINGS

NPIA
COMPILED AND EDITED BY DR WALTER PETERS FOR THE NATAL PROVINCIAL INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS P O BOX 777 DURBAN 4000 TELEPHONE 3047345 SAAMGESTEL DEUR EN ONDER REDAKSIE VAN DR WALTER PETERS VIR DIE NATALSE PROVINSIALE INSTITUUT VAN ARGITEKTE POSBUS 777 DURBAN 4000 TELEFOON 3047345 DESIGN AND PRODUCTION: MONICA GÖBEL ONTWERP EN PRODUKSIE: MONICA GÖBEL

4 – 1985 DECENTRALISED OFFICE BUILDINGS

COVER: 1. SBDC Entrance elevation. Drawing by L. Smith and A. Verster.
2. McCarthy Centre. Drawing by D.S. White.
3. Natal Building Centre. Photograph by R. Gorneman.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

In this final issue of the *NPIA Journal* for 1985, we pay tribute to the winners of the ISAA Awards of Merit for the current year. The five award winning firms can justifiably feel proud of their achievement, as they were selected by the panel of assessors from the largest number of submissions ever received.

To those who made the effort, but did not receive an award, may we offer our thanks and encouragement to participate next year. All the submissions will be presented in a forthcoming issue of the *NPIA Journal*.

Our Editor, Dr Wally Peters, to whom we are indebted for the high quality of this journal, is always on the look-out for schemes to illustrate. We therefore appeal to any member who feels that a building warrants publication, to draw it to our attention. This applies especially to architects outside the Durban/Pietermaritzburg area.

The profession is feeling the effects of the present difficult economic times. Members who have problems, which they feel may well assist the National Board to more accurately assess the gravity of the situation, should discuss these matters with any member of the NPIA Committee. If so desired, anonymity can be maintained, just so long as the Committee has sufficient information to highlight the state of the profession in Natal, and, if necessary, initiate appropriate action.

At the Annual General Meeting held in October, worthwhile contributions were made to the ongoing debate concerning the restructuring of the Institute. Members are urged to follow the development of this important issue as it may have a significant effect on the profession when finally implemented.

One of the proposals is that a National Convention be held bi-annually, at which Institute policy will be determined for the incoming National Board. Until members have that forum for expressing their views, you are encouraged to raise matters affecting the profession with the Provincial Committee.

We hope that members will continue to support the monthly informal gatherings at the NPIA Boardroom, as we feel that this is a pleasant way for the committee to keep in contact with the membership.

Maurice Dibb

EDITORIAL

In this issue *NPIAJ* looks at three recently completed office buildings, one high up on Durban's Berea, the other two along the "Old Main Road" (R310) in Westville. All three are some distance from the centre of Durban and serve as "corporate headquarters" for their respective users.

In the recent history of office buildings, Hallen Theron & Partners Inc. have achieved renown for a series of immaculate and innovative headquarters. These sit gracefully on out-of-town sites and have been adjudicated as outstanding contributions to architecture: the Huletts Head Office building at Umhlanga Rocks received the 1977 NPIA Award of Merit, the Sacca Head Office building in Johannesburg, the 1983 TPIA Award of Merit. It is evident from the submission for the Small Business Development Corporation, featured in this issue, that this project too was consciously designed with a view to similar excellence. The SBDC building is a significant contribution to the oeuvre of that firm.

The MBA Natal Building Centre and the McCarthy Centre have opted for two very different architectural expressions. In the case of the former, the character is largely determined by its external reflective glass cladding system, in the latter by each floor being expressed. Both can be deemed continuing evolutions of 20th Century corporate building expressions first mooted by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. One thinks of his 1921 project for an Office Building in Friedrichstrasse, Berlin (First Scheme), and his project of 1922 for a Reinforced Concrete Office Building respectively. In the first, Mies sought to dramatise the reflective qualities of glass – as do H.J. Nel Architects in the corners to the office block –, in the second, and more prophetic, he cantilevered the floor slabs and closed these by a continuous parapet and window band – as do Paton Taylor Associates Inc. By contrast the facade treatment of the SBDC building uses large overhangs to merge the building with the landscape and to provide solar control. It is an exercise in fitting a large mass snugly into the landscape while making use of the natural environment. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the three options of external architectural expressions here shown, these three buildings will stand as gauges against which others will need to set their goals.

All three projects have obviously had to come to terms with constraints in operating, maintenance and construction costs; open or cellular office planning options; leasing arrangements etc., and it was felt best to approach a colleague who due to his experience in this building type could comment with authority on the three office buildings. *NPIAJ* is very pleased that our Cape Town colleague, Louis Karol, has agreed to undertake this task.

Walter Peter, Editor,

NATAL BUILDING CENTRE
H J NEL ARCHITECTS

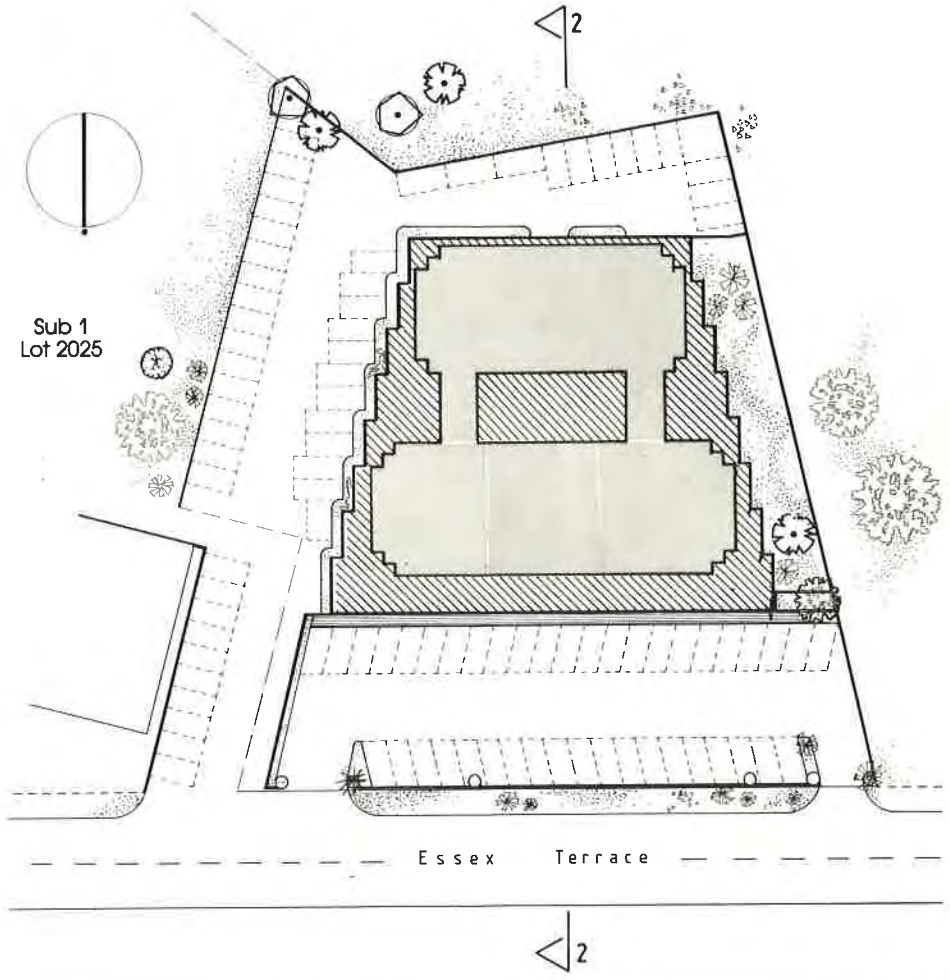
The Natal Building Centre, new home of the Natal Master Builders and Allied Industries Association, is situated off Essex Terrace, a secondary road in Westville running adjacent to the Old Main Road between Durban and Pinetown. The Building accommodates two levels of exhibition space where various firms involved in the Building Industry have the opportunity to erect exhibits to promote their products, while two further floors above accommodate office space for various tenants including the MBA itself.

Housing roughly 2 700 m² of exhibition area, and 1 500 m² of office space, the building's design concept was generated to a large extent by the nature of the site. Being trapezoidal in shape, with a large area of road frontage reserved by the authorities for parking, it was decided that the most efficient way to gain maximum allowable coverage on the site was to let the building follow the building lines as closely as possible. Thus the building is trapezoidal in plan.

The Architect was, however, not satisfied with the overall shape of the building and stepped the sides into its present form, adding visual interest and breaking down its mass while making the interior space more conducive to subdivision of exhibit areas. A requirement of the original brief was the provision of secure outside exhibition space; thus the office floors above were planned around a central courtyard, offering security to the exhibits while providing a central light-well to the offices. Therefore both cellular and deep, open plan office space division was possible, covering the full range of office rental potentials.

Another feature of the site was that the gradient of its slope, falling away from the road, was sufficient to allow a basement level to be constructed, invisible from the road yet accessible from the rear of the site. This lower ground level was originally planned to accommodate parking, but as the project progressed, interest from a once hesitant Building Industry increased to such an extent that it became necessary to provide more exhibition space than was originally allowed for.

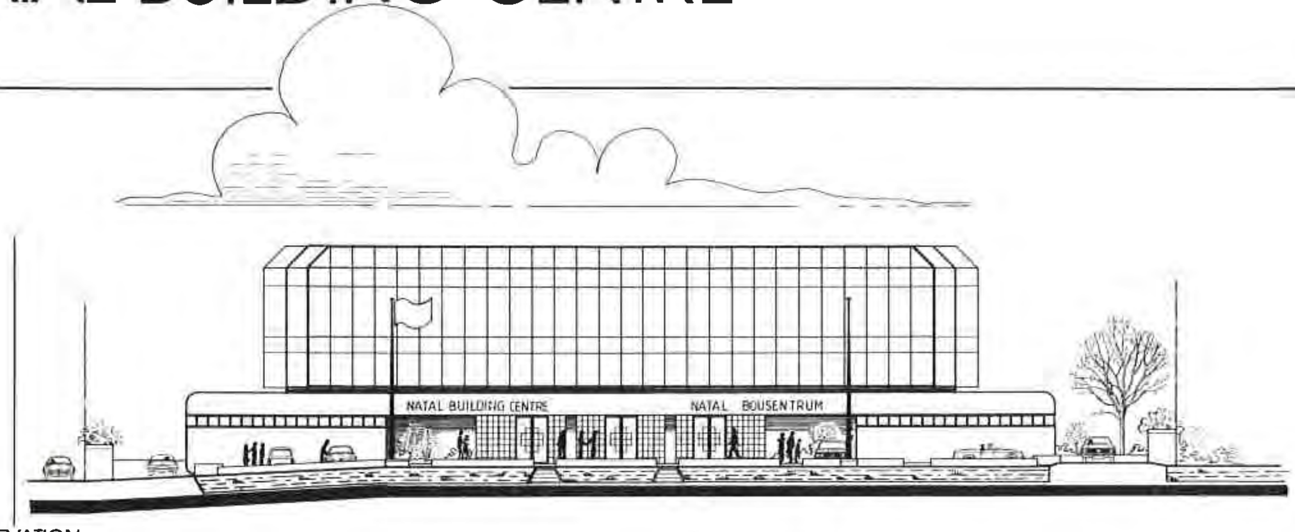
Negotiation on behalf of the MBA followed and one of two isolated adjoining sites belonging to the Roads Department was secured. These sites had no road frontage or access way and the additional area was used to accommodate parking so that the conversion of the basement from parking area to exhibition space could be



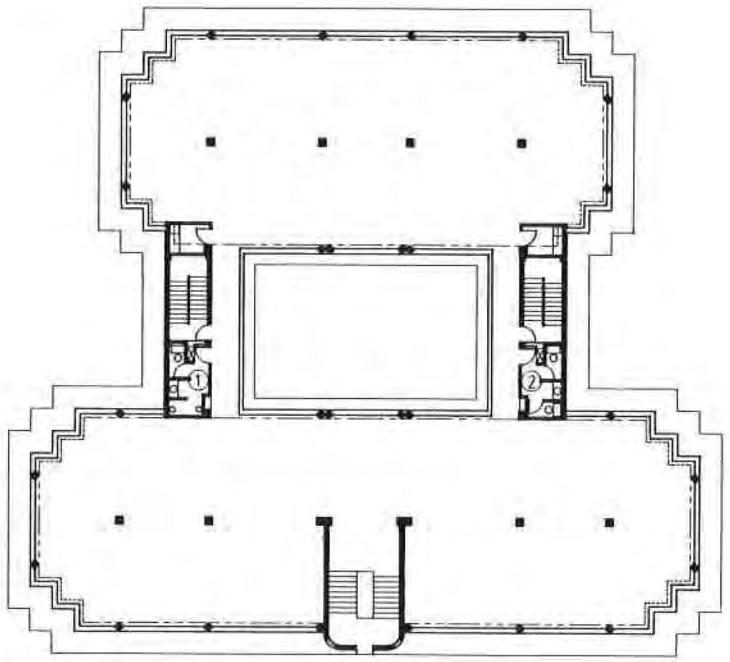
SITE PLAN

● *Corner view.*

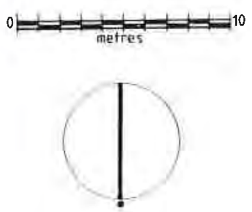
NATAL BUILDING CENTRE

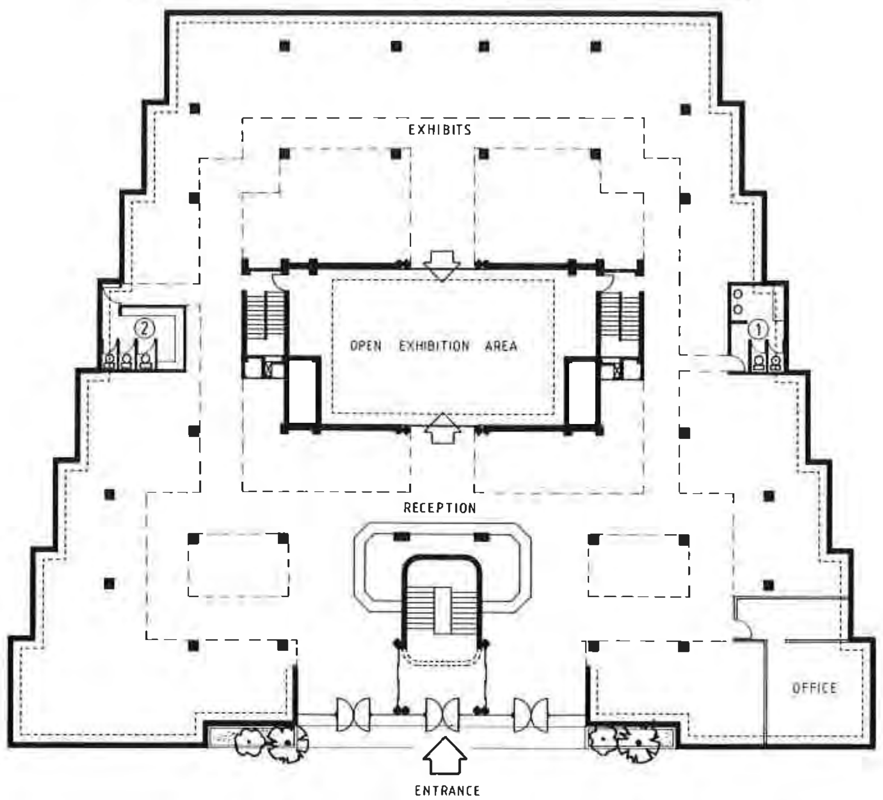


FRONT ELEVATION



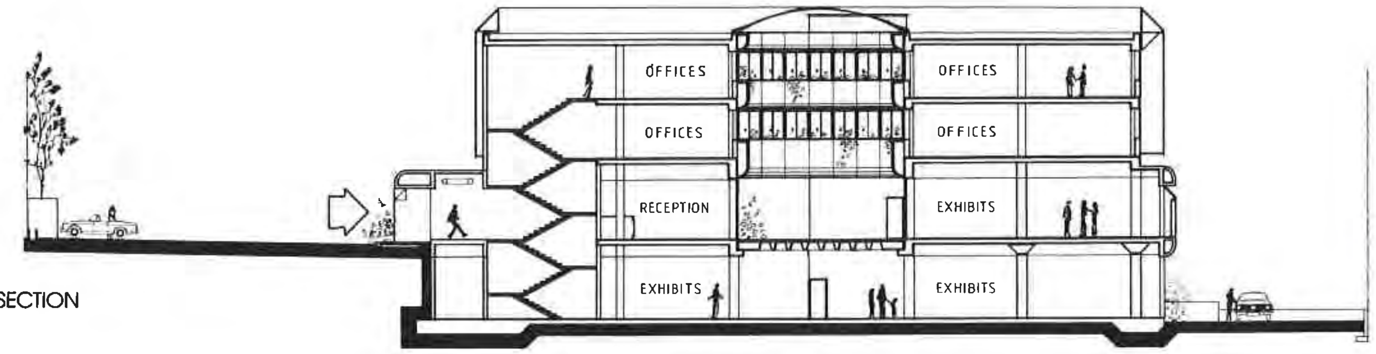
TYPICAL OFFICE FLOOR





GROUND FLOOR EXHIBITION

NATAL BUILDING CENTRE
H J NEL ARCHITECTS



SECTION

effected. Dual access is now shared between the MBA and the neighbouring site.

It seemed appropriate that a traditionally South African building material be used in the new home of the MBA. Thus brickwork was used in an imaginative way to enclose the lower exhibition floors.

Originally planned as being all in situ brickwork, it was suggested by the Contractor that a precast system be used, as this would especially ease the construciton of the numerous curved brick panels.

Ducted air conditioning was used throughout the exhibition floors while it was felt that for an office building of such a small scale, a unitary air conditioning system would be more appropriate for the office floors.

Another important requirement of the original brief was that the building be "Eye Catching" in order to generate interest from the general public as well as potential exhibitors and tenants.

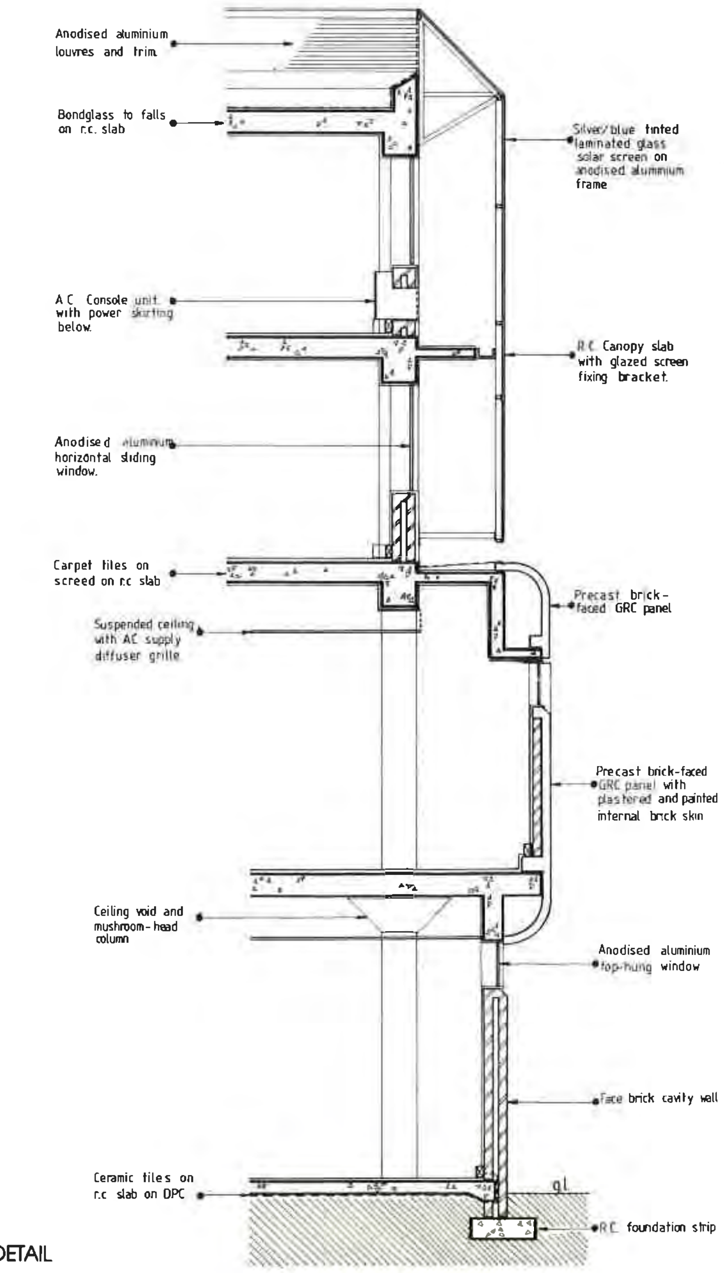
The curved lines of the lower brickwork had begun to meet this requirement, and it was decided to complement this feature by enveloping the office floors using a tinted glass screen.

This was a wise decision, since not only does the screen obscure the numerous AC console grilles in the exterior wall while providing solar control, but being synonymous with various other office developments the glass screen gives the building stature and importance while maintaining its smallness of scale.

Finally, the building is certainly "Eye Catching", the importance of which is easy to understand when one considers its location on a major roadway and the amount of people that pass by it every day.

PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Architectural Team: *H J Nel, L C Jooste, W L Nel, G Pallatt.*
Quantity Surveyors: *Borckenhagen & Louw.*
Structural Engineers: *Parsons & Associates.*
Electrical & Mechanical Engineers: Ferreira & Partners.
Contractor: *Norvo Construction Co (Pty) Ltd.*



DETAIL

McCARTHY CENTRE
PATON TAYLOR ASSOCIATES INC

1.0 **THE PROPERTY**

1.1 LOT 802 SPRINGFIELD (PTY) LTD

Area of Site	3760 sq m
Coverage	1483 sq m – 38%
Maximum Lettable Area	4600 sq m
Gross Area	5000 sq m
Covered Parking with Security System	142 bays
Open Parking	22 bays
Lettable to Gross Area Efficiency	92 %
Building Cost	R3 500 000,00

1.2 ADDRESS

201/203 North Ridge Road, Morningside, Durban

1.3 THE SITE

Three of the few remaining residential properties with commercial rights on the Berea were assembled to provide a site of 3760 sq m fronting onto North Ridge Road.

1.4 SITUATION

The property is situated in a prime elevated position towards the Northern extremity of North Ridge Road and enjoys extensive views inland as well as to the North and to the East over the Berea and out to sea.

The environment is one of tranquillity. Typifying this atmosphere are the proximity of Mitchell Park and the peaceful Robert Jameson Park.

1.5 ACCESS

The site is well positioned for access to the Outer Ring Road leading direct to Louis Botha Airport and, in the future, to La Mercy Airport.

The property is on a well serviced bus route and by car is 12 minutes from the City Centre and 6 minutes from the proposed Umgeni Arterial System at the base of the Berea.

2.0 **DESIGN CONCEPT**

2.1 HISTORY

In order to maximise the potential of the site, various alternative schemes were investigated. The viabilities ranged from the development of Site A, an attempt to retain residences on North Ridge Road which would 'obscure' a commercial development behind, to the total development of all three sites A, B & C. The original objective of observing the essentially residential character in terms of scale and form diminished as the harsh reality of the commercial venture dictated the need for a large site with large rentable areas. During working drawing documentation, once the design had been committed, the final site C was purchased, effectively adding another floor to the structure and thus providing a more profitable scheme.

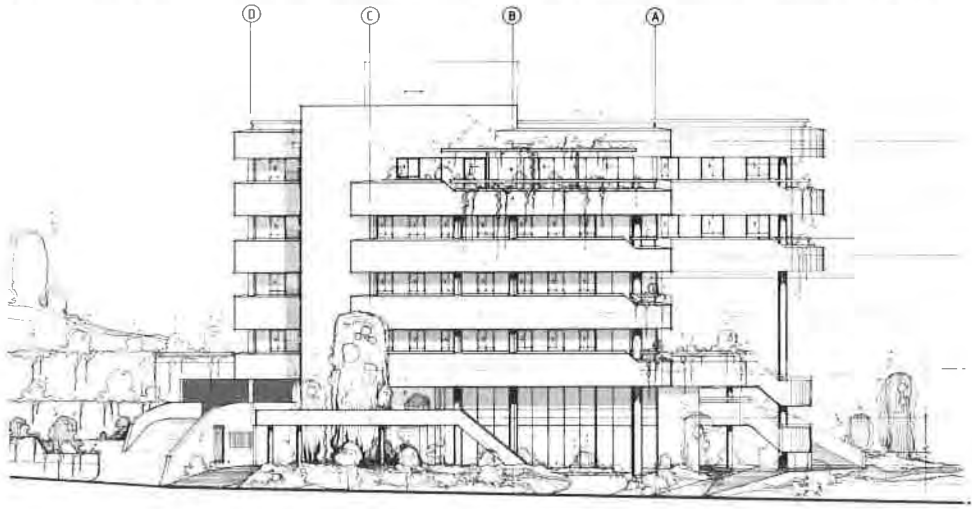
2.2 OBJECTIVES

In the first instance, the Architects pursued the objective of creating a low structure which would provide benefits in terms of a reduction of cost in the provision of facilities such as lifts, services

SITE PLAN

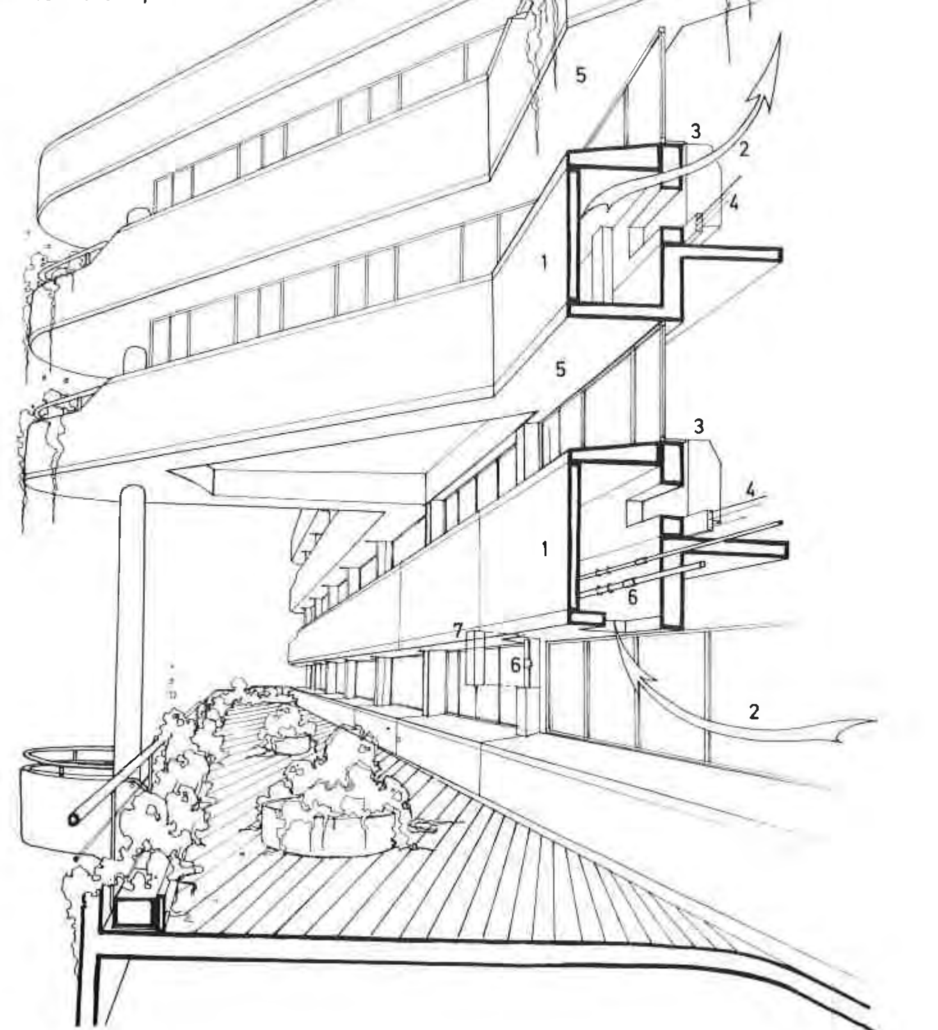
● View from Valley View Road.

McCARTHY CENTRE
PATON TAYLOR ASSOCIATES INC



EAST ELEVATION

DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION
(1) *Hollow Section Spandrel*
(2) *Fresh Air Movement*
(3) *Fan Coil Console*
(4) *Power/Computer Skirting*
(5) *Solar Protection*
(6) *Water Supply for A.C. Consoles*
(7) *Removable Service Covers to Water Pipes*



DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION DETAIL

and staircases, such costs being of considerable significance. Secondly, the brief was to provide few floors but of the greatest area, approximately 1000 sq m, so as to encourage a limited number of large tenants, as opposed to multiple small tenancies – this was absolutely paramount! Furthermore, the majority of the parking was to be undercover with covered access to the offices.

Within these commercial constraints the aesthetics were considered, the priority being the setting of the building in a richly landscaped environment. To this end the scheme sacrificed maximising its full permissable bulk, cutting back the building at 45 degrees from the 7,5 m street building line and thus providing a landscaped forecourt. Various small balconies and planting boxes were created in order to envelope the building in controlled vegetation which would assist in 'softening' the newcomer's appearance on the horizon as well as integrating it with its suburban setting.

In order to link the external and internal spaces of the building, decks and terraces have been built into the design. It is hoped that with the use of bright, attractive garden furniture, such areas may be of enjoyment to the tenants. With respect to the street frontage and the later addition of the top floor, a deck was created at this level, effectively reducing the visual scale of the building at close quarters.

The projection to the North of the Third & Fourth Office Levels was a simple means of modulating the facade, providing a hint of drama to an otherwise conventional elevation treatment.

3.0 **THE BUILDING**

3.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The building comprises six storeys, the lower two for covered parking and the upper four for office suites.

The appearance externally is one of neat, clean horizontal lines, with continuous horizontal window and solid spandrel bands around the entire building. The parallelogram planshape results in a striking 'pointed' front elevation onto North Ridge Road.

This unusual shape, which varies slightly on different floors, takes full advantage of the magnificent views to the North, East and West and adds to the interest of the elevations, and to the internal office planning.

To comply with municipal by-laws, provision has been made for a shop of 100 sq m on the Ground Floor.

3.2 BUILDING STRUCTURE

A major challenge in the design of office buildings is the integration of car parking immediately beneath offices. The structural solution achieved within the minimum requirements of the municipal car parking by-laws has proved to be an exceptionally economical one.

McCARTHY CENTRE
PATON TAYLOR ASSOCIATES INC

The solution was derived from a column grid of 7,6 m x 7,6 m providing three 2,4 m wide bays at 71 degrees. At 7,6 m column centres the 300 mm wide columns at the upper office levels provide a grid of 1,2 m x 1,2 m in both directions. This grid provides the basis for all future internal office subdivisions. The slabs are thinner than the conventional reinforced concrete and this together with the unusual air conditioning duct arrangement avoids the need for false ceilings, and permits lower floor to floor heights which in turn reduces staircase space.

3.3 EXTERNAL ELEVATIONS

Externally the hollow section spandrel bands, running horizontally beneath the windows on each floor, are of brick walls supported on a projecting concrete sunhood and are of sufficient size to contain the main air conditioning reticulation.

Special heat resistant glass is utilised throughout to ensure heat reduction.

3.4 INTERNAL FINISHES

Floors to all office suites are carpeted, and floors and walls to lobbies and foyers are covered with encaustic tiles.

Ceilings are treated with off-white, rough-textured acoustic plaster.

3.5 SERVICES

3.5.1 ELECTRICAL

Electrical services include lighting at 500 lux, emergency lighting, power, telephones, smoke detectors, fire alarm system, lightning protection and a modular infrastructure for computer services.

3.5.2 AIR CONDITIONING

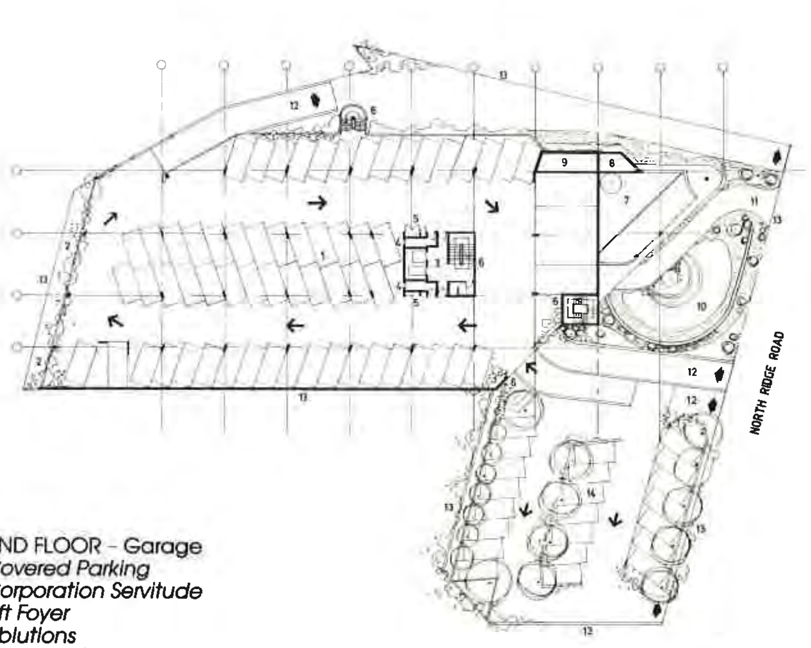
For purposes of airconditioning efficiency the office floors have been categorised as inner and outer zones. The inner zone is served by vertical ducts from the roof and concealed in twin columns. The outer zone will have individually controllable fan coil console units. Each unit will be self-contained with its own compressor and fan coil but will be cooled from a central condenser water system on the roof in lieu of the usual air cooling.

3.5.3 SECURITY

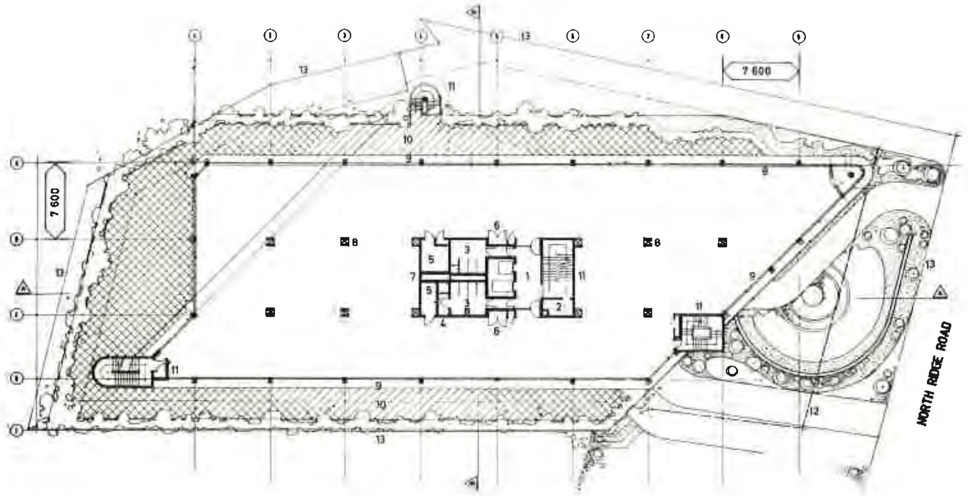
A card operated security system, controlling access to the lifts from the garage, has been provided. Provision has also been made for an attendant to be strategically placed so as to assist visitors, in addition to maintaining a check on security.

3.5.4 SERVICE CORE

Service facilities in the core on each office floor include a tea kitchenette as well as two fireproof records rooms. Each male toilet has 3 WCs, 2 urinals, 2 wash hand basins and a shower, whilst the female ablutions are comprised of 4 WCs and 2 wash hand basins.

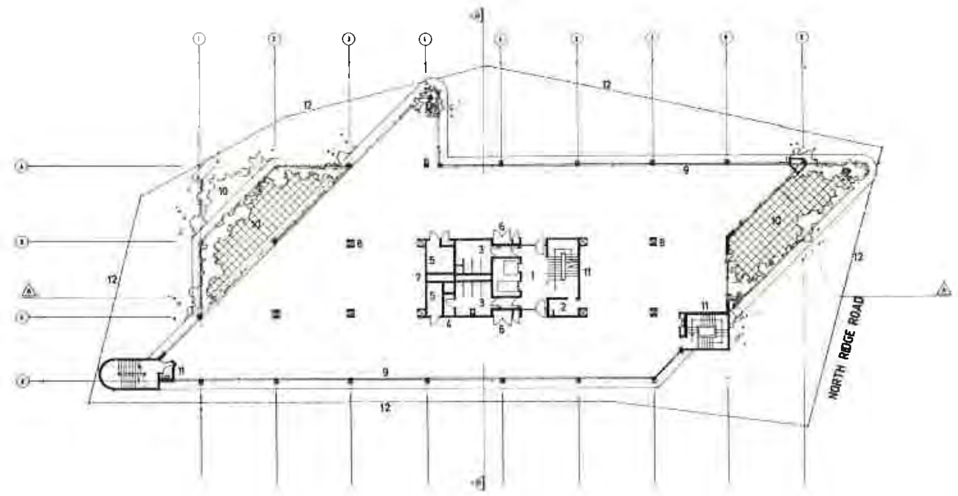


SECOND FLOOR - Garage
(1) *Covered Parking*
(2) *Corporation Servitude*
(3) *Lift Foyer*
(4) *Ablutions*
(5) *Electrical/Telephone*
(6) *Fire Escapes*
(7) *Shop Mezzanine*
(8) *Shop AC*
(9) *Substation*
(10) *Landscaped Forecourt*
(11) *Pedestrian Entrance*
(12) *Vehicular Ramps*
(13) *Boundary*
(14) *Uncovered Parking*



THIRD FLOOR - Offices
(1) *Lift Foyer*
(2) *Kitchen*
(3) *Ablutions*
(4) *Shower*
(5) *Record Room*
(6) *Electrical/Telephone*
(7) *Air Return Duct*
(8) *Air Supply Duct*
(9) *Air/Water Supply Duct*
(10) *Terrace . Deck*
(11) *Fire Escape Stairs*
(12) *7,5 m Building Line*
(13) *Boundary*

McCARTHY CENTRE
PATON TAYLOR ASSOCIATES INC



SIXTH FLOOR - Offices
(1) *Lift Foyer*
(2) *Kitchen*
(3) *Ablutions*
(4) *Shower*
(5) *Record Room*
(6) *Electrical/Telephone*
(7) *Air Return Duct*
(8) *Air Supply Duct*
(9) *Air/Water Supply Duct*
(10) *Terrace . Deck*
(11) *Fire Escape Stairs*
(12) *Building Lines*

4.0 **FINANCIAL PROGRAMME**

4.1 GENERAL

For a scheme of this nature to be financially viable, a nett return of approximately 12% is required by the developers. The gross rentals which are inclusive of parking and overheads which can be anticipated from decentralised office developments along the Ridge of Durban, range from R11,00 per sq m to R14,00 per sq m.

4.2 COSTS OF THE PROJECT

Capital cost totals R5 260 000. The building contract value is R3 500 000. Investors were invited to purchase shares in Lot 802 Springfield (Pty) Ltd which owns the property. The minimum investment was 10 shares linked to a loan of R20 000.

4.3 THE BUILDING

Due to the nature of the building (ie large floor areas and ample parking) the building was fully let and fitted out for two major tenants, each having two office floors and one parking floor, on completion of construction. The two upper floors are occupied by the McCarthy Group and the two lower floors by Bosch & Associates. As a result of attracting these two large tenants, communal areas, including all toilets, lift foyers, kitchens and decks/terraces have been let. This has resulted in the very high efficiency of rented accommodation to gross building area of 92%, and the rentals received are exceptionally satisfactory for decentralised offices.

5.0 **CRITICISM**

5.1 There is the possibility that, in purely economical terms, with a more regular shaped building a slightly more profitable solution could have been produced with marginally more flexible office spaces.

5.2 With the need to economise and the resulting omission of false ceiling/service plenum areas, service co-ordination was extremely time-consuming and difficult.

5.3 The additional floor to the building has to a degree upset the relatively low key scale of the complex.

6.0 **DESIGN TEAM**

Paton Taylor Associates Incorporated: Project Architects: *W R O'Beirne* and *A R Keyte*
Design: *D S White*
The LHW Partnership: Structural, Mechanical & Electrical Engineers.
Neville Lund & Reed: Quantity Surveyors
Wall Marriott Paul & Borgen: Land Surveyors.
Russell Marriott & Boyd (Pty) Ltd: Developers.
Standard Building & Contracting Co (Pty) Ltd: Contractors.

D S White

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HALLEN THERON AND PARTNERS INC

The building was commissioned by the Small Business Development Corporation for the purpose of accommodating the Natal head office of the Corporation and to make available space to let to small business concerns.

The building is located on the northern periphery of the Westville Business Centre and enjoys good links via the freeway system to all parts of the Durban hinterland. The site slopes towards the north with views out over Westville North, and is one of 4 zoned general commercial with a P A R of 1,0, a coverage of 50% and a height restriction of 4 storeys. The client's brief was to exploit the allowable P A R to its full and provide on-site parking at a ratio of 1 parking bay per 30 m² of lettable office space.

The building form is determined largely by the town planning requirements. It covers most of the site in a rectangular form 4 storeys in height with the office accommodation arranged around an atrium. A certain amount of undercover parking is provided under the building with the balance in the open to the north and south of the building.

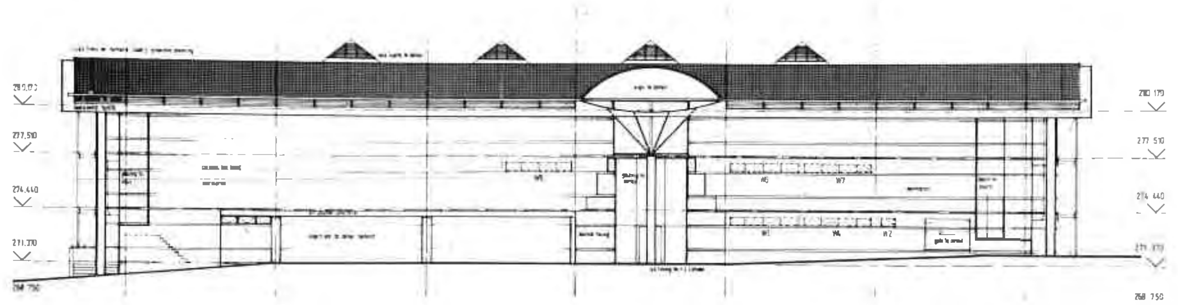
The simple form is articulated on each of the facades in response to their particular circumstances and requirements. The south facade is comparatively low and solid to exclude as far as possible, the noise of the freeway. The horizontal tile bands help to emphasise its length and acknowledge the straight line rapid movement associated with the freeway. The facade is punctured to the right of its centre line by the main entrance. The entrance is designed to operate at two levels – as a sign for passing motorists and as a pedestrian entrance which reveals all destinations prior to entering the building. The large half moon over the entrance above the eaves line was intended to be the building sign – this did not find favour with the client and it now serves a decorative rather than its intended informative function. At ground level the entrance is emphasised by the turning in of the external walls and the free standing column.

The north facade is higher due to the slope of the site and stands on tall columns which support stepped out floor slabs which give sun protection. The edges of the slabs are modulated about the centre line of the building creating a richness in the facade and increasing the potential number of 'corner' offices. The east and west facades step in a similar manner but they are dominated by the sunscreen element and the gable ends of the roof.

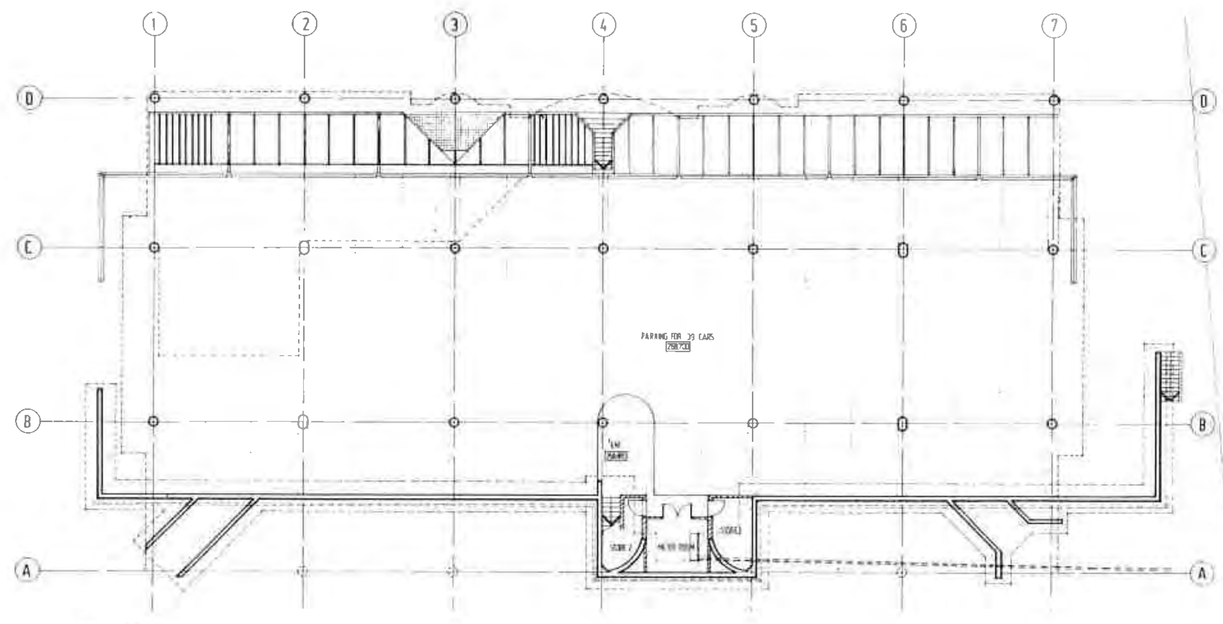
The roof derives its form from various elements found on the adjacent domestic buildings. Seen from a distance it appears to have a double pitched roof covered in clay tiles, a familiar solution to the roofing problems of the adjacent houses. The traditional timber barge and

- *Top: Entrance from Jan Hofmeyer Road.*
- *East Elevation.*
- *Atrium*

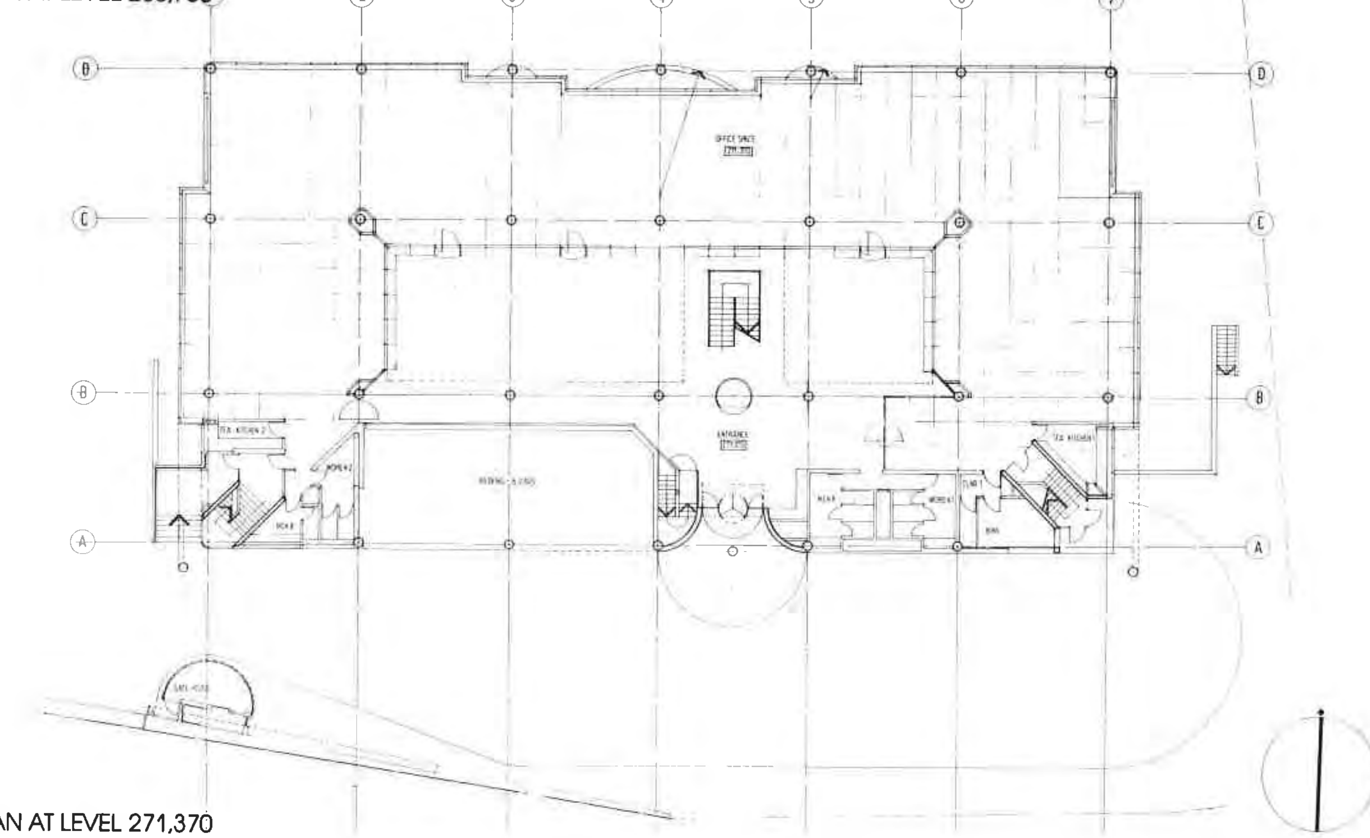
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HALLEN THERON AND PARTNERS INC



SOUTH ELEVATION

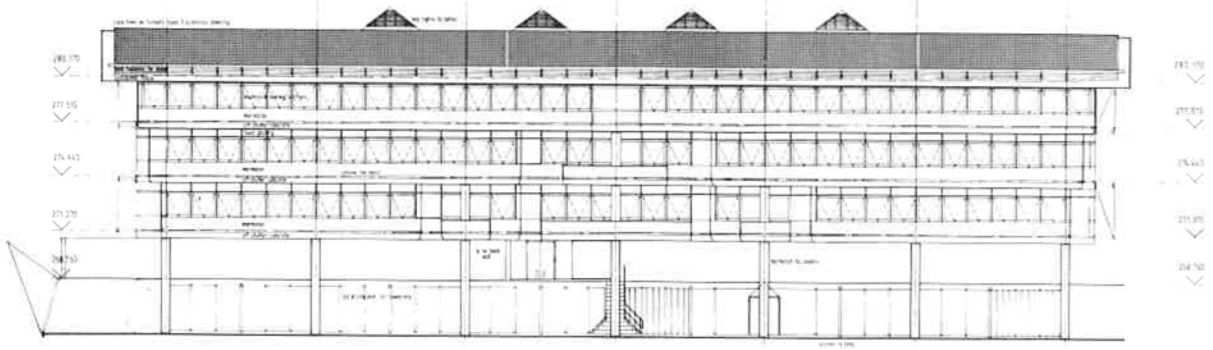


PLAN AT LEVEL 268,750

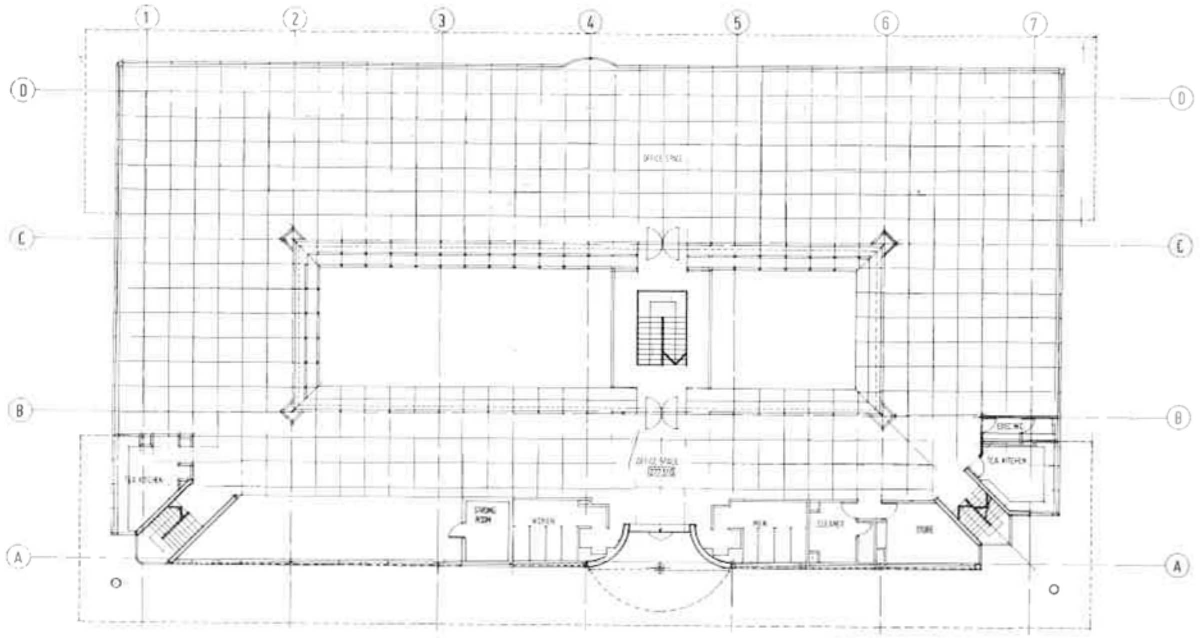


PLAN AT LEVEL 271,370

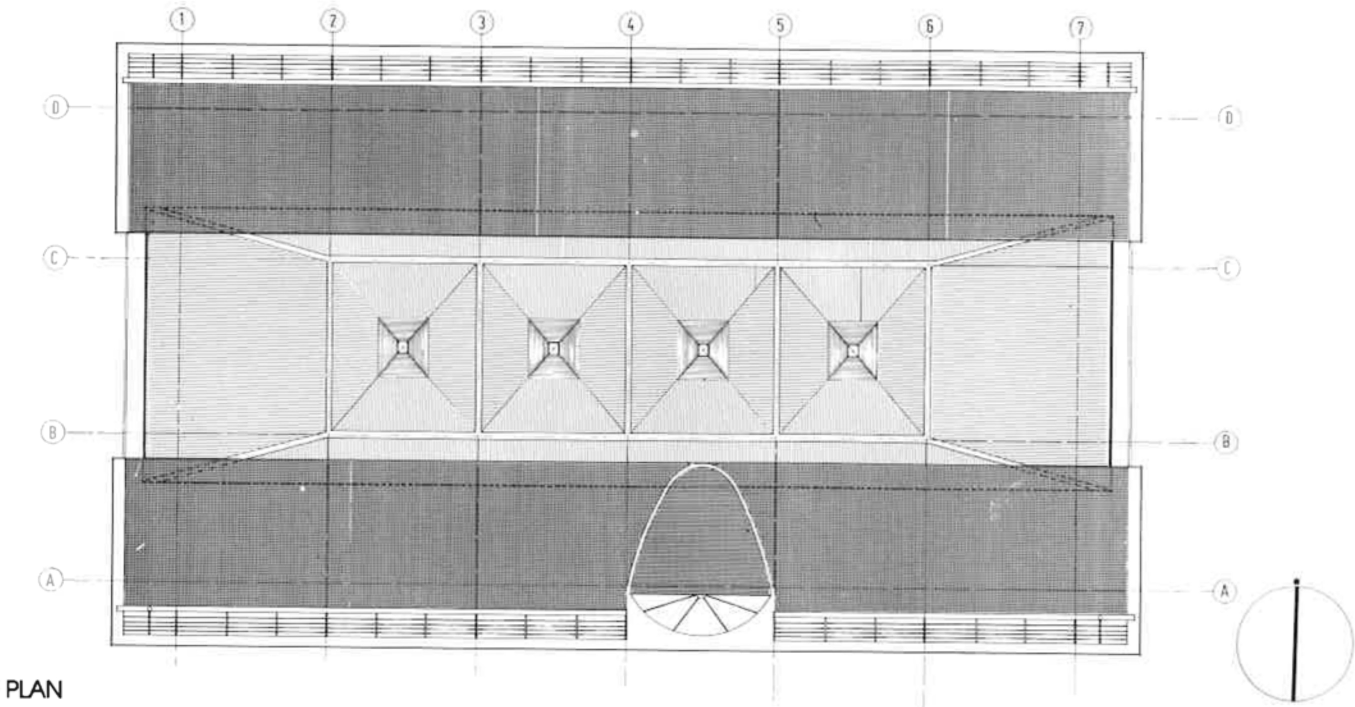
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HALLEN THERON AND PARTNERS INC



NORTH ELEVATION

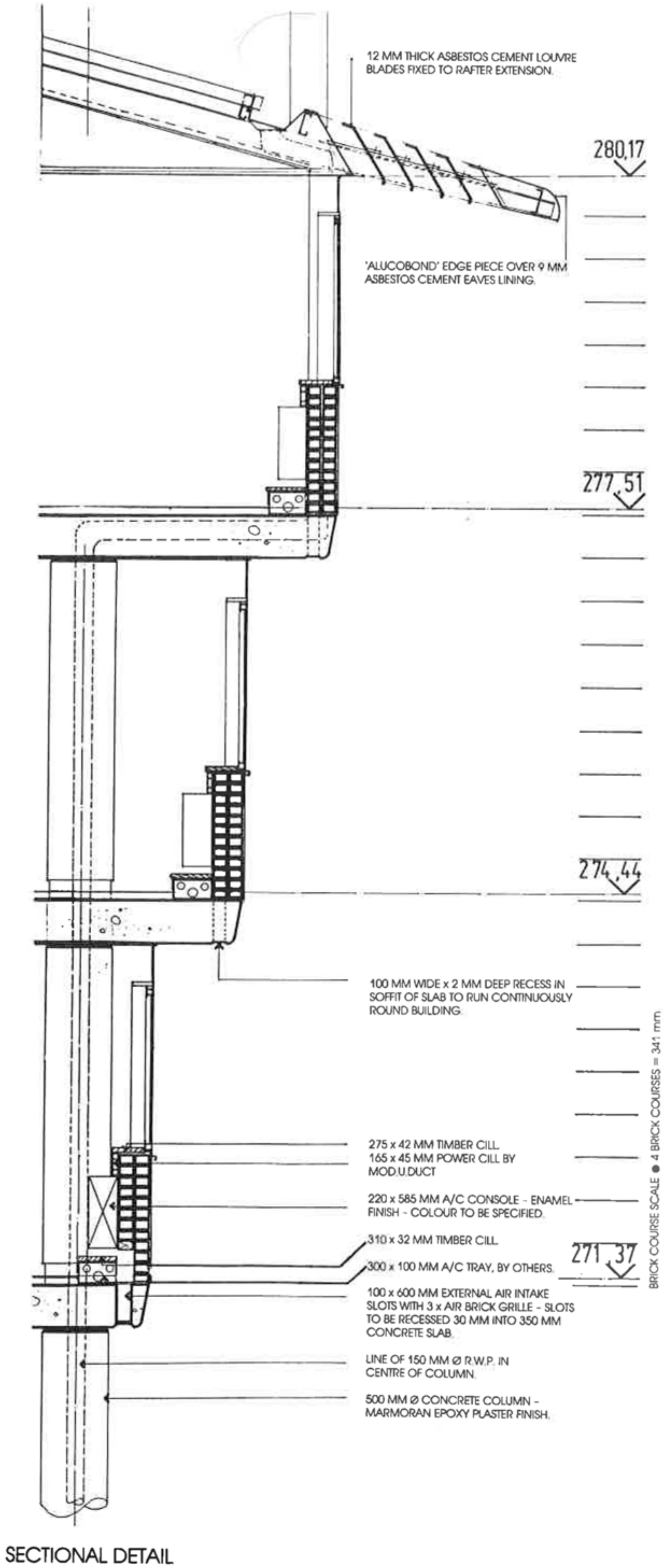


PLAN AT LEVEL 277,510



ROOF PLAN

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
HALLEN THERON AND PARTNERS INC



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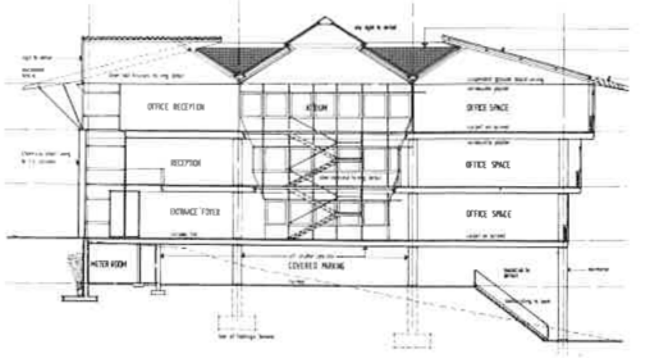

SECTION CC

gutter edge detail are elaborated to suit the scale and form of the building.

The structure is reinforced concrete flat slabs on circular columns on a 8.400 x 8.400 grid. The spacing of the columns was determined by the need for an economic office grid and the parking of cars at basement level. The flat slab made for easy and rapid construction and greater flexibility in the partitioning layout. The roof and ceiling to the upper level are supported on a steel portal frame.

For reasons of economy and flexibility an all-water fan coil system of air-conditioning was selected. The system consists of a central plantroom and thermal storage tank connected to fan coil units located on the perimeter of the office space - ie on the atrium and external walls. The fan coil units provide individual space temperature control without utilising central station air handling equipment or ductwork. In conjunction with lighting by means of specially designed uplighters the need for false ceilings and lighting grids is eliminated.

Finishes are generally modest in terms of initial cost and have been chosen for long term permanence and low maintenance.

The building was built on a very tight budget and as a consequence of increase in GST and the low rate of exchange of the rand against the dollar a number of important decorative items have, for the time being, been omitted. Despite these difficulties the all-in cost of the building is just over R1 000,00 per m².

L Smith

Architects: *Hallen, Theron and Partners Inc*
Quantity Surveyors: *J Walters and Simpson*
Structural Engineers: *M E Masojada and Partners*
Electrical Engineers: *Ken Shepstone and Partners*
Air-Conditioning Installation: *Improvair (Pty) Limited*
Contractors: *Inland Construction (Natal) (Pty) Limited*

COMMENT

DECENTRALISED OFFICE BUILDINGS

I have often pondered the wisdom of decentralised office buildings. I know that our cities can be dull and harsh while I have visited many well designed and almost romantic suburban office buildings; but, if our cities are hostile, is the solution to run away or would not business make a greater contribution by staying and thus encouraging the development of a friendly and even exciting urban environment?

New York is an excellent example of how a city has moved through cycles of undesirability to desirability. The West Side, which was for many decades an uninteresting area relegated to a position secondary to that of the East Side, has since developed a character of its own and is now pulsating with new fervour and energy. One just has to see the results of that tender which the city put out for the leasing of Columbus Circle to understand what this means.

A similar cycle has now begun on 42nd Street and the rejuvenation of Greenwich Village in the heart of run-down Manhattan is well known.

Of course the city is congested and so commuting becomes a problem, but the trade-off is a marvellous environment in which business can be conducted. The concentration of great numbers and varieties of people providing services, exchanging ideas and giving colour and character to the city, is impossible to achieve in the suburbs.

New York and London have the great advantage of a large population resident in the city. Generally speaking, we do not find this in South Africa, although Durban is probably best sited from that point of view. Durban also has the advantage that the beach front is relatively near to the city centre, which thus benefits from an additional influx of people.

As with everything else, trends are most accentuated in Johannesburg and the decentralisation of office space has taken place there with a tremendous vengeance. If one has to attend several meetings in Johannesburg, one can find oneself spending an equal amount of time in travelling as in sitting and working. I wonder if this is the solution to the problem!

I am at a disadvantage in commenting on the buildings illustrated in this issue, as I have not been to Durban for two years and, therefore, have not seen the buildings first-hand nor have I been able to assess their environmental impact. My comments are therefore brief.

The SBDC Building seems to be partly obscured by a road "map". The McCarthy Building seems to sit rather aggressively amongst what appear to be single residential buildings on either side of it. I think real problems of scale and building texture are involved in erecting a relatively large building within a residential fabric, but then of course the Berea has some rather large blocks of flats as well.

The firm Hallen Theron & Partners Inc. has always turned out buildings which are worthwhile and which have a certain amount of fun and dramatics about them (although I often yearn for the Hans Hallen of yore who produced those very lovely, soft and environmentally beautiful residential complexes which formed my introduction to his work).

The atrium seems rather sterile, due partly to the fact that the offices facing the atrium are glazed in; indeed I wonder why the atrium could not be treated as an open garden. The entrance facade, and the way it turns the corner, is very effective.

The Building Centre also has glazed-in offices facing the atrium. The internal circulation seems to be a problem; the staircase is not centrally located and will result in circulation spaces which might not be easy to handle. Again, I have a problem with the scale of the building in the environment (insofar as I can judge from the small photograph).

The McCarthy Centre has a plan which should provide no difficulties with sub-division or with usability, except for the triangular spaces which have to be specially designed; presumably this has been considered as the building houses two large tenants.

One of the main disappointments in all the schemes arises from a problem which is common to most decentralised office space. The underlying rationale for decentralised offices is that one will be able to design a building in a beautiful garden with adequate and open parkng. What normally transpires, however, is that the beautiful garden vanishes, with a few awkward pockets remaining for landscaping.

It is interesting that due to the climate in Durban, all the schemes have to be air conditioned, with the result that the relationship between the office and the landscaping breaks down since it is not possible to have windows open to the fresh air. These artificial climates are what one is forced into in city buildings because of the noise.

None of the schemes seems to make use of the topography of Durban, namely very high gradients with dramatic views. One would have thought that the advantage of a decentalised office would have been that the building could have been stepped down the slope of the ground, with beautiful terraces opening up from the offices.

I am fully aware of the problem that, when faced with the practicalities of a scheme and the limits set by having to meet the parking ratios, all these concepts break down – indeed, we have all had a similar experience with the solutions. I merely make the point, because of my opening comments, that I think there are relatively few instances where decentralised office space is really an advantage.

I believe that an exciting solution for decentralised office space is the office park where, with most of the parking able to be located in a basement, one is free to design buildings which are related to each other and to the landscaping. This provides the possibility of creating a large office component with qualities far superior to those attainable in the city.

Louis Karol

Louis Karol is principal of the firm Louis Karol Architects, Cape Town and Johannesburg. The firm with ISAA Awards of Merit to its credit, has established itself in the field of office buildings, both centralised and decentralised in the major centres of Southern Africa. *Editor.*

NEWS

PRACTICE NOTICES

CHANGES IN PARTNERSHIPS, ETC

Mr I F Poole ceased to be a partner in The Olaf Pretorius Smith and Poole Partnership with effect 31.7.85. The style of the practice remains unchanged.

Mr W van Heerden and Mr B G Gibbon as from 1 March 1985 are practising in partnership under the style of The Gibbon van Heerden Partnership at Suite One, Industries House, 1 Victoria Embankment, Durban.

Mr Piet Bakker has advised that with effect from 1.6.85 his practice has merged with that of Stauch Vorster.

Mr R G Fulford and Mr G A Treloar with effect from 31.3.85 have retired from their consultants' position in Fridjhon, Fulford & Partners. In addition Mr D Dodds has retired from the partnership and is now a consultant to the practice.

Mr B J Becker and Mr A J Hofman entered into partnership on 1 March 1985 under the style of Becker & Hofman at 2 Bank Street, Margate.

Mr O R Tennant and Mr T A Tennant have entered into partnership under the style of Tennant and Tennant at 45 Temple Street, Pietermaritzburg.

Messrs L J E Zietsman and S B Neal as from 10 June 1985 have been practising in partnership under the style of Zietsman & Neal at 89 Broad Street, Durban.

The practice of Beaton and Lloyd Spencer has been disbanded.

CHANGES IN ADDRESSES

Mr P G S Peck to P O Box 152, Umtata.
Mr R M Colley to 22 Flack Place, Virginia, 4051.
Mr M A Gafoor to Suite 5, 134 Berea Road, Durban.
Mr A K S Oehley to 1202 E.Mulberry #115, San Antonio, Texas 78209.
Mr H Ramadhin to 78 Julia Road, Overport, Durban.
Mr D G van Zyl to 207 Seventh Avenue, Durban.
Mr H N F Rodda to 1 Kilgerran Mansions, 265 Moore Road, Durban.

CHANGES IN CLASS

Mr A L Spencer from retired to ordinary – 1 Intengu Park, 9 Intengu Avenue, Kloof.
Mr J R Beaton from ordinary to retired.
Mr M H Kendall from ordinary to retired – 203 Regester Avenue, Rogers Forge, Baltimore, Maryland 21212, USA.

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

P H van Coller from NPI to CPI.

NEW MEMBERS

Mr M J M Walker (ordinary) P O Box 1016, Pietermaritzburg.
Miss P Jansen van Rensburg (ordinary) 23 Penzance Road, Glenwood, Durban.
Mrs A E Swift (ordinary) P O Box 2, Muden.
Mr R A W Lavine (AnT) 6 Cooper Place, Moseley Park, Pinetown.

RESIGNATIONS

Mr D E Franklin
Mr A K Sutton
Mr I F Poole

DECEASED

Mr K R Dickle

N P I A COMMITTEE 86/87

COROBRIK/NATAL MERCURY BEST BRICK BUILDING AWARDS 1985

The Corobrik/Natal Mercury Best Brick Building Awards for 1985 were presented by Corobrik Natal in conjunction with the Natal Mercury and, in consultation with the Natal Provincial Institute of Architects.

Architects were invited to submit entries for the best brick built (Clay or Calsi-Face or non-Face) buildings in the following three categories:

LOW RISE MEDIUM DENSITY HOUSING
INDIVIDUAL FAMILY HOUSES
BUILDINGS OTHER THAN THOSE IN THE PREVIOUS TWO CATEGORIES.

The judges were Professor Don Dyke-Wells of the University of Natal, Cape Town architect, Jack Barnett and Mike Ingram of the marketing department of Corobrik Natal.

Their selections in each category were:

LOW RISE MEDIUM DENSITY HOUSING. Winner: John Ferguson of Natalia Development Board for courtyard housing at Kwandengezi. Runner-up: Bryan Lee of Building Design Group Architects for a complex of five townhouses, Essenwood Palms.

INDIVIDUAL FAMILY HOUSING. Winner: Rob Johnson of Mikula and Johnson Architects for his own home in Cato Manor Road, Durban. Runner-up: Lance Smith of Hallen, Theron and Partners for a family home at Shepstone Place, Westville.

FOR BUILDINGS OTHER THAN THE PREVIOUS TWO CATEGORIES (PUBLIC, COMMERCIAL, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, ETC). Winner: Thurston Raats of Campbell, Bernstein & Irving for the office complex La Lucia Park, Armstrong Avenue, La Lucia. Joint runners-up: Andre Duvenage, Hallen, Theron and Partners for Golden Hours Training Centre, Durban North and Ivor Daniel and Barry Clark of Daniel & Associates in association with Barry Clark for the Assegai Methodist Church in Austerville.

The prize for the winner of each section was a cheque for R2 000.

N P I A COMMITTEE 1986/87

At the Annual General Meeting of Members held in the Ball Room of the Caister Hotel, on Thursday October 24, 1985, the following persons were elected to the Natal Provincial Committee for 1986/87: Messrs S Baillon, D Boyd, M Dibb, J Frost, P Gibson, B Johnson, W Peters, R Platt, D Sherlock, G Small, E Tollman and F Vos.

At a subsequent committee meeting, Mr M Dibb was elected President and Mr J Frost Vice-President. Messrs M Dibb and D Sherlock are to continue as the N P I representatives on National Board with Messrs F Vos and J Frost as their alternates. It was also agreed that Mr J Frost attend meetings as an observer.

As co-opted members, the Committee elected Mr P Hoal, Durban City Architect, and Mr R Cooke of the Provincial Building Services.

NEW PRODUCTS

FIBREGRASS – A NEW OUTDOOR CARPET AT EXPO 85

The tramping feet of hundreds of thousands of visitors to Durban's Expo 85 between October and January will be testing the durability of a new type of outdoor-indoor carpet developed locally.

Called Fibregrass 173, it is made by the highly innovative Durban based needlepunch carpet manufacturer Flortime (Pty) Ltd which recently scored a world first with the launch of a needlepunch carpet designed for installation on an underlay. The company holds international patents for several of its products.

Fibregrass, the only purpose-designed South African made outdoor-indoor carpet is also the first in a new generation of deep pile carpets made on the needlepunch process. It has a wide range of uses including artificial cricket pitches, turf club parade rings, outdoor podiums, gymnasiums, patios and many more. It is already in use at several schools and at the Clairwood Turf Club. 1 600 metres of Fibregrass, enough to cover half a rugby field, have been supplied to Expo 85 for the concourses and promenades at the Phanomena 'Senses and Science' exhibition.

The managing director of Flortime, Mr Brian Thomson, said that besides adding colour and comfort underfoot, the thousands of visitors expected over the three months of Expo 85 would be an incredible durability test for the product.

"We will learn a lot about the wearing capabilities of it and other floorcoverings in the pipeline," he said. A forerunner of Fibregrass had been developed as an artificial bowling green surface some time ago, but was shelved in favour of the new product which has multiple uses.

"Actually, like most good inventions, the final phase development of Fibregrass happened by accident when a different backing resin had to be used due to a shortage of the material originally intended for the product," said Mr Thomson. The result was an exceptionally durable deep pile carpet, with a built in ultra violet light inhibitor. Mr Thomson said that the potential for Fibregrass in South Africa was large as there were limited similar products available on the market and all of these were imported.

Brian Thomson, seen at right with a sample of fibregrass, sizes up the Phanomena exhibition site.