

Centres Design Guide

Appendix 1 – Newtown

Of all of the suburban centres in the city, only Newtown retains a significant proportion of turn-of-the-century commercial buildings. Clustered around Riddiford Street, these buildings give a distinctive character to the centre of Newtown.

Defining Features

Newtown's distinctive character is based on the following:

Linear form of the commercial centre extending along Riddiford Street.

A variety of building styles with 19th century shopfronts predominant, complemented by other buildings from 1930 to the present day.

Variety of use and diversity of street activity.

Fine grain of development with buildings typically narrow fronted and generally two storeys high.

A particularly prominent concentration of old buildings with a distinctive continuity of shopfronts along Riddiford Street, between Emmett Street and Newtown Avenue.

Notable turn-of-the-century buildings including Castles the Chemist (139 Riddiford Street), the Ascot Theatre (181-189 Riddiford Street) and the Ashleigh Court hotel (112-122 Riddiford Street).

Parapets as a prominent feature of existing frontages, contributing to a distinctive skyline silhouette at the street edge.

Verandas with supporting poles as a typical feature of the shop frontages.

Character Overview

Building type

This area is characterised by narrow fronted mixed use buildings with shops at ground and either offices or residential above. This predominant building type is complemented by a number of community buildings and some large floor plate buildings of variable quality.

While the predominantly 19th century shopfronts give the area its distinctive character, these are interspersed with a diverse range of more recent buildings. Some of these are recognisably contemporary, but nevertheless contribute positively to the streetscape. Others neither contribute to the street nor reflect its essential qualities. Additions and alterations to such 'non-character' buildings present an opportunity to improve the street edge.



Riddiford Street



Landmark buildings are prominent at street intersections

Building size

Buildings are generally two storeys high, although there are many that are single storey and a few three storey buildings that have a landmark presence and contribute to the definition of the street edge.

Building widths are variable, although most shopfronts are reasonably narrow. The predominant pattern of building width ranges from 4 to 7 metres, which reflects the original pattern of subdivision.

Building relationship to the street

While many of the individual buildings within the area are not of any particular merit, collectively they form a streetscape with distinctively special qualities.

The buildings within this area are typically continuously aligned with the street edge and create a notable consistency of street edge definition. Even though this is the defining characteristic, several parts of the street frontage are characterised by narrow gaps between buildings, and in places there are a variety of uncharacteristically larger setbacks.

Interactive, publicly used ground floors with shops and other activities are an integral part of the street character. Shopfronts are generally formed as bays with shop entrances recessed, either centrally or at one side.

Vehicle access and parking

While much parking is on-street, on-site parking at the street edge is uncharacteristic and discouraged. There are several accessways to parking at the rear of sites.

Building form and façade treatment

Visual richness, facade relief and three-dimensional detail are typical features of the street facades of old buildings. To reflect this pattern, new buildings should achieve a complementary level of facade relief and visual complexity.

Most buildings have parapets. Some also have elaborate frieze areas and pediments reflecting various architectural styles and periods. Parapets and friezes are generally in proportion to the height of the existing upper storey windows, the most common proportion being at least the equivalent of one window height, although there are occasional examples of parapets being one and a half times window height. In three-storey buildings, the second and third storeys have similar proportions, the third storey incorporating a parapet, with height approximately half of the window height.

Veranda posts are one of the most distinguishing features. These give a sense of enclosure to footpaths, add character by way of detail to the facades, and offer an opportunity for decoration. While there are some notable examples in cast-iron, most are simple tubular steel. Their thickness and spacing should reflect existing patterns.

The size, style and placement of windows above the ground floor level are some of the distinguishing characteristics of buildings here. Windows have vertical proportions, being generally twice as high as wide, and are in most cases regularly spaced. Windows



Some recent buildings contribute positively to the streetscape



Modest, narrow-fronted old buildings group together to make a distinctively attractive streetscape



Typically narrow shopfront



Richness of detail

in the older Victorian and Edwardian buildings tend to be double hung, while those of the inter-war period are usually casement windows.

Materials

The existing buildings use a variety of materials including timber, plaster and brick. Colour has been used generally to emphasise design features and enhance detail.

Street landscaping

Street landscaping on private lots is not a feature here, however street trees are beginning to mature and have a strong visual presence along parts of Riddiford Street.



Upper level windows and parapets



Detail of cast iron veranda posts