

NOTABLE USERS

Adrian McGregor | McGregor Coxall | Sydney, Australia

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notable

Adrian McGregor: Fixing His Sights on the Future of Our Cities



Adrian McGregor

Adrian McGregor's landscape architecture and urban design firm, McGregor Coxall, is based in Sydney, Australia. McGregor also founded The Biocity Studio, an innovative research group and internet portal that compares global cities based on twelve measurements, including economical, cultural, governmental, and health concerns—and encourages action to ensure a cleaner, stronger world.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

McGregor transforms public spaces across the world into living, breathing works of art. He was about five years old when he discovered his love of the land, as he dug in his grandmother's garden in his steel-town home of Newcastle, Australia. Later, McGregor merged his passion for landscape architecture with his passion for architectural design, when he studied at the University of Canberra in Australia. "That was the beginning of the journey," he says.

With a landscape architecture degree and subsequent certificate in horticulture, McGregor established the Urban Design Alliance in 1997 to radically improve the quality of urban life across Australia. He founded his firm McGregor and Partners in 1998, and in 2009 renamed it McGregor Coxall to better reflect the collaboration between himself and longtime colleague Philip Coxall. The firm has completed work in six nations, focusing on sustainable design in the public domain and urban settings. Their work goes beyond the reduction of environmental damage to actively advance each site's ecology with regenerative approaches. McGregor has been recognized for his work in sustainable design, as well as in mediation, helping communities, authorities, and developers to work well together.

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"[When we first started] I think that our commitment to design quality and the digital focus gave us a different outlook in comparison to a lot of other firms."

--Adrian McGregor, Managing Director,
McGregor Coxall and The Biocity Studio,
Sydney, Australia

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A SYDNEY STREETScape TRANSFORMED

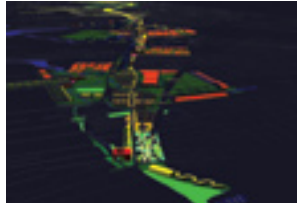
McGregor Coxall won the highly coveted international Parramatta Road Competition for their work on the 200-year-old road connecting Parramatta with Sydney. It is one of the largest Australian projects in recent history. Nicknamed the "traffic sewer," and "a varicose vein," this thoroughfare handles more than 80,000 vehicles each day. It divides the city into two sections and was an eyesore for the community. To revive the corridor, McGregor and his team generated a series of strategies with a big picture view of the city.

The team worked in the Vectorworks® Landmark software, importing GIS data, widening the road, and producing a full 3D model of the entire 23 km

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Left: Ballast Point Park: Using recycled materials, wind turbines, and storm water filtration systems to reduce its impact on the environment, the team repurposed the former Caltex lubricant production facility (and one-time ship ballast quarry) into the 2.5 ha (25,000 square meters) Ballast Point Park on the Birchgrove Peninsula in the inner reaches of Sydney Harbor, Australia.

Top Right: Ballast Point Park: This Vectorworks Landmark plan shows the award-winning vision for the formerly contaminated Ballast Point Park.

Top Left: Parramatta Road: This 3D model shows the sheer size of the 23km Parramatta Road, one of the largest Australian projects in recent history. McGregor and his team won the coveted international Parramatta Road Competition Prize for their transformation of this former eyesore.

corridor, including close-ups of certain sections. "With Vectorworks Landmark, 3D is easier and easier and now more accurate than before," McGregor notes. "Graphically, it's great. We use a lot of transparencies and textures, and a lot of layering and graphic work as well."

Since the project was so massive, timesaving tactics were also very important. "We have a really systematic workflow—we customize all of our layer and class names in the concept phase, so when we move into design and development, we automatically replace all the class attributes—it instantaneously turns the drawing into a working drawing and saves a lot of time." The team also builds standard details in the office that match specifications, so all of that work is very tightly integrated. And using Building Information Modeling (BIM) techniques, they link worksheets to the plant database and auto-generate material schedules. With a flexible workflow and efficient tools, the team completed this immense plan with just one Vectorworks file.

BIRTH OF THE BIO-CITY STUDIO

"Working at that scale [on Parramatta Road], . . . we looked at the transportation, housing, urban ecology, habitat, economy, citizens' health—a lot of big issues facing modern cities. We wanted to formulate some kind of framework for looking at cities and making cities more sustainable." Thus Biocity Studio was launched in 2006. An online gateway providing data for sustainable urbanism, it has

expanded to encompass a growing list of cities. The organization uses public information from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and is negotiating potential partnerships with the United Nations and The Climate Institute for even more robust data for its interactive data "visualizer." It is also pursuing cooperative research grants with universities to build more functionality on the site and to provide more classes at many Australian universities. "It's a way for city leaders and policy makers to say we're deficient here, what are we doing wrong and how can we fix it?" McGregor says. "We're really at the beginning. We're just getting started."

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"Everyone knows we've got immense challenges ahead of us—with the end of oil, climate change, a huge loss of biodiversity, and soaring population growth, we've got some really, really big issues to deal with. Cities are where most of the human population lives now, so that's why we're interested in how we can work with cities to make them more sustainable and also how to transition into the future when we can't put oil in our cars anymore."

—Adrian McGregor, Managing Director,
McGregor Coxall and The Biocity Studio,
Sydney, Australia.

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THE FUTURE

The 14-person McGregor Coxall team recently won the coveted 2009 Topos Magazine Landscape award and 2009 Australian Institute of Landscape Architects New South Wales award for their work on Ballast Point Park in Birchgrove (www.mcgregorcoxall.com/#/projects/30). The firm was also ranked 12th out of 4,000 small businesses (fewer than 100 employees) across Australia by Telstra Business Awards for its leadership role in the business community. McGregor Coxall and The Biocity Studio continue to jointly seek out opportunities to design innovative, sustainable solutions for cities. From a garden in Newcastle to a view that encompasses Australia and beyond, McGregor and his team are leading the way to a more sustainable future.

McGregor Coxall

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