

WEEKEND PROPERTY

COMMERCIAL

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An artist's impression of Brisbane's Wintergarden shopping complex, including Studio505's \$6.5 million facade

New angle on design

Brisbane's Wintergarden shopping complex marries art and functionality

ANNIE REID

IN the heart of Brisbane's CBD, the Wintergarden shopping complex is slowly taking shape.

In a city not known for design, what catches the eye is the \$6.5 million art facade, designed by Melbourne-based Studio505 in collaboration with Wintergarden's project architects, the Buchan Group.

Up to 90m long and 25m high, the facade has about 4000sq m of double layer cut metal panels suspended on three sides of the city block.

The design features intricate layers, geometric patterns and botanical and biological themes that create a visual forest or garden.

When the second stage of Wintergarden opens in April next year, the centre will have 50 stores and a new 750-seat food court spread out across

13,174sq m on the city's Queen Street Mall. The \$100m redevelopment is being undertaken by the building's owner, the Industry Superannuation Property Trust, with the first stage completed in May.

"What Wintergarden will do is connect that Southbank edge to the other side of the river, which draws the city across," Studio505 director Dylan Brady says. "And as soon as that happens, there's going to be a real sense of activity and it will mature quite a lot."

The facade will display a lighting system too, with animated content, slowly changing mood lights and images such as a school of fish or butterflies.

On a practical level, the facade conceals blank, uninspiring walls, but

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LIFESTYLE AND LEISURE LIFTOUT INSIDE



THE PRODUCERS

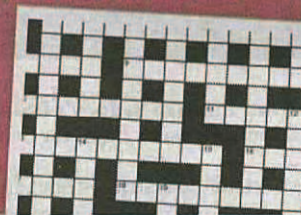
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New angle on design

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with its shading system and lighting control mechanism, highlights how art and function can be melded.

"If you can stitch these two things together properly, you can generate value on both sides of the equation," Brady says.

The project has been four years in the making.

"It's a job that's incredibly close to co-director Dirk (Zimmermann) and my hearts. As an artwork, it has no purpose other than imagination and identity, but it also makes a cultural space and, ultimately, there's the idea of dragging people into the shopping centre," he says.

The facade is being built in China by Australian-based Urban Art Projects.

Also in Brisbane, Melbourne-based architect Rothelowman and Brisbane's Whitearchitecture merged to become Rothelowman White last month and it is working on a yet-to-be-approved apartment tower for South Bank.

The practice has 75 staff in Melbourne and a team of seven in its Brisbane studio at West End.

Managing principal Shane Rothe said the firm was designing Brisbane-based ARIA Property Group's new 30-floor, 300-apartment tower on Edmondstone Street.

"Brisbane is looking for refreshed



An artist's impression of the new residential tower on Edmondstone street in Brisbane

ideas, and this building is the first cab off the rank," Rothe says.

"It's something fresh and new and we have great confidence that our set-up in Brisbane will expand our business."

Rothe says of the decision to expand: "Brisbane ticked all the boxes. There's still good population growth, houses are suppressed, demand is good, there's an undersupply of hotel rooms and commercial offices are still very strong because of the resources sector."

In another Melbourne-Brisbane tie-up, Brisbane-based Mode Design and Melbourne's Morris Partnership merged in September.

It's the seventh studio for Mode Design, which also has Queensland offices on the Sunshine and Gold coasts and will create a firm of almost 100 staff.

"The expansion into Victoria has been a long time coming, as we have had clients in key industries in the re-

gion for many years," says managing director Rhonan O'Brien.

Despite a handful of big projects, confidence and sentiment continues to be tough.

The Property Council of Australia's Queensland executive director, Kathy Mac Dermott, says the greatest challenges are barriers to investment such as planning legislation, red tape, development assessment processes, property taxes and infrastructure planning.

"To turn this sentiment around, we need more certainty in planning, as well as greater competition among councils to attract investment and development." She says Townsville has been a standout: "It has eliminated infrastructure charges in the core CBD as a way of attracting investment."

Queensland's Major Projects Office, established in April, also has helped streamline the development assessment of six large-scale developments.

"It has become clear that the property sector is the critical conduit that

'It has no purpose other than imagination and identity and, ultimately, there's the idea of dragging people into the shopping centre'

DYLAN BRADY
STUDIO505

will help achieve economic recovery and deliver the generational benefits from the resources boom," Mac Dermott says.

The Brisbane City Council is working to stimulate the economy through its new South Brisbane Riverside Neighbourhood Plan, which Lord Mayor Graham Quirk hopes will help drive an urban renewal of the inner city.

Approved in April this year by the Queensland government, the Neighbourhood Plan guides future land use and development for riverside land in the South Brisbane area.

"The reality is the state government is forcing council to find room for 156,000 new dwellings in Brisbane by 2031.

"We see the best way to deal with that as putting higher density in the inner city and along transport corridors rather than urban sprawl, so we can protect our tin and timber suburbs," Quirk says.



An artist's impression of the Wintergarden project

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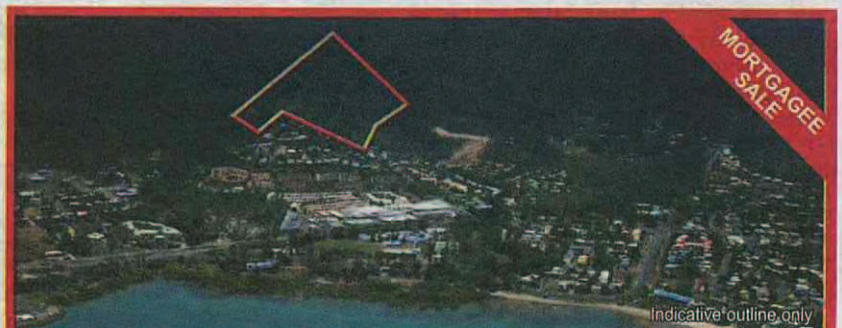
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