eThekwini Municipality

Engineering Training Centre

Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

Architects: **City Architecture Department, eThekwini Municipality, Michael Watts Architects**
Project Team: **Michael Watts, Tiffany Murray, Nick Vinton**
Structural Engineers: **City Architecture Department**
Mechanical Engineers: **City Architecture Department**
Electrical Engineers: **City Architecture Department, GIBB**
Landscape Architect: **City Architecture Department**
Quantity Surveyor: **City Architecture Department**
Contractor: **C & R Contractors Kwazulu**
Photographer: **Angela Shaw**
Text: **Michael Watts**

29° 48'47.88"S
30° 59'4.48"E

The eThekwini Municipality Engineering Training Centre is located within the Municipality's Springfield complex. The 'grittier' depots, technical centres and repair workshops are located here at the edge of the central business district where proximity to motorways provides metro-wide accessibility.

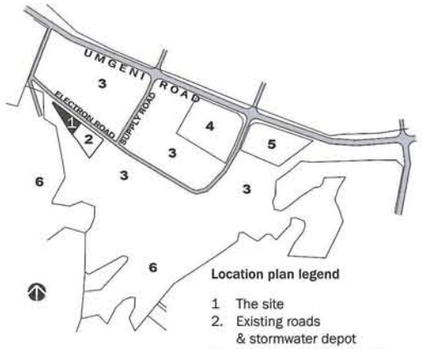
The brief was to provide a theoretical and practical training facility for municipal workers. This called for two lecture rooms, each seating 30 trainees, and a large covered 'practical' training area where brick- and kerb-laying, manhole construction and asphalting could be tutored. Planning for future expansion of the complex was important.

Aside from the physical accommodation requirements of the brief, the architects' objective was to develop a pleasant campus-type environment despite the industrial character of the surrounds. This was achieved through defining a north-facing landscaped courtyard bounded on the south by the lecture rooms and on the west by the main building. A veranda links these two elements, forming a breakout space for trainees.

The courtyard is screened from the parking area to the north by giant planters formed out of 3 m x 1,2 m stormwater pipes that had lain abandoned on the site since 2010. In conjunction with water conservation and recycling, solar water heating and hardy landscaping, this creates a more sustainable building. Materials are low maintenance and all internal spaces maximise daylight and natural cross-ventilation.

The project was an opportunity to raise the profile of otherwise utilitarian and undistinguished municipal buildings in this area.

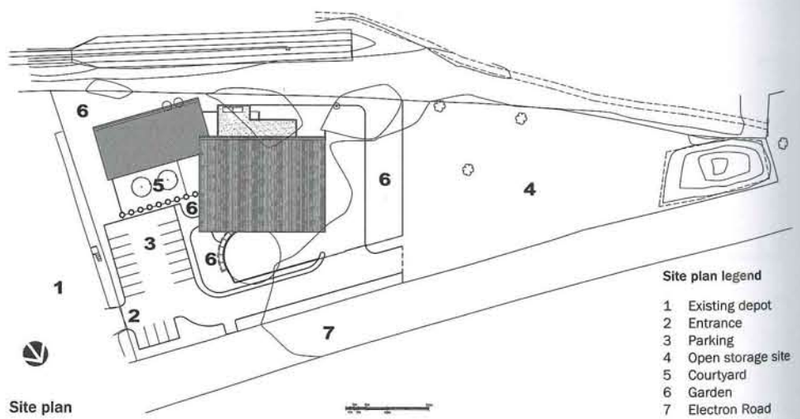
Roof forms were kept as simple as possible; two interlinked mono-pitches and the larger volume of the practical training building on the northern Electron Road façade were used to brand a 'feature' panel. This panel is composed of fragmented timber slats, fixed to the steel structure at high level. Aside from creating a fixing point for building signage, the slats shelter the training and reception area from the north sun and provide a dynamic sense of movement along the public face.



Location plan legend

1 The site
2. Existing roads & stormwater depot
3 Existing municipal facilities
4 Value Centre
5 Makro
6 Existing bush

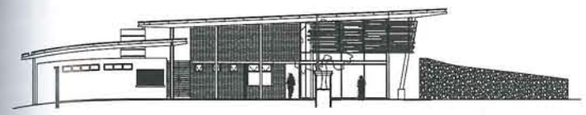
Locality plan



Site plan

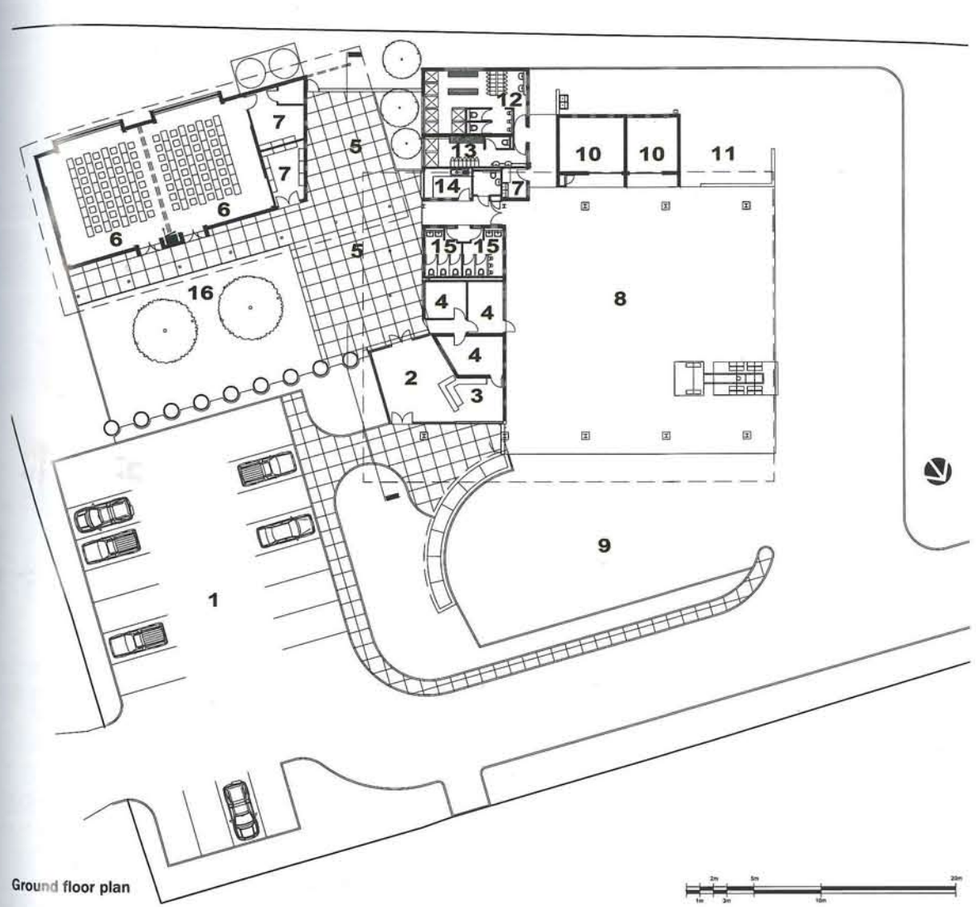
Site plan legend

1 Existing depot
2 Entrance
3 Parking
4 Open storage site
5 Courtyard
6 Garden
7 Electron Road



Section

North elevation



Ground floor plan

Ground floor plan legend

1 Parking
2 Foyer
3 Reception
4 Office
5 Breakout area
6 Lecture room
7 Store
8 Covered training area
9 Training yard
10 Equipment store
11 Yard
12 Male change-rooms
13 Female change-rooms
14 Kitchen
15 Staff WCs
16 Courtyard