

Wellington City Council

Design Guide Introduction



Introduction

Wellington's population is expected to grow by 50,000—80,000 people over the next 30 years. To accommodate this population growth, a significant amount of new housing will be required. This densification needs to be done well, and requires a collaborative approach between Wellington City Council, local communities, developers, planners, designers, businesses and private landowners.

Wellington is changing and it will continue to change into the future. We will be living, working and playing in a denser city. The Design Guides facilitate this change by ensuring a well-functioning urban environment that is compact, attractive, thriving and inclusive.

These design guides are a strategic and regulatory tool closely aligned to the objectives, policies and rules of Wellington's District Plan. They are a statutory part of the Wellington City District Plan. The Council will use the Design Guides to assess resource consent applications for developments where the District Plan provides discretion to do so. They are also intended to be accessible to a diverse audience so as to best support the wider goals of Wellington's Spatial Plan.

Through the pre-application and application stages of the resource consent process, these design guides will ensure new development is designed to a quality standard that contributes to our city goals and our design principles. In addition, they guide new developments to have a positive impact on environmental infrastructure, neighbouring sites and adjacent public spaces while delivering efficient, successful site layouts and quality buildings for the end-user.

The Design Guides should inform pre-application and application discussions between applicants and Council; and assist Council urban designers and planning professionals in preparing clear, consistent commentary in their assessment of proposals. They will have the greatest impact when used collaboratively between design disciplines from the early stages of any design process.

If the principles, outcomes and best-practice guidance contained in these Design Guides are embraced, Wellington can look forward to new development that is safe, attractive, meaningful and resilient; that enables our city to grow and change in response to the evolving needs of our communities and future generations.

Change is ongoing, and it can be done well

Wellington and other cities across Aotearoa New Zealand—as well as cities across the globe—are experiencing change. Populations are growing, and we are experiencing greater social and cultural diversity. We are also experiencing greater sustainability challenges than ever before. The buildings, streets and spaces of Wellington need to be “fit for purpose” to support this change now and into the future. This means that some parts of our city may start to look and feel different in coming years.

We have an important opportunity to ensure that this change is done well, and that Wellington moves from strength to strength as it grows. Mana whenua stories and our heritage places enrich Wellington's built and natural environment and its future identity, remind us of our past, and provide a connection between people and generations. By creating a sense of place, identity and wellbeing, they provide stability and continuity in a rapidly changing world.

Design principles

Following on from a number of engagement opportunities with the community as part of Planning for Growth, Wellington City Council has identified six city goals to guide the Spatial Plan, District Plan and related efforts to plan for and support anticipated growth:

1. **Partnership with mana-whenua**
2. **Compact**
3. **Inclusive and connected**
4. **Greener**
5. **Resilient**
6. **Vibrant and prosperous**

These goals are used here as design principles that all new developments in Wellington should strive to meet. In the following section, the Council's expectations about what good design needs to achieve in order to meet each design principle are articulated.

Design outcomes

Design outcomes are intended to support the design principles and achievement of good design across Wellington. While the Design Guides are ultimately outcome-focused, specific guidance should not be used as a strict template or planning rules, nor should it reduce the potential diversity of design approaches taken. Rather, the Council anticipates guidance to be interpreted and used appropriately by resource consent applicants and advisors, so as to achieve good design that meets the overarching outcomes and principles of these design guides.

In support of the six design principles, the following five design outcomes help to coordinate specific guidance across a range of scales, from the wider environment through to individual buildings:

1. **Responding to context**
2. **Responding to the natural environment in an urban context**
3. **Effective public-private interface**
4. **Well-functioning sites**
5. **High-quality buildings**

Specific guidelines consist of a combination of text and technical diagrams intended to demonstrate how the outcomes can be achieved.

A note about the design process

Achieving good design starts with the alignment of an appropriate budget and design brief, awareness of constraints and opportunities and a strong design team. The use of experienced architects and landscape architects with the relevant professional accreditation is recommended. Some larger projects may be most successful through the collaboration of multiple design practices.

Every stage of a project, from site acquisition, through concept development to detailed delivery, requires a commitment to delivering quality outcomes through good design. The allocation of sufficient budget through robust feasibility studies, a strong design brief, and early engagement with Council contribute to an effective process that supports the delivery of quality outcomes.

Unheard stories: mana whenua identities, worldviews and practice

Māori, and more specifically mana whenua identities, worldviews and practices have for the most part been erased from our built environment. Acknowledging these in appropriate and considered ways offers an opportunity to create a unique sense of place in any new development. At times, particularly where developments are large or impact significantly on wider urban systems, it will be appropriate to engage mana whenua in the design process. This should be factored into resourcing for development projects.

To support robust design outcomes for mana whenua, one of the six goals for Our City Tomorrow is partnership with mana whenua. This goal has been translated into a design principle to guide development through the resource consenting process.

The Design Guides ensure the integration of mana whenua identities, worldviews and practice into the city and that new initiatives and developments reinforce the city's aspiration to become a city where mana whenua can flourish.

Environmental sustainability

Wellington needs to and can become more sustainable, ensuring its natural environment is protected, enhanced and integrated into the urban environment. Design plays a crucial role in achieving sustainability goals. The unique benefits and efficiencies of buildings, sites and urban systems need to be maximised, delivering quality places where resources are optimised. Sustainable design can include the ongoing use of existing buildings and the adaptation of heritage buildings for new uses.

The Design Guides aim to ensure that nature and eco-friendly practices are more proactively integrated into our city, and that new development contributes to a future for Wellingtonians that is environmentally sustainable.

Density, height and new housing types

More and more people are choosing to make Wellington their home. Higher densities and more people are a good thing, and larger populations can sustain more local businesses and initiatives. Higher densities make public transport options, community services and events more viable and therefore more available. When done well, density can increase the general well-being of people through improved social connection opportunities, safety and accessibility.

In delivering density, new developments will need to provide for a range of housing types. This will be needed as our population becomes more and more diverse. This means that new buildings in Wellington are likely to be taller than some of their neighbours, at least at first. Done well, new development can be integrated with our valued heritage places and the city can seize this opportunity to set a new benchmark for design quality in Wellington. It can and should contribute to our city's evolving identity, which consists of buildings, streets, spaces, landscapes, history, people, uses, stories, mana whenua stories, memories and more.

The Design Guides aim to ensure that density, height and new housing types are delivered through quality design, so that Wellington continues to be a place that a diverse range of people are proud of and want to call home.

Design principles

Partnership with mana whenua

Wellington recognises the unique role of mana whenua as partners in the ongoing design and development of the city. Predicated on an active partnership, mana whenua values, worldviews and identities are fundamental in the retention and evolution of Wellington's place identities. To achieve this, good design:

- is based on meaningful engagement with mana whenua partners where development is significant in terms of size, location (near or on sites of significance for iwi), public presence and importance.
- reinforces and re-establishes (where currently erased) mana whenua identities in new design and development.
- strengthens through design, the values and worldviews articulated by mana whenua in the following six principles:

Tino Rangatiratanga—Design outcomes support the tino rangatiratanga of mana whenua through ensuring mana whenua have a decision-making role in place-making and place-keeping processes and the ongoing evaluation of built environment outcomes; development that contributes to the re-indigenisation of the city; ensuring development decisions are made with a view to the next generations; and, mātauranga ā-iwi being central to urban processes.

Tātai Whakapapa—Mana whenua are evident in the city through a living and enduring ahi kā presence. This presence is exemplified by celebrating mana whenua cultural landscapes; recognition and celebration of sites of significance for mana whenua (both built and natural); the telling of mana whenua stories and histories through built and natural landscapes; and, supporting the ability of mana whenua to trace their whakapapa in the built and natural environment through reinstating natural heritage (e.g. provision of native flora and fauna or daylighting streams), public art and memorials and the reinstating of traditional place names.

Te Mana me te Mouri/Mauri o te Taiao—The mana and the mouri/mauri of the natural environment is uplifted and sustained across the city through building works that restore a healthy relationship with nature. Examples include use of materials and methods that use very little energy; building works that acknowledge the living relationship between everything in the environment; fostering kaitiakitanga or the ability to steward and protect the health of important environmental sites; and, ensuring that the ongoing health of wai tai (sea water) and wai māori (freshwater) is sustained through any new development.

Te Ora o ngā Tāngata—Promoting the health and wellbeing of people is done through using the built and natural environment to support whanaungatanga or whānau connectedness and community participation; to encourage kotahitanga or community cohesion; and, create environments that offer good access to amenity including education, health, employment and social services.

Manaakitanga—Developments offer opportunities for mana whenua to manaaki manuhiri through built outcomes that: provide space for tikanga; offer environments designed to be safe places for all ages—kaumatua, tamariki, rangatahi and pakeke alike; and provide environments that support the revitalisation of culture and te reo Māori.

Whakāhuatanga—Built outcomes celebrate beauty in design through designing to lift the human spirit; incorporating public art and interpretations of mana whenua narratives; place-based design (e.g. celebrating the winds of Pōneke); and, design that acknowledges the beauty and wonder of the environment and celebrates mana whenua identity.

Compact

Wellington has been recognised for its compact form and it needs to build on this urban identity with quality development in the right locations. Development should enrich future urban identity, quality and legibility through a considered response to Wellington's unique environment (including celebrating mana whenua narratives, our unique landscape, ecology, history, heritage places, built form, etc.). To achieve this, good design:

- Supports compact, liveable, easily accessible and connected urban form;
- Makes efficient use of existing infrastructure, community facilities and transport links;
- Supports or incorporates quality streets, paths, green spaces, public open space; and
- Future proofs the longevity, functionality and capacity of relevant infrastructure.

Prioritising compact urban form ensures that Wellington's unique qualities and sense of place can grow and change sustainably into the future.

Inclusive and connected

Wellington has a world-class urban environment, which includes a network of transport options with attractive and accessible public spaces that support our diverse communities and cultural values. The histories held by both Māori and non-Māori demonstrate an ongoing connection between people and place over the centuries and into the future. Development should support and enhance this sense of inclusivity and connectedness through designing as for integrated urban form (including environmental infrastructure (papatūānuku), streets, buildings and spaces) that understands the relationships between urban form, its function and the meaning it holds for our diverse population. Design should facilitate well-being, movement and access opening up opportunities for all. To achieve this, good design:

- Recognises and celebrates ahi kā (the enduring role mana whenua play as kaitiaki in this particular place);
- Contributes to Wellington's evolving identity and sense of place;
- Supports or delivers increased housing choice across the city;
- Ensures universal accessibility within and to/from a development site; and
- Supports safer, healthier and more convenient access to a range of services and amenities.

Prioritising inclusiveness and connectedness helps to support mana whenua aspirations, encourage interactions and exchanges between people, and between people and place; resulting in greater place attachment and healthy communities with evolving identities.

Greener

Wellington is sustainable and its natural environment is protected, enhanced and integrated into the urban environment. Development should prioritise opportunities for integrating green infrastructure into design, so as to protect or enhance the natural environment and/or provide more usable and accessible green space for a growing residential population. To achieve this, good design:

- Uses water sensitive approaches to support improvement in water quality across the city;
- Protects important natural and physical features and natural heritage that celebrate mana whenua identity and enhance the city's sense of place;
- Supports or delivers quality green space within a 5-10 minute walking catchment;
- Retains existing iconic buildings, and adapts heritage buildings to new uses, and
- Reinforces the City's aspiration to become a sustainable eco-city.

Prioritising a greener city in new development ensures that Wellington's valued natural environment plays a part in the future shape of the city and that new development contributes to achieving a zero-carbon future.

Resilient

Wellington's natural and built environments are healthy and robust, and we build physical and social resilience through good design. Development should focus on maximising potential benefits and efficiencies of built form and systems which optimise the full potential of a site's intrinsic qualities. These qualities include the site boundaries, size, heritage values, relationship to the street, landforms, outlook and proximity to services, amenities and infrastructure. To achieve this, good design:

- Considers development opportunities that support social and physical resilience;
- Embeds adaptability to ensure continued viability for our changing communities, cultures and built and natural environments;
- Employs water sensitive approaches; and
- Uses durable and sustainable materials.

Prioritising resilience in designing our buildings and spaces ensures that Wellington's neighbourhoods can support future generations culturally, socially and physically.

Vibrant and prosperous

Wellington builds on its identity by acknowledging mana whenua worldviews and aspirations, welcoming social and cultural diversity, supporting innovation and investing strategically to maintain our thriving economy. Development should accommodate a rich mix of uses, activities, urban form, architecture and heritage places, which together support vibrancy and prosperity. To achieve this, good design:

- Acknowledges mana whenua identities;
- Demonstrates or enables creativity, innovation, and technology in urban development;
- Delivers attractive, coherent and integrated built forms and spaces; and
- Supports the economic viability of Wellington's neighbourhoods.

Prioritising a vibrant and prosperous urban environment through development will ensure that Wellington is a place where current and future generations want to live, work and play.

Design outcomes

Responding to context

- New development responds to the unique valued characteristics within the surrounding environment.

Responding to the natural environment in an urban context

- New development acknowledges the natural environment as part of creating a sustainable and resilient built environment that responds to the topography, vegetation and ecosystems of the site and its surroundings, within the context of the planned urban environment.
- Methods to maintain or enhance the mauri (the health and wellbeing) of waiora (water), where required, are integrated into the overall design of the development in a manner that provides for the amenity of the living environment.

Effective public-private interface

- New development is configured and designed to contribute positively to the visual quality, spatial definition, amenity, and safety of adjacent streets and the public realm.
- The layout of new development (including blocks, streets and open space) integrates with the surrounding neighbourhood.
- Mana whenua sites of significance are acknowledged and celebrated.
- New development respects and responds to nearby scheduled sites and areas of significance to Māori, heritage areas, buildings, structures and trees.

Well-functioning sites

- ◆ New development maintains or enhances the walkability and permeability of the pedestrian network.
- ◆ New development provides for safe and convenient cycle and pedestrian movement and access.
- ◆ Vehicle access, garage doors and car parking do not dominate the streetscape.
- ◆ Open spaces are designed and located to provide amenity and be accessible, safe and easily maintained.
- ◆ Servicing is provided for in a manner that integrates with the site and minimises adverse effects on the surrounding streetscape and neighbours.

High-quality buildings

- ◆ Buildings are coherently designed, and achieve the relevant design outcomes in an integrated manner.
- ◆ Buildings are well designed, safe and provide good amenity for inhabitants and utilise materials and details that will age well over time.
- ◆ Parts of buildings that rise conspicuously above those around them demonstrate visual interest and architectural coherence when viewed from the surrounding urban environment.
- ◆ Development contributes to an urban environment that can be accessed, used and enjoyed by a range of people, regardless of any disability or stage in life.
- ◆ Buildings are designed to support energy efficiency and reduction in building-related carbon emissions.
- ◆ Internal environments provide healthy, comfortable, convenient, functional and attractive places for their occupants.
- ◆ Buildings are designed to facilitate multiple uses and changes in use over time.