Central Area Urban Design Guide

15 September 2006

Contents

Intention

To achieve high quality buildings, places and spaces in the Central Area of the city.

This will be achieved by ensuring they:
- are coherently designed
- make a considered response to context
- address heritage values
- establish positive visual effects
- provide good quality living and working environments
- integrate environmental sustainability principles, and
- provide conditions of safety and accessibility

Central Wellington

Using this Guide

Application

This Design Guide should be read in conjunction with the objectives and policies contained in Chapter 12, and the rules contained in Chapter 13 of the District Plan.

The guide applies to new buildings, and additions and modifications to existing buildings in the Central Area. Specific and detailed design objectives are set out in each section, followed by related generic guidelines. Appendices cover identified heritage areas, and other areas of special character in the Central Area.

Relevance

Good design is site and programme specific, and not all of the generic design guidelines in this design guide will necessarily apply to every site. However, every guideline that is relevant to the project site, type and scope must be considered, and every relevant design objective satisfied.

Relevant guidelines can be identified by the designer and confirmed with WCC design reviewers in pre-application meetings.

Cuba Street

Design flexibility and responsiveness to site

Sometimes, a design objective may be best achieved by means not anticipated in these guidelines. In this situation, it is justifiable to depart from a guideline if it can be demonstrated that the alternative design solution better satisfies the associated design objective.

Prioritisation

Every design proposal is a response to a unique mix of requirements and circumstances. Sometimes, they are in competition. While each development should demonstrably satisfy all applicable objectives, the unique conditions of each location may mean some objectives are more important than others. Priority should be given to satisfying those guidelines that are most critical to the overall intentions of this guide. Priorities can be identified by the designer and confirmed with WCC design reviewers in pre-application meetings.

Explanation

Throughout this guide, italicised explanatory text provides further assistance on the proper application and interpretation of the guidelines.

The illustrations in the Guide are intended to support the text by explaining principles. They are not intended to represent actual design solutions.

Information requirements

Chapter 3 of the District Plan lists all the information required to be submitted with each application. This includes a design statement describing how the proposal satisfies relevant design guidelines and objectives. A heritage assessment will also be required for heritage items and heritage areas, in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 20 and 21 of the District Plan .

Wellington Context

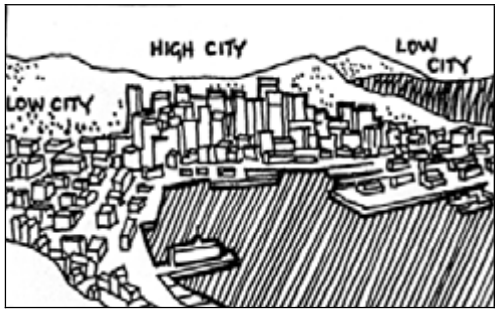
Building design is a catalyst for generating a quality public environment. This Design Guide outlines design principles for achieving a quality public environment in the Central Area. One attribute of these principles is designing to the context of the setting. To set the scene an overview of the Central Area context is provided below.

Wellington is New Zealand's capital city and, as the seat of government, the Central Area's built environment has an important role in reflecting the country's nationhood as well as its own unique sense of place.

The Central Area forms Wellington's commercial and business heart. It hosts a wide range of political, recreational, cultural, and entertainment activities of local and national significance, as well as an increasing number of inner city residents. The mix of activities within the Central Area has diversified as the city has evolved, increasing vibrancy, vitality and attracting a range of people to the different experiences on offer.

Wellington City's physical character is largely shaped by the surrounding topography and harbour setting. A natural amphitheatre is formed by the steep bush clad hills of the Town Belt that step down past inner residential areas to predominantly flat areas below, before opening out to the harbour. This topography naturally contains, and forms a compact city structure that concentrates activities within the city centre.

The Central Area is characterised by a 'High City'/ 'Low City' urban form, which is reinforced by this urban natural amphitheatre setting. The 'High City' relates to the Downtown area (CBD) where most of the city's high rise buildings are clustered. The 'Low City' is effectively the balance of the Central Area where lower buildings spread out to the north and south – towards the surrounding residential areas and adjacent hills. The lower height development along the waterfront completes the stepping down from the higher hills to the harbour's edge. The 'High City'/ 'Low City' urban form affects the nature of public spaces, together with the different block structures and patterns of access routes.



The Central Area contains the city's most visually prominent buildings, as well as a variety of architectural styles that reflect a range of building uses and eras. While there is a mix of building styles and eras, most were built after the 1960s. Clusters of heritage buildings and former sites of Maori occupation are important features within the city centre.

Building design and appearance has a direct bearing on the visual quality of the public environment and distinctive nature of the Central Area. By way of example, buildings typically define the edges of the public space in the Central Area. This is in contrast to the rest of the city where buildings tend to be surrounded by open space.

Central City Areas

The Central Area contains five distinct areas; Pipitea Precinct, Capital Precinct, Downtown, Te Aro and the Waterfront.

Pipitea Precinct

'Pipitea' refers to the clear water over the pipi beds

This area is located to the north/ northeast of the Railway Station. The primary land uses have long been dedicated to supporting rail and port operations, and as a result the area is relatively open and less intensely developed. The existing public space is structured around the role of this area as a main entrance to and from the north of the city, and providing for the movement of people and goods – including to and from the Wellington Regional Stadium located north of the Railway Station.

Because of changing economic drivers the Pipitea Precinct is undergoing physical change with the potential for other uses to be developed and integrated into the area.

Capital Precinct

This area lies directly to the north of the Downtown area (CBD). Parliament, the courts and other significant national institutions are the main focal points of this area. Central government has a strong presence, together with Pipitea Marae, several schools, ecclesiastical centres, localised retailing and smaller residential holdings.

The block pattern in this area is fairly irregular, and building density is generally lower than in the CBD and Te Aro basin. Characteristically, buildings in this area tend to be set back from the street edge, surrounded by open spaces affiliated to Government institutions and adjacent schools. The two main routes of Molesworth Street and Murphy/Mulgrave Streets set a strong north-south access pattern.

Downtown (CBD)

This area encompasses the core of the Central Area. It incorporates what is traditionally known as the CBD and includes the densest areas of high rise buildings. This is reflected in compact built up blocks; with one or two tall buildings covering the entire block. The blocks in this area are small and delineated by a closely-packed grid pattern of relatively narrow streets. This produces a city texture marked by many intersections and prominent corner sites. The more frequent and shorter east-west streets link the Terrace escarpment to the harbour – over the old shoreline. Longer routes provide access in a north-south direction along Lambton Quay, Featherston St and the Quays.

Te Aro

The Te Aro basin is located to the south of the Central Area. The area is made up of larger and less intensely developed blocks. In some cases these are further subdivided by the ad-hoc development of lanes and cul-de-sacs. Their potential as minor routes through the city is at times frustrated because of the lack of full block-to-block connections. Buildings in this area largely conform to block perimeters and to the edges of lanes and cul-de-sacs.

This area has seen some substantial changes in land use; from former industry to a strong presence of inner residential living, and more recently with the formation of the Te Aro corridor traffic route. With the exception of the main street life found in Cuba Street and Courtenay Place, the other areas of Te Aro are less intensely used.

This is partly because of the 'Low City' building height, traditional land uses, a smaller daytime population, and the 'coarse grained' nature of the area.

The Waterfront (Lambton Harbour Area)

The waterfront is located to the south of the Railway Station and is bounded by the Quays to the west, and Cable Street to the south. The area embodies rich cultural, heritage and recreational values. This includes a strong emphasis on public accessibility as a pedestrian-dominated rather than vehicle access route. Ongoing development along the waterfront is guided by the principles set out in The Wellington Waterfront Framework 2001.

Sensitive Areas

There are number of sensitive areas that are important because of their heritage and character value or because they are relatively less developed. Specific design guide appendices have been prepared to guide development in these areas.

Identified heritage areas reinforce the city's 'sense of place' based on their unique and individual characteristics. These areas are as follows:

- Parliamentary Precinct Heritage Area
- Stout Street Heritage Area
- Post Office Square Heritage Area
- BNZ/Head Office Heritage Area
- Civic Centre Heritage Area
- St John's Church Heritage Area
- Cuba Street Heritage Area
- Wesley Church Heritage Area
- Courtenay Place Heritage Area

The two less intensely developed areas are:

- Pipitea and Port Redevelopment Precincts
- Te Aro Corridor

1 Design Coherence

A new building or public space should have its own inherent design integrity and coherence. It should not simply be a piecemeal assemblage of elements and conditions required by the guidelines or other design criteria. This same principle applies to additions to buildings, and the way in which they relate to existing buildings. For heritage buildings, the integrity and coherence of the original building must be respected.

The notions of design coherence and relationship to context (see Section 2 below) are over-arching principles that underlie all the objectives and guidelines in this document.

Building characterised by design coherence

Objective

O1.1 To ensure each design solution is coherently designed, demonstrates design integrity, and integrates all relevant design criteria in the best possible way.

Guideline

Internal consistency and integration

G1.1 Demonstrate in the design and composition of any building an overall coherence that integrates the various design guide requirements.

> *Design coherence comes from the consistency and cohesion that are provided by a definable integrating design concept. Integration requires that the planning, formal composition, and visual qualities of a building are considered as a whole, as well as separately.*

2 Relationship to Context

Relating to context means understanding and responding in a considered way to conditions beyond the site. New developments should not occur in isolation.

All development should consider multiple contexts. These include the local street environment and the wider neighbourhood. When a development is large relative to its neighbours, is prominently located or accommodates an activity of public significance, the context of the city itself needs to be considered. Public significance is determined by the social or cultural importance of the activity, and the extent of its relevance to the wider community.

A successful relationship to context arises where the defining characteristics and patterns of the context are identified, understood, and responded to in a considered way. These characteristics are always location specific. However, they generally include the cross-sectional dimensions and patterns of use of the street; typical building dimensions, orientations and alignments; complexity of form; and proportions. The nature of movement and activity in public space at the edge of the site is

Examples of relationship to context with contemporary building

also important. An authentic sense of place may be developed by references to the social or cultural history of the site, or to the underlying landscape.

Objectives

O2.1 To recognise the unique qualities and sense of place of every urban setting, and respond to and enhance these with new development.

O2.2 To maintain or enhance the quality of the settings of individual heritage buildings, including those in heritage areas.

Guidelines

Consistency or contrast

G2.1 Maintain consistency with defining and valued neighbourhood patterns. Contrasts should be created only if the development is significant on a district or city-wide scale and/or accommodates a unique or publicly significant function.

Defining and valued patterns can be determined by analysing the setting for the development, and by referring to documents such as Council character studies, heritage area reports and Community Plans.

When is consistency required?

Consistency is most important when a new building is placed within a valued and recognised ensemble of buildings that have similar character, or where alignment, similarity and coherence is required to maintain the quality and character of the public environment (for example, in heritage areas). The collective quality of such a group of buildings or public space could be significantly degraded if new development did not visually relate to it in important ways. New developments should complement such settings. This means that a development should acknowledge and establish a respectful relationship with its immediate context. It does not imply replication, nor that the style of new buildings should match existing buildings.

New development should complement and support national institutions

Because of its role as the nation's capital, Wellington is home to various institutions of national significance. New development should provide a respectful framework for national institutions such as Parliament, the courts, public monuments, as well as civic institutions, heritage buildings and heritage areas. It should complement and support, rather than dominate, these buildings, structures and places.

New development should attempt to complete, improve and enhance the setting of heritage areas and individual buildings or groups of buildings listed as heritage items in the District Plan.

Publicly significant building demands contrast

When contrast might be considered

Contrast creates a focus for attention. The extent to which this is appropriate depends on the public significance of the proposed development and its function. It also depends on the heritage or cultural value of the setting. Activities that have a city-wide significance or unique function justify an expressive or contrasting treatment to differentiate them from the majority of buildings.

Contrast may also create a local landmark. Positive landmark structures contribute diversity and richness, and enhance the identity of the city. As distinctive features, landmarks can also help orientation and wayfinding. Because of their visual prominence, they should be of high design quality. While they may alter local context, new landmark structures should not undermine the consistent local character. Landmark structures are appropriate for specific and culturally important sites, but they might also be appropriate in other settings - such as terminating vistas, and at corners and curves in the street.

Where a street or neighbourhood is valued for its complexity and diversity, design solutions that contribute to that diversity and largely remain within its boundaries will maintain those qualities.

Positive precedents

G2.2 Refer to positive rather than negative precedents:

Where existing patterns are negative, or buildings have features that demonstrably compromise the quality of their setting (as determined by reference to this guide), these 'non-contributing' buildings or features should not be used as precedents or references for new development.

Achieving consistency

G2.3 Consider ways of complementing the existing built context, including:

- compositional relationship, or similarity in:
  - siting and alignment of walls in plan
  - frontage orientation
  - alignment of key elevational lines – including roof, cornice, parapet, verandah and/or floor lines
  - proportions of forms and openings
  - visual rhythm of frontage widths or openings
  - levels of complexity of form and material, including the amount of shadow-casting three dimensional detail
  - colour
  - material and constructional quality
- dimensional relationship, or similarity
  - of overall building height
  - of floor to floor height
  - between secondary forms on a larger building and primary forms on the smaller
  - of frontage module
  - of overall building width

This list is not exhaustive, and other methods may also achieve the objective.

Complementing an existing building

Visual links to the surrounding context are most important where an area possesses a distinctive local character and heritage value.

Generally, both compositional and dimensional relationships are required. The primary ways of achieving visual links are through similarity of plan and frontage alignment, and overall bulk and form.

There is no formula for establishing meaningful visual links. Simplistic or token responses are rarely successful, and simply selecting one or more of the methods described above will not

guarantee the objective is achieved. Generally, however, the primary relationships described (similarity of plan and frontage alignment; overall bulk and form) are required, and these may be supported by others. There is no expectation that making more references will necessarily achieve a better result. An appropriate degree of consistency will be achieved when the mix of methods appropriate to each unique setting is selected and integrated into a coherent design response. Nevertheless, the above list is not exhaustive, and other special features may be relevant in any given situation.

Developing an authentic sense of place

G2.4 Express the local sense of place with new development.

Where there is little or no established pattern, new development should introduce sound design precedents for the future. This might be by expressing the intended use of the building, referring to the history of the site's development and use, or to underlying landscape patterns or elements. Where such references are appropriate and can be made, they should be an integral part of the development's design concept.

3 Siting, Height, Bulk and Form

The siting of buildings should allow for intended activities while also acknowledging neighbouring building, reinforcing valued patterns of public space, and creating positive open spaces.

Height and bulk are both relative concepts. Buildings of great height or bulk can easily overwhelm their immediate surroundings. Where the length, width and/or height of a new development conflicts with the physical scale and texture of its surroundings, various design techniques may be employed to modify and mitigate the visual impacts.

Examples of buildings defining public space, and articulation of form and façade to give visual interest

Height

More attention should be given to formal composition and appearance when a building extends above the threshold established by the predominant height in an area. Building height becomes a particular issue when a building is elevated significantly above its neighbours, creating potential problems such as visual domination, shading of public open spaces, and wind effects. When the building extends above the height limit, the risk of excessive shading of neighbours also becomes relevant. As new building extends above its neighbours, an increasingly skilled and sophisticated design response is required to achieve a satisfactory result. Conversely, a building that is much lower than its neighbours can break the coherence of the street edge.

Bulk

Bulk relates to both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of a building, and refers to the size of a building relative to its surroundings. A building may be of modest height, but still appear bulky.

Natural light, outlook and ventilation

A building's internal amenity and potential to be environmentally sustainable is significantly affected by the decisions designers make at the outset about planning, bulk and form. Amenity is also affected by existing neighbouring buildings and any neighbouring sites that may be developed. Therefore, it is important to create conditions that maintain

acceptable levels of daylight, outlook and natural ventilation should the development be 'built-out'. This relates particularly to setbacks from site boundaries. Consideration should be given to optimum widths and depths to take advantage of natural ventilation and daylight.

Objectives

O3.1 To complement existing patterns of alignment, and achieve a positive scale relationship with adjoining buildings and public spaces.

O3.2 To respect the setting of heritage items and identified heritage areas.

O3.3 To create coherent patterns of building that contribute to the amenity of neighbouring public spaces.

O3.4 To ensure that reasonable levels of ventilation, daylight and outlook are maintained in a building's habitable spaces should development on adjacent sites be built to the maximum standard.

Guidelines

Street edge definition and building alignment

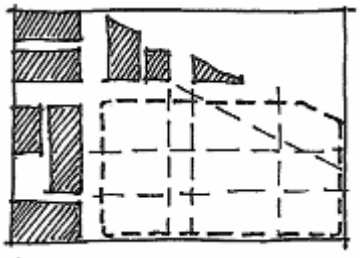
G3.1 Site and align building forms to reinforce the local street grid and the local system of public open spaces, with common alignment and construction generally to the street edge.

Fronts of buildings should generally be built to the edge of streets and other spaces, and large or random edge setbacks should be avoided. The complex shapes or prominent positions of particular sites may be recognised and expressed through a limited setback from the street edge. However, this must maintain the general pattern and coherence of street edge definition, and create a positive open space that demonstrably contributes to the wider system of public space.

Alignment of building forms in parallel with the local street grid should generally be continued at upper levels. However, contrast may be appropriate on unique or prominent sites, and with special purpose buildings used for publicly significant activities.

G3.2 Align buildings with the block pattern typical of the surroundings where there are no other buildings on the block.

The siting of new buildings on large open sites should establish a positive precedent for new development. New buildings are more intrusive when they are sited in isolation, and when they contradict the characteristic block and street layout of the surrounding area.



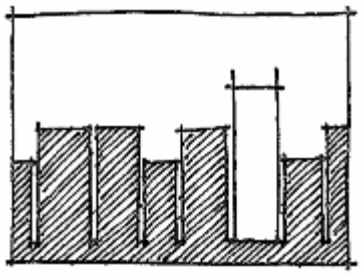
References for primary alignments on a vacant block

G3.3 Maintain the general continuity of massing and street frontage alignment at bends and street corners.

This may include employing shape and surface treatment to emphasise the curved or angular shape of the street bend or intersection.

G3.4 Maintain general consistency of building height at the street edge

Better streets and public spaces are formed when the height of buildings at their edges is generally consistent. However some variation is possible, in the order of one-third of the height of the highest buildings in a street edge that is characterised by relatively consistent building height. Smaller variations in height are appropriate in heritage areas, where it is generally not appropriate to increase the street edge height by more than one storey above that of adjoining heritage buildings.



Variation in the order of one-third the height of the highest buildings

Landmark structures or buildings used for activities that have neighbourhood or city-wide significance can, and often should, break the pattern. However, it should not be general practice to conspicuously elevate other buildings to become landmarks. This is particularly inappropriate in heritage areas and may be considered in such areas only in special circumstances where contrast rather than consistency is appropriate.

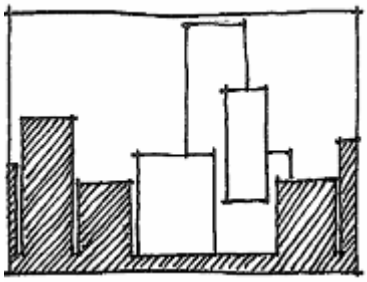
Consistency of height is not important where a street edge is underdeveloped with a concentration of very low buildings or open sites.

Height and scale relationship

G3.5 Ensure new buildings do not dominate lower adjacent public spaces and neighbouring buildings by moderating their height at and close to the street edge. This will achieve a scale transition between the higher and lower buildings/spaces. ,

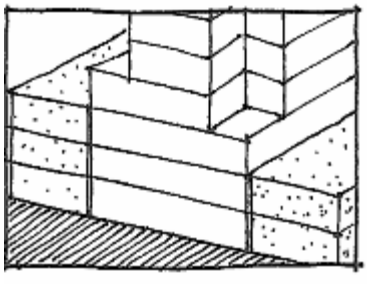
This can be done by techniques including:

- *boundary setbacks at high level;*
- *secondary forms of similar dimension to those of the lower buildings, placed to act as transitional volumes;*
- *physical separation of large tall buildings from those that are much lower;*
- *reduced height adjacent to much lower buildings or spaces where shading is problematic, and;*
- *significantly reducing the site area for the tallest components of the building, while potentially retaining full site coverage at lower levels.*



Achieving height and scale relationship using a variety of techniques

Where a new development adjoins a heritage building that is four storeys or less, its height should be not more than one storey above the heritage building, over an area extending approximately 5-8 metres along and back from the street frontage at the common boundary with the heritage building. Where the heritage building is six storeys high, new building should be restricted to not more than two storeys higher at the boundary in order to avoid visual dominance and achieve a scale transition. Where a heritage building is proportionally higher or lower than these references, the extent of increased height relative to the heritage building increases or decreases respectively .



Indicative setbacks adjacent to heritage buildings. Note that guidelines relating to design coherence also apply.

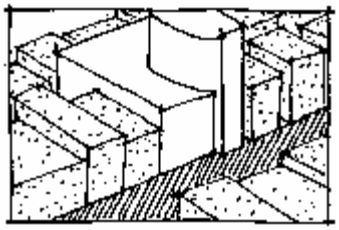
A similar setback from the front of an adjoining heritage building and height transition at the common boundary is appropriate where adjoining heritage buildings are located mid-block or set back from the street edge. Means of avoiding visual dominance including setbacks and form modulation should also be considered when the heritage building is neighbouring, close to, but not immediately adjoining the common boundary.

G3.6 Provide a generous ground-to-first-floor height.

This should be in the order of 30-50% higher than the floor-to-floor height for typical upper storeys, should extend over the entire site, and should comfortably accommodate retail. It should provide the space and configuration that allows future installation of extract ventilation and a grease trap. This recognises that a greater ground to first inter-storey height is both typical and traditional in the Central Area, and also helps accommodate a range of different future uses at ground floor level including food and beverage related retail.

G3.7 Reduce the proportion of site area covered by parts of buildings that are significantly higher than existing surrounding buildings.

The area of site coverage above that threshold would be in the order of one half to two-thirds. This applies where a building is in the order of a third higher than the height of buildings on adjoining sites and immediately across the street, and affects those parts of the building extending above that height. This height threshold varies within and between the 'High' and 'Low' cities. In the Low City, four storeys might be taken as a base height threshold, except where adjoining buildings are heritage listed or the site adjoins a public open space other than a street.



Reduction in site coverage to addressing visual dominance of conspicuously high building mass

Because they are visually prominent, the highest parts of such buildings require particular attention to formal composition. Setbacks should be used to achieve a scale relationship with existing lower buildings. However, all setbacks should be consistent with a coherent formal concept for the building.

Building bulk

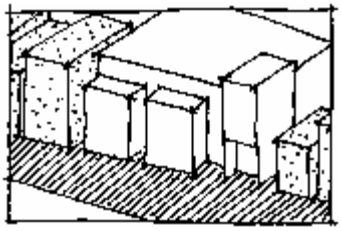
G3.8 Mitigate the visual impact of building bulk, where a building is large relative to its neighbours and to other nearby buildings.

This applies to buildings that are more than around 50% taller than their immediate neighbours. It also applies to large floor plate buildings, particularly those with an unusually elongated plan form or very large wall planes. Large floor plate buildings are those that are approximately twice or three times the width and depth of other buildings around.

Utilise techniques such as:

- *a secondary foreground volume or volumes to help obscure the primary volume when viewed from neighbouring spaces;*
- *transitional volumes between the smaller existing buildings and the larger, primary volume of the new development;*
- *contrast between projecting and recessive elements; and/or;*
- *sculptural form.*

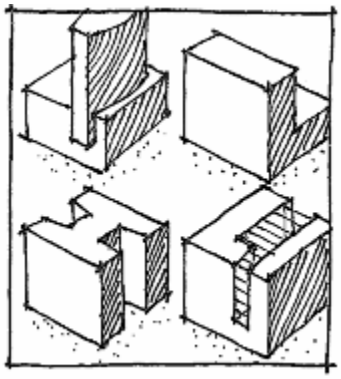
In situations characterised by a mix of buildings, and where a building accommodates an important public function, contrast – in the form of large and simple bulk – may be justified. However, a sense of human scale is always required at the street, or at other public edges of the building that are used by pedestrians.



Mitigating bulk with transitional volumes

Natural light, outlook and ventilation

G3.9 To maintain acceptable natural light, outlook and ventilation for residential and other habitable spaces, provide on-site setbacks from side and/or rear boundaries (or atria and lightwells) so that the development is not reliant on the openness of adjacent sites to achieve acceptable levels of natural light. Position windows as required.



Examples of approaches to achieve light, outlook and ventilation

The building's form and configuration should maintain reasonable outlook, and acceptable natural light and ventilation onsite. In assessing this provision, Council will assume that development at the boundaries of neighbouring sites is built to the maximum height anticipated by the District Plan.

Consider leaving open space at the rear of a site; setbacks from one or more side boundaries at the high levels of relatively tall buildings; and skylights, atria or lightwells (as well as windows) to achieve ongoing light sources. Changes of occupation may occur over the life of a building, so this requirement applies to all building types. Coordinating setbacks on adjoining sites ensures amenity is respected, and light and outlook are shared and maximised.

Lightwells and atria within existing buildings, particularly heritage buildings, should be retained.

Residential amenity and outdoor living require more consideration of these issues than other activities. When designing residential buildings (including serviced apartments as these are capable of becoming permanent residential activities), the New Zealand Building Code requirements for light and outlook should be considered when establishing plan and building form. Environmental efficiencies may be achieved by providing daylight and ventilation beyond the minimum building code standards.

Positive open space

G3.10 Locate any publicly accessible open space on site so that it complements other spaces within the street system, and positively shape and define it with edges of buildings or large scale landscape elements. Where intended for recreational use, ensure it is orientated to receive sun and shelter that attracts and supports occupation. This is particularly important during the times when it is in greatest demand.

Publicly accessible open spaces on a site should have active edges, be located on main walking routes or have ready access and visibility to them.

New open spaces should be orientated to receive sun during the time of day when most use can be expected, and may complement rather than reproduce existing spaces in this regard. Open spaces to the south of tall buildings are rarely occupied. Leftover or residual space without positive qualities is often unsuccessful. Where spaces have poor orientation and edge conditions, and lack natural surveillance, they are frequently poorly used or claimed for delinquent activities, and may provide opportunities for concealment and entrapment.

The size of new spaces should be appropriate to the intended

use. Landscaping should complement the adjacent streetscape and be attractive, robust and readily maintained.

There should be clear distinction between public spaces that are open to the public, and onsite communal open spaces that are private or semi-private, particularly in residential developments. The former should be open to all, and the latter access-controlled to maintain safety and security. Any through-site links should be designed to have a reasonable proportion of active edge.

Wind effects on public space

G3.11 Deal with wind effects within the site boundaries and in a way that does not compromise the coherence and compositional integrity of the building.

New building work above 18.6 metres in height is assessed to ensure that it does not worsen ground level wind conditions in the vicinity. Buildings that project higher than their neighbours are most likely to cause adverse wind effects, and may require careful and sometimes substantial modelling of form to mitigate these effects. Wind effects should be dealt with by amending the massing, form and detail of the building rather than with off-site devices.

Wind mitigation measures should be coherently integrated into the building's design and should not adversely affect the heritage values of buildings.

4 Edge Treatment

The buildings that line the edges of streets and other public spaces establish their character, quality and attractiveness. They collectively define the setting for the activities that take place there.

Buildings should provide active edges, with frontages to adjoining streets and to public open spaces. These edges provide a sense of occupancy and natural surveillance, and contribute interest and safety for passersby. Safety is an essential attribute of successful urban spaces, and can be supported by adopting the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

Factors that are particularly important in achieving a high quality public environment include the frequency, location and design of entrances and windows. The type and arrangement of activities, especially at ground level, are also important.

Blank walls at high level are also detrimental in visible locations. It is anticipated that the height of the city will transform over time as buildings extend up to the District Plan height limit. Therefore, in any area where existing buildings are relatively low, new buildings will be significantly taller and more visible than surrounding properties. Accordingly, it is important to give attention to the architectural treatment of all building facades.

Example of an active edge including building entrance

Objectives

O4.1 To create building edge conditions that support pedestrian activity and

enhance the visual interest, legibility, safety and comfort of streets and other public spaces.

Guidelines

Building fronts

G4.1 Orientate building frontages, including windows and the main public entrance, to the street. Buildings that have more than one significant street edge should provide secondary entrances and frontages on each edge.

The connection between building interiors and adjoining public spaces is fundamental in determining the character and quality of those public spaces. A building with windows and doors at ground level, as well as windows above, offers visual interest and offers opportunity for informal surveillance. This will create a more successful edge to public open space than a façade without openings.

However a main building entrance facing a park or square should connect with, but not appropriate, that space as a forecourt.

Where a site is bounded by more than one street or public space it should establish a primary frontage on one public boundary, generally to the most significant street or space. Secondary frontages should be established on others.

Building frontage to the street

G4.2 Use lighting within shopfronts to create an attractive effect after dark, and also to contribute spill lighting to the footpath.

At night, spill light from shopfront windows enhances the attractiveness and safety of the street edge. Any security facility should ideally be an unobtrusive and inherent part of the shopfront.

Active edges

G4.3 Place publicly-relevant activity in view at the public edges of buildings.

Publicly relevant activity includes retail, event space, show rooms and any other activity to which the public may gain access. A view of what is happening inside a building creates visual interest. It also communicates how the building is used and occupied, which helps people understand the city. Buildings and public open spaces that have activity at their edges, including good visual connections with the street, also encourage informal surveillance that contributes to perceived and actual safety. Ground floor activity that supports the use of public open space is particularly important when a building fronts a park, square or retail-orientated street.

Car parking, which is often inactive and unattractive, is an undesirable activity at the ground floor edges of central city buildings and sites and should not be visible from the street edge.

Example of an active edge

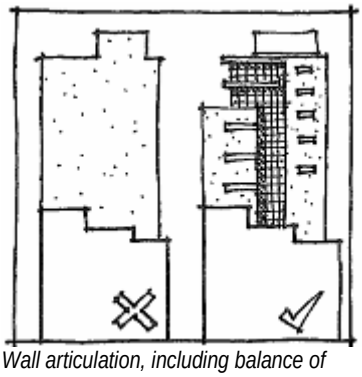
G4.4 Provide openings such as windows and entrances over a proportion of the ground floor frontage that is consistent with the type of street (or other public open space) it adjoins, and with the importance of these adjoining spaces as pedestrian routes.

The proportion of ground level windows and openings should be maximised in areas of established retail activity and where intensive pedestrian use is likely. Secondary streets and lanes are preferred locations for service access and may therefore have a reduced proportion of openings.

Frontage treatments should complement that of neighbours. However, where a street or public open space is currently dominated by inactive edges, it is important for new development to redress rather than perpetuate this situation. Windows should be connected to internal activity. Blank or 'false' windows are not acceptable. The addition of roller doors or security screens to shopfronts is also not acceptable, and these should be integrated into the building fabric.

G4.5 Articulate or eliminate wall surfaces that are featureless or plain

Large blank surfaces should not occur at ground level at the street edge, nor at high level if in prominent public view. While a building may have a primary frontage, all other visible facades should also include detail and openings and be treated similarly as frontages – albeit secondary ones. Form should be carefully articulated to avoid creating concealment or entrapment areas at ground level.



Wall articulation, including balance of modelled and flat surfaces

However, a large flat wall surface may be used to balance other more complex parts of a façade. It may provide contrast and visual relief or a scale relation to an adjacent larger building. A flat wall surface might constitute a small proportion of ground floor facades, but only if the quality of the street edge is not compromised as a result.

Buildings in many parts of the city extend considerably above their neighbours, and parts of their service-orientated side and rear facades are likely to remain in prominent public view. It is important that such upper level facades are given visual interest with an architectural treatment. Consideration should be given to articulating these high level walls, often located close to boundaries, with openings and architectural treatments including three-dimensional modelling.

Internal amenity should not be dependent on windows that are placed on or very close to internal site boundaries. It should be assumed that openings at internal boundaries will be built out in the future, and so acceptable light and outlook should be provided by other means.

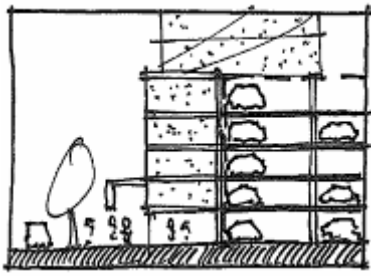
Servicing and car parking

G4.6 Integrate servicing and car parking functions in a way that does not compromise the quality of the street edge, nor the status of the main entry to the building.

Where possible, place loading areas away from the main frontages and main entrance. Ensure service and rubbish storage areas are visually unobtrusive and/or back from the street edge.

Parking should be at the rear of buildings, or above/below ground. Multiple garage doors facing the street should be avoided. This allows publicly relevant activity to be located at ground floor street edges.

Carparking is generally not an appropriate use of a heritage building.



Parking located behind a veneer of activity, maintaining an active edge to the street.

G4.7 Provide space at the main entrance for loading and unloading when an on-site loading area is not available or practicable.

Space should be provided within or close to lobby areas so that goods can be moved through without compromising the lobby function. . This should meet the reasonably expected demand for servicing, and might be an unobtrusive part of a generous entrance lobby.

Shelter and building entrance enhancement

G4.8 Develop transitional spaces and/or features between the public street and building interiors. These should signal the location of entrances, enhance the sense of arrival and provide shelter.

Verandahs, colonnades and entrance canopies offer the dual benefits of providing shelter and signalling the building's entrance. Where a street edge is likely to increasingly feature retailing, or is an important pedestrian path, consider extending this shelter along the entire building frontage.

While entrance definition and features are desirable, large setbacks should not be introduced – unless the open area created is attractive and useable public space, and maintains the quality and integrity of the street edge.

Universal access that allows all users, including those who are disabled, to use the same entrance is desirable, however this should not compromise heritage values.

Adding shelter elements or verandahs to heritage buildings should generally be avoided. However these may be considered in locations where a verandah has existed previously, where active edges and shelter are essential, and where they would not adversely affect the heritage values of the building or area.

Building entrance enhancement

5 Façade Composition and Building Tops

Coherence in façade composition

The composition of buildings determines their relation to context, their design coherence, and their suitability for a range of uses. Consideration should be given to the composition of every facade, including the building's top and its relationship to the building below.

The topography of Wellington's Central Area ensures that even moderately tall buildings are viewed from many directions. If building tops are designed in a positive rather than a utilitarian manner, they can enrich the character of the city.

Objectives

O5.1 To ensure that façade and building top design is coherently resolved.

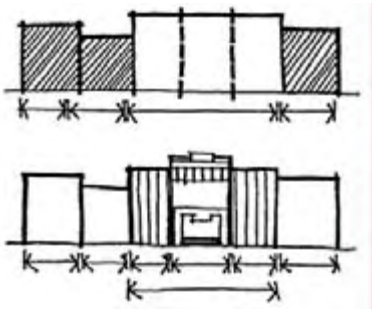
O5.2 To ensure that additions and alterations to heritage buildings maintain the heritage values of those buildings, their setting and any associated heritage area.

O5.3 To facilitate multiple and changing building uses, except where such change adversely affects the heritage values of heritage buildings or areas.

Guidelines

Relation to neighbouring buildings

G5.1 Where there is an established pattern of vertical and/or horizontal subdivision in neighbouring buildings along the street, relate the facades of new buildings to that pattern.



Frontage Subdivision

Visual subdivision of building facades can be used to relate the scale of a large building to much smaller neighbours, and also avoid visual monotony and achieve a sense of human scale. This also ensures the building relates to its context. Visual subdivision techniques include alignment of floors, using similar frontage widths, and applying to the frontage secondary forms that are of similar dimension to all or parts of neighbouring buildings. Depending on context, a combination of these methods may be appropriate.

G5.2 Generally avoid reproducing the appearance of existing frontages on new buildings.

While new buildings are required to recognise their context, it is neither necessary nor desirable to replicate the style and appearance of heritage or other existing buildings. New facades can be innovative and reflect contemporary culture and norms, while still relating fundamentally to their context.

New buildings in heritage areas should respect the architecture of adjoining heritage buildings to retain design consistency in those areas.

Additions and modifications to existing buildings

G5.3 Establish a coherent compositional relationship with the existing structure, three-dimensional forms and facades when adding to or modifying existing buildings.

Methods include:
- *Common alignments, particularly vertical alignments of load-bearing elements and centre-lines of openings;*
- *Use of common materials, textures and colours;*
- *Expression of common modules or elements of similar dimension and proportion; and/or*
- *Expression or reinforcement of the vertical hierarchy of 'base, middle and top', if relevant to the existing building.*

All solutions are project-specific and the combination of appropriate methods will vary accordingly. It is often possible to integrate contrasting elements or treatments providing key alignments are retained, and the addition can demonstrate a considered positive relationship with the existing building.

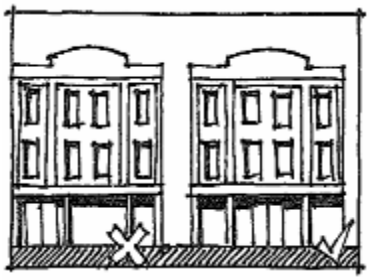
Where the existing structure is a heritage building, consideration should also be given to reinstating any original compositional features, architectural elements and details that have been removed over time.

Example of relating to context with vertical alignment and completion of the composition of an existing building with a new top (take photo from other angle)

Shopfronts

G5.4 Relate shopfronts to the composition of the building, paying particular attention to the alignment of columns and other vertical elements.

Shopfronts may express a shop's identity, but should not undermine the composition of the building. This is particularly important for heritage buildings and buildings that include more than one shop at ground level. New shopfronts on heritage buildings should follow the composition of the original design.



Ensure load-bearing elements are aligned

G5.5 Ensure new shopfronts for new buildings that adjoin heritage buildings or heritage areas are compatible with existing significant heritage shopfronts.

Significant heritage shopfronts are those that retain heritage form, proportions and fabric.

G5.6 Retain and conserve significant heritage shopfronts on heritage buildings.

Where possible, missing fabric should be restored. Materials and details should be compatible with the era of the building.

Building tops and roofscape

G5.7 Integrate the tops of buildings, including plant and services, as explicit and coherent parts of the overall composition.

The top of a building is more than the roof. However, how much of a building comprises its 'top' varies, depending on its height and the chosen design concept. On a four storey building, the 'top' might include the uppermost storey; on a 12 storey building, it might be the uppermost two or three storeys. How the building top is realised, or whether this consideration extends further down the building, is a matter of architectural judgement that depends on the design concept and proportions, as well as the building's overall height.

An integrated building top

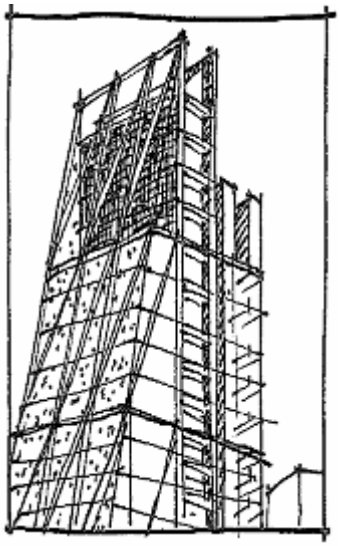
G5.8 Place particular emphasis on the design and appearance of building tops which are prominent in views across the city.

The city's urban form is strongly influenced by buildings that are tall – either in absolute terms or relative to their neighbours – and therefore prominent on the skyline when viewed from below. The design of the tops of such buildings demands particular consideration. The articulation of form and surface should generally present large, simple features that can be recognised from afar. Silhouette and profile should also be considered.

G5.9 Avoid degrading the value of heritage area skylines by changing the parapets and roofs of heritage buildings, or adding to buildings within or immediately adjacent to heritage areas. .

Parapet lines contribute to the identity of the building and are often a distinguishing characteristic of the street edge. The roof is a 'fifth elevation' of a heritage building, and its heritage values should be recognised and protected.

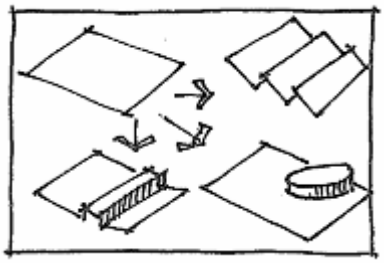
The relevant skyline is that which is viewed from the adjacent street and other public vantage points.



Example of a top integrated into the overall building composition

G5.10 Modulate the scale of, and create visual interest in, the roofs of large floor- plate low-rise buildings that are viewed from elevated sites or are otherwise prominent.

Regardless of their height, the roofs of large floor-plate buildings can have significant visual impacts – especially when seen from elevated sites around the city. In this respect, low-rise buildings with large plan dimensions can produce more significant visual effects than tall buildings with small footprints. Modulation techniques may include visual subdivision of large roof planes; sculptural roof forms; and expression of structure or secondary forms, such as service rooms and towers. The roof edges of such buildings are important when viewed from below, and consideration should be given to the composition of this edge, including its shape and visual rhythm.



Indicative modulation of roofscape

Human scale

G5.11 Give a sense of human scale at the publicly occupied edges of buildings.

This can be achieved by various means including openings with proportions and/or dimensions that are similar to those of the human figure; textures and subdivision of elements that are of commonly understood dimensions; and elements and components that are sized for human occupation and use.

Flexibility and adaptability

G5.12 Develop façade imagery that is not exclusively associated with a single type of use, or which could be readily adapted for a number of different activities.

Building use is likely to change over time. The buildings that are most likely to contribute vitality to the public environment are those that can be readily adapted, ensuring continuity of occupation. This is facilitated by easy subdivision of internal space, multiple entrances at the street edge, and proportions that readily allow subdivision or amalgamation to accommodate different uses. The ability for existing building stock to readily accept changes of use is an aspect of environmental sustainability.

Proposed changes of use of heritage buildings should be carefully considered to avoid adverse effects to their heritage values.

6 Materials and Detail

Materials and detail are important in maintaining visual interest and a positive relation to context and heritage value.

The quality of materials and detail is particularly important at ground level. Here, people are able to view buildings at close range and perhaps touch them, increasing the risk of damage. This fact also determines maintenance requirements and serviceability, factors that are particularly important on more inaccessible parts of buildings.

Heritage values should be identified and protected, allowing spaces and fabric of lesser significance to be adapted for re-use. The heritage values of a building or area can be enhanced by reinstating missing original fabric, sensitively replacing existing fabric, and/or ameliorating the effects of previous changes.

Sophisticated detailing in a contemporary building

Objectives

O6.1 To achieve qualities of visual interest and physical robustness consistent with demands arising from the building's location in the central city.

O6.2 To respect and conserve original heritage fabric.

Guidelines

Compositional coherence

G6.1 Ensure the quality of materials and detailing is consistent with the compositional theme of the building.

This applies particularly to additions to existing buildings. It is important that the palette of materials characteristic of the original construction be used in any minor additions and alterations to heritage buildings.

Similar levels of material quality can also be used to ensure a new building responds appropriately to a valued or important neighbour.

G6.2 Reinstate missing architectural details on heritage buildings where possible.

This includes reinstating verandahs, balconies, parapets etc. where they have been known to exist previously.

Visual interest

G6.3 Ensure richness of detail is provided in public areas and other parts of buildings that are experienced by the public at close range and for extended periods of time.

These parts of buildings require enhanced visual interest to engage the eye of occupants and passers-by. This can be achieved by greater attention to fine detail – for example, with materials selected for textural or colour effect, and increased complexity of form at the detailed level. Conversely, large simple forms and a relative absence of fine detail are appropriate in those parts of developments that are experienced only at long range or at speed. Some parts of buildings may be experienced in several ways: a composition that integrates fine detail with medium and large-scale elements is important in such cases.

The incoherent composition of elements (including signage, services and other items) that causes visual clutter to buildings and streetscapes is to be avoided.

Richness of detail at ground level

G6.4 Use three dimensional detail to give visual richness, depth and relief to facades.

A façade is given depth, richness and visual interest with shadow-casting detail. This can be created by expressing structural elements; modelling openings with deep reveals; overlapping modular façade materials; double skin facades, and applying shading devices and other elements such as louvres, light reflectors, screens or balconies.

Areas of three dimensional detail may be contrasted and balanced by flat areas for further architectural effect. This approach requires consideration of the overall composition of the building.

Three-dimensional form

Physical robustness

G6.5 Use physically robust, readily maintained materials and details in areas that are prone to damage or vandalism.

High quality finishes and good maintenance help establish an attractive image for a building or place. Materials, finishes and details that are resistant to damage and/or readily repaired or replaced are desirable. Signs of damage or lack of care (as well as overt signs of 'target-hardening' such as barred windows and security shutters at shop fronts) raise perceptions of disorder and a potential safety threat. Some people may be dissuaded from using these places.

Three-dimensional form and detail

Facade transparency

G6.6 Use glazing systems that maintain visual connections between public spaces and building interiors.

Limit or avoid the use of dark tinted or reflective glazing that precludes day-time visual connection. Such glazing not only prevents the public environment from benefiting from signs of activity, but it can, when used over an entire façade, lead to the building being visually dominant. Methods for achieving environmental control and privacy that do not preclude visual connections are available. Highly reflective cladding materials should also be avoided where they would create glare conditions in neighbouring streets and public spaces,

Appendix 1: Pipitea Precinct >>

Appendix 2: Te Aro Corridor >>

Appendix 3: Heritage Areas >>