

DESIGNS ON NEW PLYMOUTH

He's the man responsible for the design of some of the city's most recognisable buildings: the New Plymouth District Council Chambers, Govett Quilliam's striking seaside practice, the iconic Stratford Clocktower and streetscape, the Ferneries at Pukekura Park and the drystore at Port Taranaki with the curved roof. Then there's the Top Town Cinema 5 complex, Devon Medical Centre, the Richmond Centre, the Taranaki Jockey Club, the Ohakune streetscape, the TET Stadium at Stratford and the popular Bach on Breakwater.

Words Irena Brooks Photos Roger Richardson

He has also designed dozens of residences both here and around the country as well as 16 kindergartens for the national Kindercare chain.

Originally architect Neville Saunders came to New Plymouth in 1993 to work for TSE Taranaki & Associates when he designed some of the buildings above, but ten years ago he left there to start his own practice, which has been operating from its new Vivian Street location for just over a year.

Of his commercial projects, Neville rates the Govett Quilliam building and the New Plymouth District Council Chambers (not the rest of the building he hastens to add) as two of his favourite designs.

He acknowledges however that "there are some disgraceful buildings around. My job is to help improve that."

But a building can't just look good.

"It should actually work as a building and perform the job it is designed to do, as well as be aesthetically pleasing."

Neville has also undertaken plenty of residential work in his time. He is very pleased with the Bredow home (see preceding pages) and also his design of a Waitara bach that was an award winner in the 2009 New Zealand Institute of Architecture Awards (Western Region), and was profiled in LIVE's February 2010 issue. He rattles off half a dozen

other residences he ranks among his best designs.

"I always design something I personally like and that I can be proud of."

Neville also prides himself on the individuality of his designs.

"You'll notice a lot of architects have a common theme to their work. I'm quite eclectic – a bit like my taste in music, I like all sorts – and I like to try new ideas."

He also believes it's important to keep up with new technology and changing trends.

His influences are legendary American architect's Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra and Mies van der Rohe – "they would be some of the early Modernist architects," says Neville.

"Architects always want to produce something worthy of their calling. The best buildings always come from the best clients. A building is basically a reflection of the client. A good client will often have a really nice concept in their head but needs someone to bring it to fruition.

"That's why the Waitara bach was so successful. The client is superbly interested in architecture and we were able to work as a good collaborative team."

Neville says even after 30 years practising as an Architect he still is passionate about his work.

"I get to know my clients very well, albeit on a



professional level. It's quite a personal relationship you develop as you become privy to how your client lives and their future aspirations. You have to, in order to design a home that is going to work for their current lifestyle as well as into their future.

"It's a fulfilling job as you touch on so many different aspects; the people involved – clients and contractors, the environment, nature, views, temperatures, materials."

Supporting Neville at his practice are some young designers, like Luke and Blair.

"They are my goldmine if you like. They are wonderful," says Neville. "You can't survive without good people behind you and they have been with me for over four years now."

He recognizes they too need to enjoy their work and tries to make it variable for them.

"It keeps interest levels up when you're not working on the same old thing all the time. And it's good to have young energy coming through too. It helps keep you alive – and helps keep the business alive too." ••

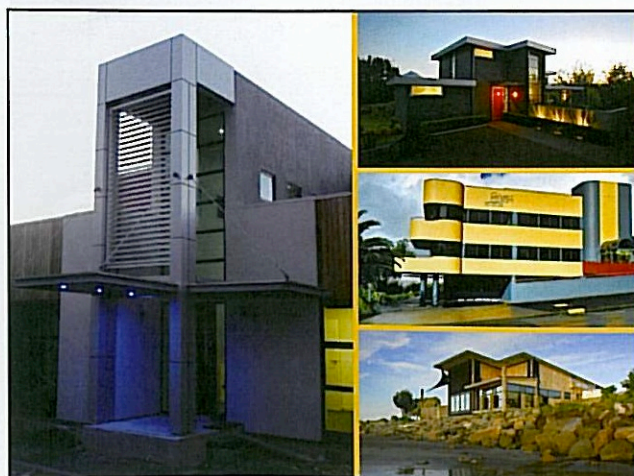


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