

Knox City Shopping Centre

Architect's report

McIntyre McIntyre and Partners Pty Ltd received the commission to design this regional shopping centre in 1972. The initial design brief was for a shopping centre of 55,000 square metres (gross leasable floor area) in two stages to be built upon two adjacent sites (A and B).

The current development, Stage One on Site A, is on a site of approximately 12 hectares (gross area) and comprises 341,200 square metres of retail area and 41,420 square metres non-retail area.

Contained within the development are a Myers department store of three levels, a Target discount department store, a Target supermarket, a McEwans hardware store, 83 speciality shops on two levels, a regional library, Twin Dendy cinemas and a four level office tower.

The basic premise of the design philosophy was continuity of appearance as opposed to the eclectic style of the traditional shopping centre. Basic details, materials, textures, junctions and colour are carried throughout the design to reinforce this. The plan form was a response to the many constraints the site imposed on the design including drainage, SEC easements, floodways, car parking on two levels, perimeter access, location of major tenants and the servicing of the centre.

The cladding to the building is a specially designed light coloured "reeded" concrete block. Its use throughout is both a response to the economic constraints of the project and an important element in the continuity of the external finish.

Externally angled walls break up the scale of the otherwise flat and massive facade and add interest and variety to enhance the pedestrian approach. Large earth bunds integrated into the wall forms and heavily landscaped further reduce the scale.

Major tenancies are at either end of the building, linked by the small speciality shops spread over two levels. Angled malls which form the spine of the building were so designed to provide maximum shopfront area for retailing and to have a dynamic impact on the shopper.



Knox City Shopping Centre won the IES Meritorious Lighting Award. It was published in *Architect* February 1978.

Architect:

McIntyre McIntyre and Partners Pty Ltd

Project team:

R. P. McIntyre, W. Glover, K. Barron, K. Freiverts, G. Ellis

Client:

AMP Society

Structural and civil engineer:

John Connell and Associates

Specialist services engineer:

Rankine and Hill Pty Ltd

Hydraulic services engineer:

C. R. Knight and Associates Pty Ltd

Quantity surveyor:

Rider Hunt and Partners Pty Ltd

Landscap architect:

Carol Frank-Mas

Graphics:

Les Mason

Builder:

Costain Australia Limited

Location:

cnr Burwood highway and Stud road City of Knox Victoria

Approx cost:

\$30M

Total internal area:

451,620 square metres

Approx cost per square metre:

\$66

Completion date:

November 1977

Access between mall levels is by escalators, stairs or lifts. The level 1 mall is approximately 11,000 wide. It has raised and sunken seating and relaxation areas with in situ planters and mall furniture. The level 2 mall is approximately 16,000 wide and consists of a 4000 wide walkway on either side of major void spaces spanned by bridge links.

Major visual elements of the building are: the Dingus Tower, a semicircular concrete tower incorporating the Centre symbol; a covered pedestrian walkway, the focus for public transport arrivals and departures linking the Dingus Tower to the Centre; the skylights, trapezoidal skylights primarily designed to provide natural light to mall and curvilinear skylights to dump natural light over landscaped areas and the coloured mosaic tile graphic covering the entire level 1 mall floor.

Major structural elements throughout the building have been expressed. Off form concrete plinths and lintels and return wall surfaces are treated as flat off form

concrete to contrast with the reeded cladding. Circular concrete columns and painted exposed steel trusses are used in the Dingus Tower, the pedestrian walkway and in the main malls.

Considerable importance has been placed on landscaping throughout, both internally and externally, and where possible established natural plants were used.

Inside the mall there are specially grown "Royal Palms" from Queensland. Outside many advanced trees were planted. All landscaped areas have an automatic sprinkler system. There is a 20,000 wide, densely planted buffer strip between the highway and the Centre's car park.

The Centre is serviced through five loading docks, strategically located, most feeding into a system of corridors at the rear of the tenancies. These loading docks are fed by a ring road so deliveries can be made without entering the main malls. Garbage and waste is collected from the four secondary loading docks and compacted in the main loading dock for removal.

Ian McKenzie Photography



Peter McIntyre receiving Buildings Award Medal from Victorian Chapter President Richard Young

The design brief stressed the need for the graphics to convey their message effectively and to be visually striking. The information system is uniform and coordinated throughout in typeface, colour way, size, material and location. Corporate images in the sign boxes over all entrances follow the theme established in the mall floor mosaic and the corporate symbol. Externally, a focal point is the multifaceted Centre identification sign mounted on the Dingus (5500 x 5500) designed as a neon light sculpture.

The Centre has three main entrances, one in Stud road and two from Burwood highway.

The car parking for 2,300 vehicles includes an elevated car park deck on the south side of the building for 600 vehicles. The ground level car park is generally herringbone pattern and has large areas of landscaping to break up bitumen areas. The elevated car park deck provides right angle parking. Landscaping here is planter tubs located over columns below.



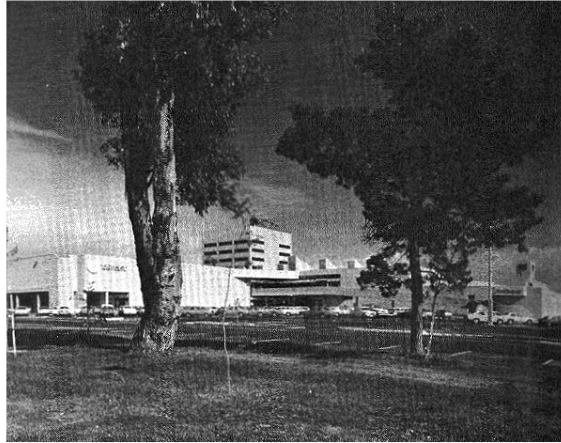
Ian McKenzie Photography

Jury's comments

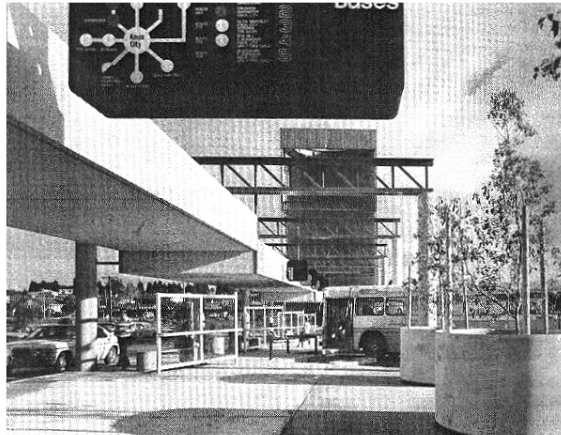
Jointly awarded to the architects for a contribution to an area of building where good design is rarely seen as a primary objective.

Given the concept of a regional shopping centre and contrary to commercial forces, it extends the design contribution as far as might be reasonably expected.

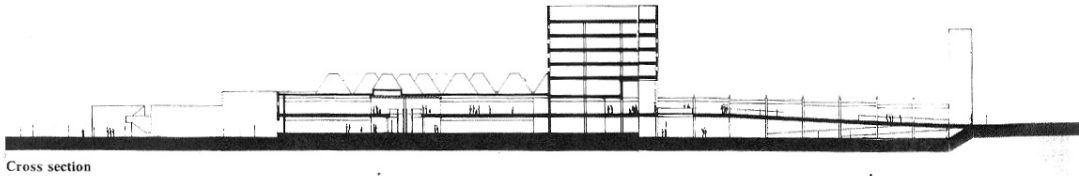
The complex provides a skilled resolution of site, scale, identity car and pedestrian access. It offers a relaxed effective environment for shopping.



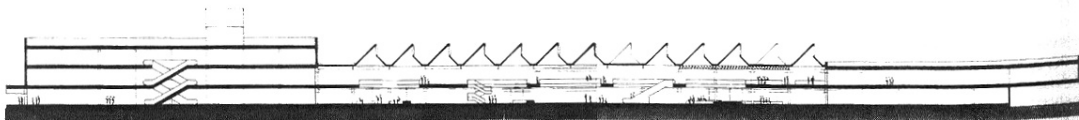
Ian McKenzie Photography



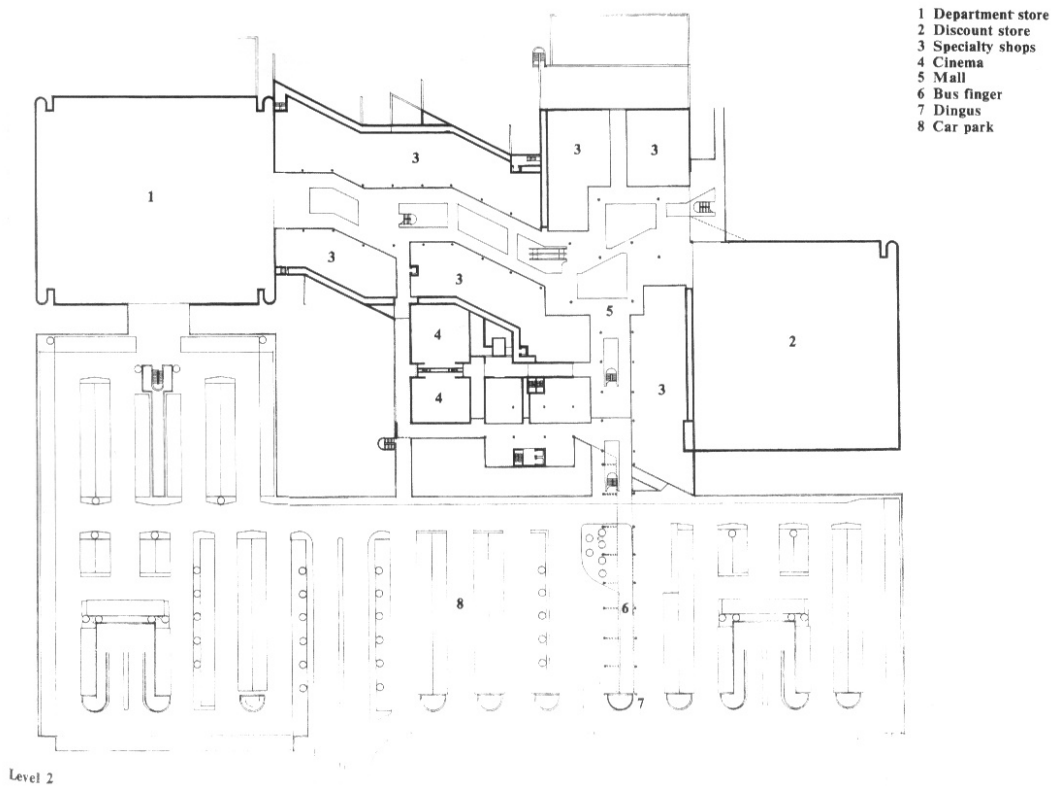
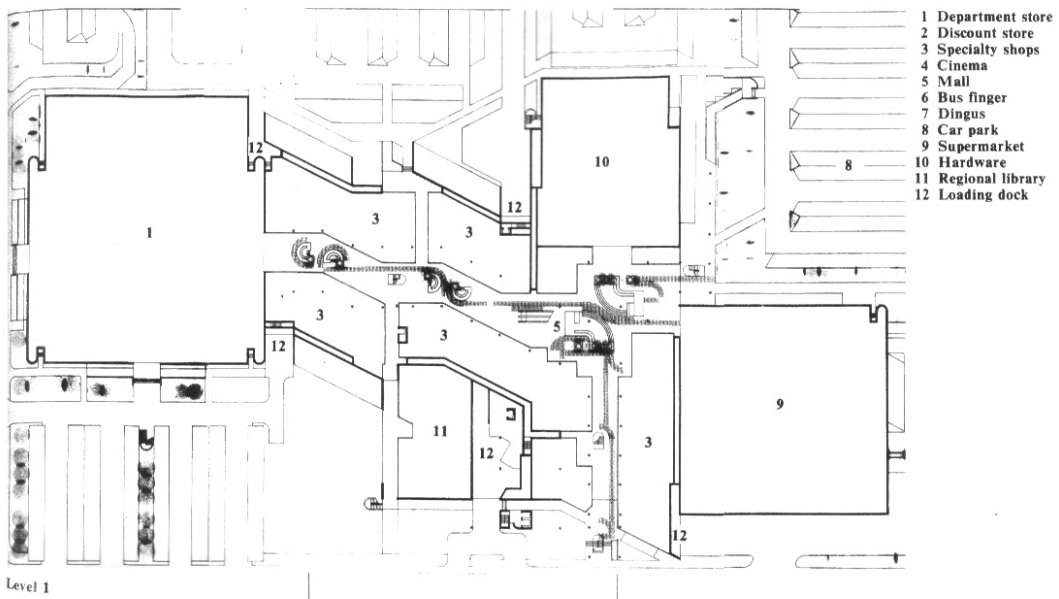
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Cross section



Longitudinal section



Knox City Shopping Centre: a review

Neville Quarry is Professor of Architecture, New South Wales University of Technology. This review is an edited extract from a piece written for *Architectural Review* on three shopping centres of different types by McIntyre, McIntyre and Partners.

The furthest fringes of the outer suburbs of Melbourne are just lapping over the ridges on the way to engulfing the "Blue Dandenongs", a spine of hills that is the most distinct landscape backdrop to Melbourne and its one-time weekend escape to the bush, now rapidly becoming commuter territory.

In the last flat stretch between the sprawl and the rise of the foothills, Knox City Shopping Centre is perfectly situated to catch the trade of the mobile suburbanites. Driving from the city one comes across the Centre abruptly and, at first glance, it looks as steadfast

central mall space of the shopping centre, where the main bones of the structural system continue.

This route is not the usual stumbling entry into the boring jangle or the neutered atriums that characterize the extremes of most shopping centres of this size. One does not lose orientation nor feel alienated from the outside despite being already in air conditioned space. Ahead and to the right the Dandenongs are seen, far off, through the glazed doors of another entrance from the car park. The interior street continues, wandering off to the left obliquely, but its termination in other

which dapples down from trapezoidal skylights overhead, removing the even dullness of entirely artificially lit spaces and catching the prismatic elaboration of the ceiling.

Blue painted steel balustrades zappily indicate floor levels and stairs. The exposed trusses, with a theme of diagonal slant against serrated shopfront, mark the extent of the mall.

Of course the shopfronts are not consistent with this, or with any other, design philosophy except that of individual tenant's shopfitters. Some cohesion has been wrought by a continuous fascia for shop signs above doorhead. Perhaps in the long run any more severe design control would counteract the shopper's positive response. Design preciousness and constancy can intimidate the suburbanite who, if not in real control of his or her own environment, does not want to feel that somebody else is in control.

I'm sure it is a different matter outside, for the shoppers sieve out everything from the appearance except the homing signal of the "dingus". To fastidious architects' eyes the external form of Knox City Shopping Centre is a simple composition of rectangular prisms, bulking larger over the larger stores, lower over the mall with the acute skylights pricking the air, the office tower standing partly proud from the main block. What could have been harsh has been softened by plain setbacks and by the external wall cladding.

The cladding is a grey concrete block with a reeded surface, an indiscernible pattern until approached closely and reading as the slightest of textures from a distance.

From any part of the car park entrances are always self-evident, the least obvious being the entrance to the Municipal Library which is incorporated in the Centre.

Perhaps it is the humane security of direction, inside and out, coupled with the breaking down of a scale that could easily have been monumental, which makes this shopping centre so popularly received and architecturally distinguished.



Ian Mackenzie Photography

and isolated as an airport terminal, surrounded by an inevitable concubinage of cars. Grey and cubic, what appears to be a covered way trails from it to what looks almost like a control tower without the control room. At usual highway speeds of approach this impression is soon corrected. The air terminal analogy takes off, although some ambiguity remains.

The tower recatches the eye. It is evidently nothing more than a marker, like a concrete wheat silo, sawn vertically down not quite the middle. Named the "dingus", it sports a flamboyant op art symbol at the crest of its convex side towards the road — a dour description of something which is, in fact, good fun and a useful point of entrance for which to aim.

From the interior side of the site this concave chute, its transverse bright green steel beams casting variable shadows, suggests what Kahn might have done had he ever cast off his solemn mode and gone pop.

The covered way is a bus shelter. Its structure, bright green exposed steel trusses atop round concrete columns, leads up a slight rise, past a flanking office tower and into the

entrances and exits remains in sight. One suspects that even straying children would get lost only by determination for there are many clues to where you are, to where you might want to go and to where you have been, clues that are more than mere recognition of the merchandise you go past.

The clues begin with the floor which is predominantly a neutral warm-toned tile. Stripes of yellow, red and blue accentuate certain central and minor focuses: a stepped down terrace, providing a shallow auditorium for minor public entertainments; smaller conversation-pit rest areas and little changes of level, forming seats and platforms. These focuses are accepted by the shoppers and children casually and confidently, as if they were used to experiencing them all the time. There is something just right about their scale which is sympathetic with occupation and activity. Such items always appear in the design renderings of shopping malls but eventuate less often.

The ubiquitous exotic tropical palms are here, too, but healthy. Their health is due, no doubt, to the fair sprinkling of natural light