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Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

Wellington City Council

Design Guide Signs

Contents

Introduction

Signs design guide intent

Signs are essential to the city's commercial areas and activity. They communicate information, add vitality and provide a sense of direction. But while they can enhance the cityscape, they can also diminish it. If they are poorly designed or inappropriately located, signs can detract from the surrounding architecture, overwhelm public spaces and undermine streetscape quality. Similarly, too many signs can create visual clutter that reduces their effectiveness.

The design outcomes presented in this design guide encourage appropriate signage that makes a positive contribution to the city.

Application

This design guide should be read alongside the District Plan's provisions for signs and if relevant the Heritage Design Guide. The Design Guides are a statutory part of the Wellington City District Plan. The Council will use the Design Guides to assess resource consent applications for development.

The guidelines do not stipulate signs of a particular type, size or appearance. Instead, they promote general design guidance that can be applied in different ways appropriate to each proposal and site. The illustrations further clarify and explain the guidance, but are not intended to represent actual design solutions.

~~Prioritisation~~

~~A rating system of one to three has been designed to indicate the relative priority of each guideline against the overarching principles of each guide. However, the priority of each guideline should be confirmed with Council in pre-application discussions, as they are indicative only.~~

~~The ratings are described below:~~

- ~~Guidelines rated with three dots are considered essential and must be applied to all proposed development.~~
- ~~Guidelines rated with two dots will apply to most proposals; if a proposal does not meet a design guide rated 2, the applicant may be required to justify or revise the design.~~
- ~~Guidelines rated with one dot can support a proposal to meet the Outcomes of the Design Guide. However, they may not apply to all developments.~~

~~The rating system is represented visually, using a corresponding number of dots to the number rating before each design guide text.~~

Outcomes

Scale and location of signs

- To ensure that new signs are well integrated with the building or site to which they are attached, and are compatible with the scale, design and visual attractiveness of that building or site.

Relationship to surrounding context

- To ensure that new signs fit within the context of the surrounding area.

Visual dominance

- To ensure that new signs respect the host buildings and their context, and do not detract from the architectural features of buildings.

Design quality

- To manage the number, design and location of new signs in a way that supports the aesthetic coherence of buildings and streetscapes and encourage visually interesting signs that are legible and clear.

Illuminated and digital signs

- To ensure that illuminated and digital signs are appropriate for their context and do not compromise the amenity of nearby areas.

Maintenance

- To ensure signs are easily accessible and of quality materials to be maintained to a high standard.

Guidelines

Scale and location of signs

Well designed signs respect the proportions and composition of the building, and do not obscure or dominate any architectural features. Overall, a well-designed sign maintains the design coherence of the building to which it is attached, and is well integrated with its façade.

G1. ••• Design signs in scale with the building/site to which they are attached. To achieve this, the dimensions of signs should relate to:

» Important dimensions of the building and its façade elements such as height/width of the building façade, windows (size/proportions), structural bays, spacing between columns/pilasters, floor-to-floor height, parapets, etc.

» The dimensions of the site and; the size, arrangement and design of any landscape or other features

Architectural features articulate the building façade and provide visual interest and a sense of relief. The size, proportions and arrangement of these elements determine the architectural composition of the building façade. The intensity and imagery of the façade elements/features determine the architectural style of the building and its detailed design quality.

~~Rating System~~	
•••	~~Guidelines rated with three dots are considered essential and must be applied to all proposed development.~~
••	~~Guidelines rated with two dots will apply to most proposals; if a proposal does not meet a design guide rated 2, the applicant may be required to justify or revise the design.~~
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G2. The sign must not compromise or alter the overall form of the host building and its silhouette line. To achieve this signs should not:

- Extend outside the building envelope
- Project above the line of the parapet or building roof top.

G3. Signs must not obscure or visually dominate any architectural or other features of the host building or site.

Where signs are attached to buildings, it is recommended to proportion them to the 'grid locations' set by the lines of primary façade elements such as verandahs, windows, cornice lines etc. (see diagrams 1 and 2). This ensures that the critical elements that give the building its architectural identity and style remain dominant features of the building façade.

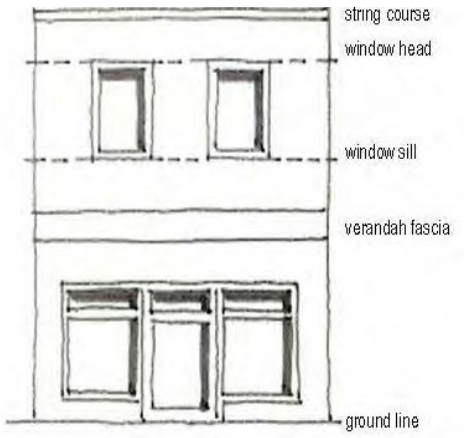

Diagram 1: Façade 'grid analysis' which uses the grids formed by architectural features to outline horizontal and vertical panels and indicate possible location for signage

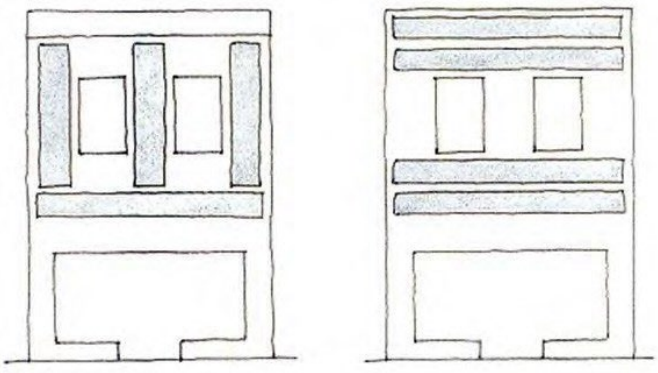

Diagram 2: Based on a 'grid analysis' this diagram indicates where a possible sign panel may be located

G4. Signs on blank side elevations should be:

- Set back from the edges of the side elevation; and
- Aligned with or positioned with reference to important lines on the main building façade (e.g. cornice and parapet lines, and/or lines created by the rhythm of windows or the spacing between columns, etc.).

Relationship to surrounding context

Signs need to be sensitive to their location, and its significance and be well-integrated with the context of existing buildings, sites and streetscapes. The location of signs requires careful assessment

G5. Signs must not disrupt or visually dominate important characteristics of the surroundings. For example:

- Identified viewshafts
- Prominent skyline views
- Landmark buildings or those at the end of vistas

G6. The location of free-standing signs, and especially those in pedestrian-oriented areas, must not compromise the ease of pedestrian movement.

G7. Signs should relate to the context of the surrounding area by taking account of nearby buildings, streetscape/ landscape features and existing signs.

G8. Free-standing signs should be well integrated with their context, and should not compromise the quality of existing planting, landscaping or other design features.

Visual dominance

Visual dominance is directly linked to the scale, location and prominence of the sign and the method and intensity of any illumination. For instance, highly visible signs that are oversized, brightly illuminated and/or moving can easily become visually dominating. The context of the surrounding environment also influences visual dominance.

G9. ●●● The visual impact of signs will be determined by the full range of distances from which the sign will be viewed. This is particularly important for large billboard, illuminated and digital signs located in:

- » Heritage buildings
- » Heritage areas
- » Character precincts
- » Near residential areas and public spaces
- » Upper building elevations

Therefore, it is recommended to provide a range of perspectives/viewpoints of the sign.

G10. ●●● Signs must not obscure architectural features and should not project above the building roof top.

G11. ●●● Billboard signs specifically illuminated and digital signs (free-standing or attached to buildings) must not draw the eye from an identified view-shaft or detract from the architectural features of buildings.

G12. ●●● Signs that project out from the face of a building must not adversely affect the streetscape by obstructing and/or cluttering views along the street. Small signs that sit close to the building can help to minimise this effect.

G13. ●●● Ensure signs that are located at ground level do not obstruct sightlines or adversely affect public space safety and passive surveillance.

G14. ●● Colour schemes of signs should be designed to fit in with and not dominate the host building or its setting.

G15. ● Where possible, signs should be composed of individual letters fixed to a building to be less dominant than placed on a backing panel or material.

Signs composed of individual letters

Design quality

The design quality of a sign derives from its use of materials, colour, graphic design and lighting, and also from the design of the supporting structure and fixing detail. Designers need to consider the type, location and context of the sign in an integrated manner.

G16. Minimise the number of different signs and designs, shapes and sizes of signs on a single building or site. For example, individual signs on the same verandah fascia should have a consistent width and compatible design.

G17. Integrate signage for buildings with more than one occupancy. For example, collective signs at building or site entrances should coordinate design, scale and alignment.

G18. Ensure quality of detailing, installation and lighting of signage.

G19. If the back of signs and their supporting structures can be seen from anywhere in the surrounding area it should be given the same design treatment and quality as the sign's 'face'. This is particularly important for free-standing or projecting signs.

G20. Signs should not be hung from, placed on or supported by other signs.

G21. Signs should be visually attractive, and effectively convey information.

G22. Consider the scale, location and positioning of signs relative to existing signs and other features on the host building or site and the adjoining streetscape.

G23. Consider signage at the outset when designing developments.

G24. Consider the context of the street, including street furniture, trees and vegetation and existing signs to minimise visual clutter.

G25. Avoid closely spaced and overlapping signs.

Good example of identification signage of high design quality that respects the architectural features and context of the 'host' building

Illuminated and digital signs

Illuminated and digital signs have the potential to dominate their surroundings and cause significant adverse effects. Digital signs may distract motorists, while illuminated signs can cause glare at night. Both illuminated and digital signs are of particular concern where they are located in, or can be seen from heritage buildings, heritage areas, character precincts or residential areas and public spaces. If not appropriately designed, these signs can detract from the architecture of buildings or visual attractiveness of an area.

Like all signs, illuminated and digital signs should be designed to respect the context and amenity of the site, and should be compatible with road safety.

G26. Ensure the sign does not detract from the architecture or quality of the host building or site.

G27. The cabling or equipment for any illumination/animation should be concealed and integrated with the sign for example, neon, internal lighting, well-designed and carefully located remote or spot lighting.

G28. Where possible, illumination levels should not cause glare or adversely impact the neighbouring environment.

Maintenance

Maintenance and repairs are integral to the overall quality of a sign and its visual impact. This also applies to temporary signs which, if poorly designed or removed without due care, can adversely affect the fabric and appearance of the host building or site.

G29. Consider the use of high quality materials, appropriate to the streetscape context and locality, for the effectiveness of ongoing maintenance. Spending more on materials initially may bring long-term benefits and reduce maintenance costs.

G30. Consider ease of access to signage for maintenance purposes.

A maintenance plan/strategy including proposed cleaning methods, replacement of defective lighting and a detailed maintenance schedule can also help ensure signs are well-maintained.