Business Area Design Guide

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Introduction

Intention

To achieve high quality buildings, places and spaces in Business Areas.

This will be by considering they:
- are designed in an integrated way
- respond to their context
- establish positive visual effects
- provide good quality working environments
- integrate environmental sustainability principles, and
- create places that are safe and accessible.

Using this Guide

Application

The guide applies to new buildings, and additions to existing buildings in Business Areas (as specified in the Business Rules). Specific design objectives are set out in each section, followed by related guidelines.

Relevance

Not all of the 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.

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 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 interpretation and application 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

Refer to Chapter 3 of the District Plan for a list of information

required with each application. This includes a design statement that will describe how the proposal satisfies relevant design objectives and guidelines.

Wellington's Business Areas

Collins Avenue
Glenside
Grenada North
Greta Point
Kaiwharawhara
Kiwi Point Quarry
Southern Landfill
Miramar South
Newlands Ngauranga
Ngauranga
Oxford Street, Tawa
Park Road, Miramar
Rongotai East
Rongotai West
Ropa Lane, Miramar
Southern Newtown
Takapu Island
Tawa East
Tawa Street, Tawa
Tawa South

1 Integrated Design

The design of a new building and its associated yard and external spaces should be undertaken in an integrated way, and not simply a piecemeal assemblage of elements. This applies also to the design of additions and the way in which they relate to existing buildings and the site.

Objective

O1.1 To ensure buildings and external spaces are designed to form an integrated solution.

Guideline

Consistency and integration

G1.1 Demonstrate integrated design and integration of all building elements.

Integration requires both the design process and the built outcomes to be considered in terms of each element as well as the development as a whole.

2 Siting, Height, Bulk and Form

The siting of buildings should acknowledge neighbouring buildings, reinforce patterns of streets and other public open spaces, and create attractive and useable open spaces on site.

The primary ways of achieving visual links with the existing context, are through similarity of plan and frontage alignment, and overall bulk and form. Buildings of great height or bulk may visually overwhelm their immediate surroundings. Where the length, width and/or height of a new development conflicts with the characteristics of its surroundings, design techniques may be employed to modify and mitigate the visual impacts.

Objectives

O2.1 To complement existing street patterns, and achieve an appropriate scale relationship with adjoining buildings and public spaces.

O2.2 To ensure that the siting of buildings respond and contribute to the amenity of neighbouring public spaces.

O2.3 To ensure that reasonable levels of ventilation, daylight to and outlook from habitable spaces in the building will be maintained should development on adjacent sites be maximised.

O2.4 To enhance the pedestrian network within Business 1 Areas.

Guidelines

Street edge definition and building alignment

G2.1 Site and align building forms to reinforce the local system of streets and public open spaces, with alignment 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. Special-purpose buildings that have public, community and/or cultural relevance are exceptions - it may be appropriate that such buildings are expressed as local landmarks.

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 the street edge.

Generally, it will be acceptable to set buildings back from the street edge only where this is a high quality building set within a high quality open space design, where the setback maintains an existing and valued pattern of street edge treatment, or where the setback contributes to a coherent open space design for the neighbourhood.

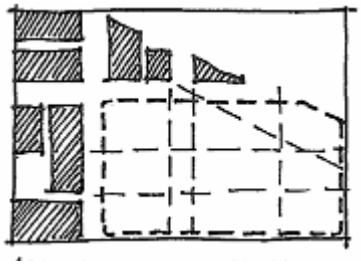
Depending on context, frontage setbacks may or may not include car parking. However, in the situations where car parking is appropriate, it should be part of a coherent landscape plan for the site.

In Business 2 Areas, where the uses are purely for large-scale industrial activities or predominantly open spaces (ie. a quarry) or when the street bounded is a major highway with no connection, relation to the street edge may be irrelevant. In this case occupied buildings should be located close to and readily visible from points of entry to the site, and landscape elements might be used to achieve a positive edge to the street.

G2.2 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



Building bulk

G2.3 Mitigate the visual impact of the building bulk, where a building is large relative to its neighbours and to other nearby buildings, or prominent in views from nearby highways or arterial roads.

This particularly applies to buildings that are more than around 50% taller than their immediate neighbours. It also applies to large floor-plate buildings (those that are in the order of two or three times the width and depth of other buildings around), particularly those with an elongated plan form or large wall planes.

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

Where viewers are motorists travelling at speed, subdivision or modelling of the form of the wall should be larger and simpler.

Natural light, outlook and ventilation

G2.4 Provide on-site setbacks from side and rear boundaries and position windows as required to maintain acceptable natural light, outlook and ventilation for habitable spaces, while also considering privacy effects where buildings are adjacent to habitable spaces and residential neighbours.

Internal amenity should not be dependent on windows that are placed on or very close to site boundaries. It should be assumed that neighbouring sites will be built-out in the future, and so acceptable light and outlook should be provided by other means. In assessing this provision, Council will assume that development at the boundaries of neighbouring sites will be built to the maximum height anticipated by the District Plan.

Positive open space

G2.5 Locate any publicly accessible open spaces and any setbacks so that they complement the street system, and positively shape and define any new spaces with edges of buildings or large scale landscape elements.

This guideline does not apply to private yard and other service, industrial or storage spaces which are access-controlled, and which are not part of the public domain.

Publicly accessible open spaces on a site should be located on main walking routes or be readily accessible and visible from them. They should wherever possible have good access to sunlight and provide shelter for users.

In some Business Areas, open spaces at the edges of streets might accommodate carparking, drive-through or retail display. Spaces for these activities should also be shaped and defined as positive open space as part of an integrated site development plan.

Mid-block pedestrian access

G2.6 In Business 1 Areas, consider creating a new public thoroughfare through large blocks where this enhances walkability and links publicly-relevant destinations.

Where existing blocks are large, public thoroughfares or pathways that usefully link public destinations or existing paths and streets should be integrated into site redevelopment. In planning mid-block pedestrian access, there should be a clear distinction between spaces and routes that are open to the public, and onsite open spaces that are private or semi-private. 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 edges.

3 Street Edge Treatment

While many Business Areas are typically vehicle-oriented, buildings should provide frontages towards adjoining streets and other 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.

Objectives

O3.1 To create building edge conditions that enhances legibility and safety in streets and other public spaces, and support pedestrian activity.

Guidelines

Building fronts

G3.1 Orient building frontages, including the occupied parts of buildings, offices, windows and the main public entrance, to the street.

The connection between building interiors and adjoining public spaces, including streets, is fundamental in determining the character and quality of those public spaces. A building with openings or large amounts of glazing that display internal activity and doors at ground level, as well as windows above, offers visual interest, and opportunity for informal surveillance.

Sites should always have a pedestrian entrance, and the building entrance should be located close to the main pedestrian entrance to the site in order to assist wayfinding for visitors.

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 may be established on others.

Active edges

G3.2 Avoid or articulate featureless or plain wall surfaces that are at the street edge or prominent in view from immediately adjacent dwellings or highways.

Large blank surfaces should not occur at ground level at the street edge, nor where a building backs onto or is otherwise prominent in view from a major road, irrespective of whether there is any physical connection. 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 reasonable proportion of ground floor facades, but only if the quality of the street edge is not compromised as a result.

Where service orientated side and rear facades are likely to remain in prominent public view from a state highway or other key route, it is important that they are given visual interest with an architectural treatment. Large walls might be articulated with openings, and where this is not possible, with architectural treatments including three-dimensional modelling.

While colour can contribute to the positive visual effect, it should be applied in combination with other architectural means.

Shelter and building entrance enhancement

G3.3 Entrance canopies, transitional spaces and/or other features should be used to signal the location of entrances, enhance the sense of arrival and provide shelter.

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.

Human Scale

G3.4 Give a sense of human scale at the publicly occupied edges of buildings.

This might 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 wall surfaces that are of commonly understood dimensions; and elements and components that are sized for human occupation and use.

4 Façade and Building Tops

The topography of Wellington ensures that many buildings will be overlooked from surrounding residential areas and from streets and arterial roads. How the various elements of a building come together has an important influence on how they fit with their context, and whether the building appears coherent. Consideration should be given to the façade, the building's top and the side and rear elevations of buildings.

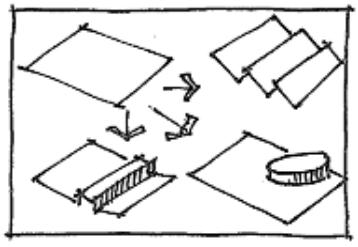
Objectives

O4.1 To ensure that the design of each façade and the building top is considered in relation to its context and as an integrated element of the design solution.

Guidelines

Roofscape, plant and services

G4.1 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.



Indicative modulation of roofscape

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 form, such as service rooms and towers. When the roof edges of such buildings are prominent in public view, consideration should be given to the composition of this edge, including

its shape and visual rhythm.

G4.2 Integrate plant and services as a coherent part of the overall design of the development.

Mechanical plant and services will often be a significant part of a development. Some plant will be untidy, and will best be treated with enclosure. Other plant, such as cranes, gantries, hoppers, conveyors, silos and so forth may be visible, and if so can contribute to the character of a Business Area. It helps people to locate a facility and can be a visual asset, contributing both diversity and interest to the neighbourhood.

Plant, if it has sufficient scale and visual presence may also be expressed architecturally. While provided for functional reasons, it often can be used to modulate the scale of a building and create visual interest. This might be by methods including alignments, grouping, creating a visual rhythm and using contrasting colour.

G4.3 Architecturally express vertical elements such as masts, towers, flues and aerials.

Vertical elements if judiciously placed and well-designed will be a positive contribution in Business Areas. They:

- *will offer visual relief from the typical horizontality and box building forms of most work areas;*
- *can express the function of activities, contributing to legibility;*
- *offer potential to contribute visual interest to both facades and the skyline; and*
- *may also, if sufficiently large, well-located and appropriately designed, create a positive landmark effect.*

Nevertheless, because these are tall, and therefore usually visually prominent, their placement and design is important. They might be expressed as an integral part of the architectural composition of the building, or act as vertical accents or space defining landscape elements. They should be designed and placed to avoid visually dominating neighbours or the street edge, or casting shadow on any neighbouring residential site.

5 Materials and Detail

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

The quality of materials and detail is particularly important at ground level and at the publicly accessible and visible parts of buildings. Here, people are able to view buildings at close range and perhaps touch them, increasing the risk of damage.

Objectives

O5.1 To ensure the level of visual quality and physical robustness of the building is appropriate to its type and location.

Guidelines

Visual interest

G5.2 Use three dimensional detail to visually enhance 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; varying the alignment of wall planes; using 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.

Physical robustness

G5.3 Use physically robust, readily maintained materials and details in areas that may be subject 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) will raise perceptions of disorder and a potential safety threat. Some people may be dissuaded from using places where these conditions exist.

6 Open Space, Car Parking and Landscape

In contrast to city and suburban centre locations, a relatively high proportion of sites will be open space, and the design of this space becomes important. Much of it will be necessarily devoted to vehicle circulation, parking and servicing. Because of its predominance and potential to dominate the adjacent streetscape, it is important that carparking is carefully designed.

The landscape context should be considered, particularly as many of these sites are at peripheral locations close to rural or reserve areas. In these cases, the landscape treatment of a development should complement its context.

Objectives

O6.1 To create landscape and open space areas which contribute to local amenity.

O6.2 To enhance legibility and safety in streets and other public spaces, providing for the necessary vehicle access while supporting pedestrian activity.

Guidelines

Relation to landscape and streetscape context

G6.1 Use type, species and patterns of planting that are characteristic of the locality, and which will enhance the development.

Where existing landscape themes are strong and positive they should be extended. In other situations, the opportunity to establish positive precedents for the future with planting that is both functionally and aesthetically appropriate should be taken.

G6.2 Concentrate planting in the areas best placed to benefit from it.

Rather than necessarily distributing planting evenly around the site it should be concentrated where it is visible, and where it contributes to maintaining or extending a valued landscape, habitat, or streetscape pattern. Planting may contribute amenity to all areas, but is not necessary within utilitarian work yards at the rear of sites.

Maintenance and serviceability

G6.3 Ensure species are suitable for growing conditions, that optimal growing conditions are provided, and make provision for maintenance.

Planting that is difficult to maintain will often deteriorate, so serviceability and maintenance requirements should be considered and planned for. Retention swales might also be considered as a means of providing for irrigation. Where establishment of planting will be difficult, a landscape management plan should be produced.

Car parking, yards and servicing

G6.4 Locate car parking, yards and servicing where these functions provide for the necessary convenient vehicle access but do not compromise the quality of the street edge, nor the status of the main entry to the building.

The appropriate location of parking depends on context. Where the street edge has moderate to high pedestrian use, parking should be at the side or rear of buildings, or above/below ground. This allows the most publicly relevant activity to be located at ground floor street edges. Car parking might be used to activate the frontage only in locations where there is otherwise little public activity.

G6.5 Break very large areas of car-parking into smaller groups, using structures or landscape elements to separate these groups.

Landscape elements such as large trees in combination with low level landscaping should be used, ensuring that there are good lines of site for drivers across the car park. Retention swales might be used as low level landscaping, as these irrigate planted areas and help minimise stormwater runoff. This ceases to be relevant where the parking is at the rear of a site, or not visible from off the site.

G6.6 Locate loading and service areas away from the main frontages and main entrance.

Rubbish and other messy storage areas should be visually unobtrusive and/or back from the street edge. However, where a servicing or storage activity is clean, visually ordered, and signals the purpose of the business occupying the site, it might be at or in view from the frontage. In this case it can contribute visual interest and enhance legibility of the work area by displaying activity.

The degree to which vehicles may occupy the site frontage will be determined by context. For activities in some vehicle oriented Business Areas, vehicle entries may

become the front entry to the site. Drive through activity is acceptable at such frontages, and should be visible from the frontage.

Pedestrian Access

G6.7 Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian access from footpaths to the entry of buildings, as well as extending footpaths along street edges where these do not already exist.

Separate access facilities will be required for pedestrians where justified by the type and intensity of vehicle use: that is, where traffic speeds, volumes or the type of traffic raise a safety risk.

Pedestrian only or pedestrian priority areas will typically be provided with kerbs or raised pedestrian facilities or material differentiation. Otherwise, where vehicle use is low, shared surfaces may be acceptable.

Paving treatments should be supplemented by appropriate amenity lighting, and directional signs if the entrance or destination is not immediately visible. Amenity landscaping is desirable associated with pedestrian accessways.

Safety and security

G6.8 Control access to areas which may allow unobserved access to buildings and facilities.

Where the means of access control is visible from the street, ensure it is integrated with building design and landscape planning.

G6.9 Ensure outdoor spaces can be overlooked from within the building, and that these areas are well lit if after dark use is anticipated.

The potential for informal surveillance and risk of being observed has the effect of deterring many potential intruders. It also enhances the sense of safety for legitimate users of the site.

In particular, landscaping should not provide opportunity for concealment or entrapment close to the street, pathways and entrances to the building.