City and Town Centre Design Guide

September 2023

Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Ngāmotu
New Plymouth District Council

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Introduction

New Plymouth's city centre is the district's and region's commercial hub and focal point for a wide range of activities, particularly retail and business service activities, living activities, community facilities and visitor accommodation.

Waitara and Inglewood town centres function as service towns for their surrounding residential and rural communities. Both are poised for further growth and development, with investment expected following the passing of two pieces of legislation. The Waitara Lands Act 2018 provides certainty regarding land ownership along with avenues for funds to be invested in Waitara. The Te Atiawa Claims Settlement Act 2016 provides Te Āti Awa with the option to purchase Office of Treaty Settlement landbanked sites throughout the district, including the Inglewood Railway Station land, a large area in the heart of Inglewood. If Te Āti Awa chooses not to purchase this site it will be sold on the open market.

Fitzroy town centre is both a convenience centre for the surrounding suburban neighbourhoods and a destination shopping centre with a particular focus on homewares stores and café and restaurant dining.

To enhance the vitality of the city and town centres, and further strengthen their role as commercial, social, cultural and residential centres, the District Plan supports growth through promoting quality building development.

To help achieve this, the City and Town Centre Design Guide applies to new building development, as well as to additions and alterations to existing buildings in New Plymouth's city centre, Waitara, Inglewood and Fitzroy town centres. The intent of the Design Guide is to facilitate high quality buildings which contribute to attractive, accessible, vibrant and safe city and town centres. This means thinking about how new buildings sit within the landform, how they respect existing character and heritage and how they enhance the collective identity of each centre as a whole.

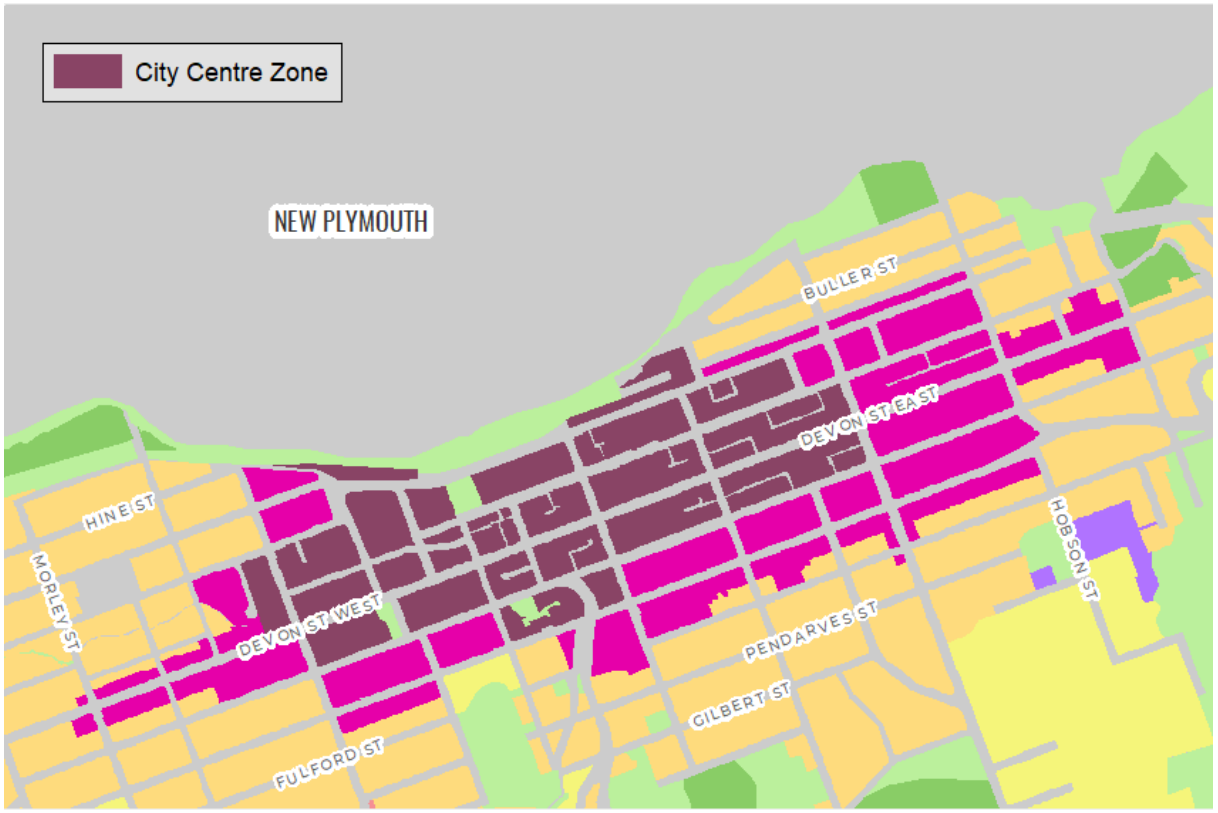
The key outcomes sought by the Design Guide are building developments that:

- are coherently designed with positive visual effects;
- respond well to their context and enhance the local sense of place;
- address heritage values;
- encourage street activity;
- provide good quality working and living environments;
- integrate environmental sustainability principles; and
- provide conditions of safety and accessibility.

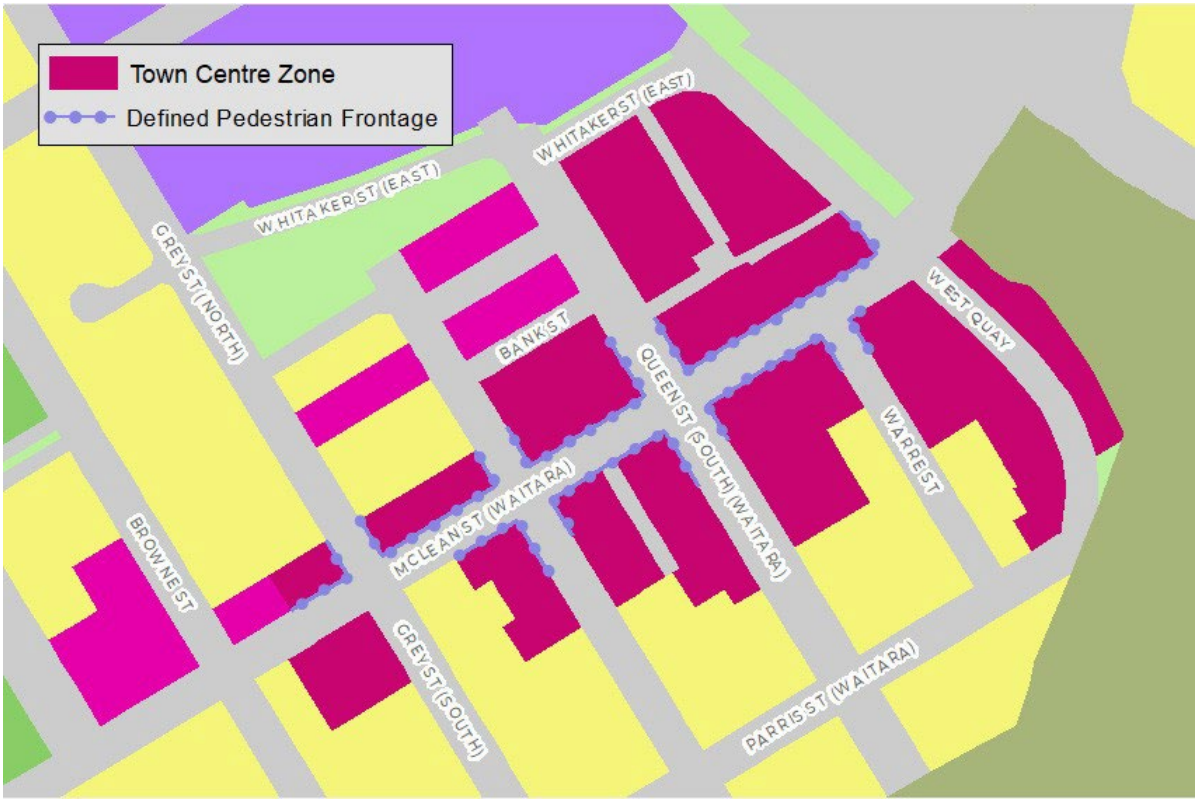
The Design Guide is part of a suite of design guidelines in the District Plan aimed at improving the quality of design outcomes within the district.

The following maps outline the boundaries of the City Centre Zone in New Plymouth and the Town Centre Zone in Waitara, Inglewood and Fitzroy. Sites within the City Centre Zone and the Town Centre Zone are subject to this Design Guide. "Defined Pedestrian Frontage" is also shown on these maps. This matter is discussed later in this Design Guide.

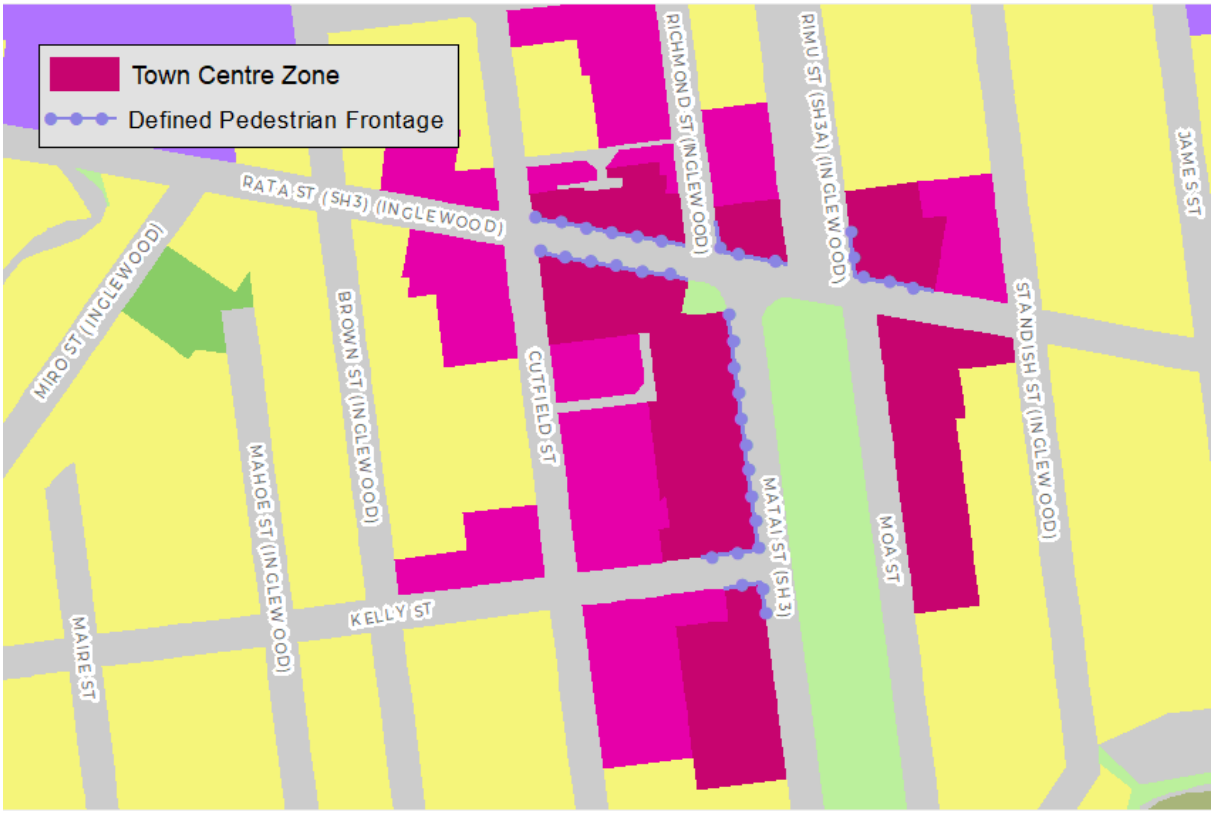
New Plymouth



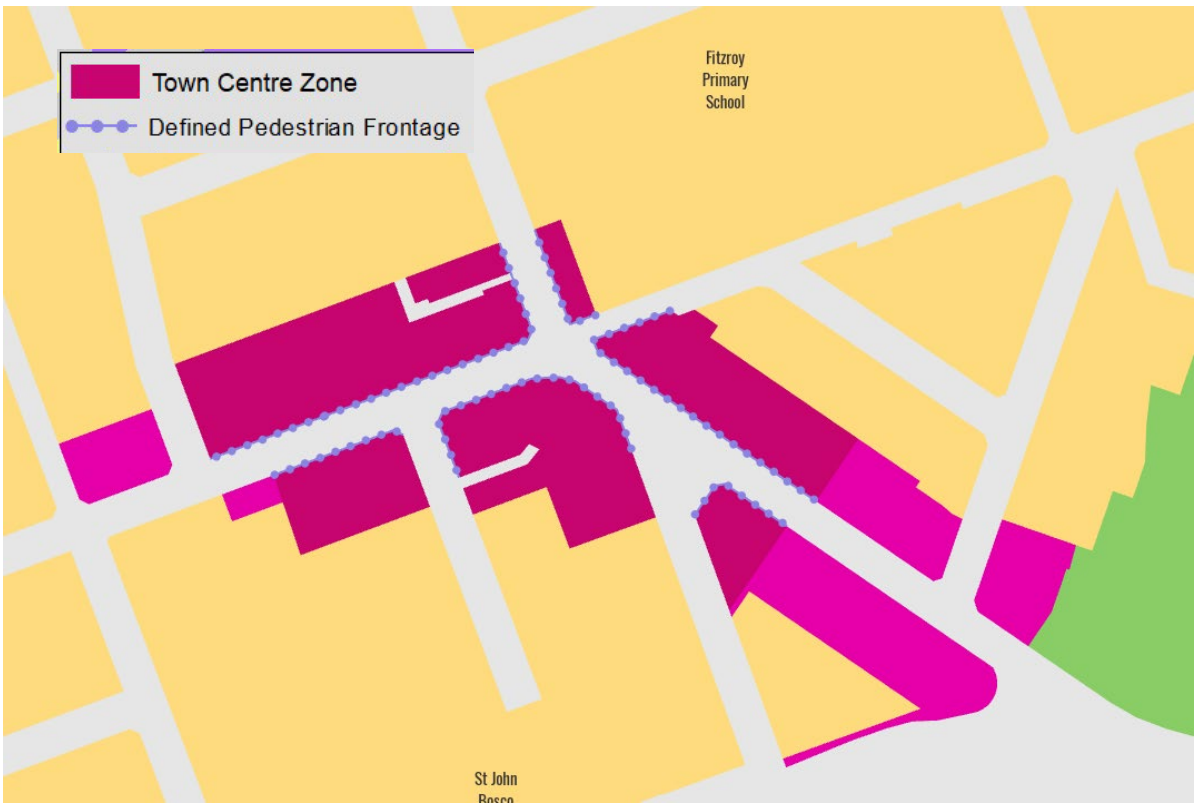
Waitara



Inglewood



Fitzroy



Application and Purpose

The purpose of the Design Guide is to:

- give landowners, developers, architects and designers 'good urban design' principles for quality city and town centre buildings; and
- outline the type and quality of outcomes the Council is seeking for new city and town centre buildings.

The Design Guide should be read and applied in conjunction with the relevant objectives, policies, rules and standards in the District Plan. However, the Design Guide is a non-statutory document.

The illustrations in the Design Guide are intended to support the text and illustrate the principles, not to promote specific design solutions.

Throughout the Design Guide italicised text provides explanation and further assistance on the intended application of the guidelines.

How to Use the Design Guide

Relevance and application

Good design is site-specific and responsive to its context as well as to the needs of future occupants. This means that not all of the guidelines will necessarily be relevant to every site or type of development. Relevant guidelines for each proposal can be identified and confirmed with the Council in pre-application meetings. The Design Guide does not seek to prescribe specific design solutions, but rather provides a set of design guidelines which developers and designers need to consider and interpret in relation to the development site and its context.

Design Guide and consenting process

To be effective the Design Guide should be considered at the early stages of subdivision design to inform the initial design concepts. It is important that all of the relevant guidelines are considered in an integrated way, as they are inter-related and reinforce each other.

Applicants are encouraged to attend pre-application meetings to discuss the initial design concepts with Council staff from different disciplines (e.g. planning, design, transportation and engineering). This will help the Applicant gain an understanding of the key issues and clarify the site-specific outcomes sought by the Council for each development site. It will also ensure that the Applicant receives coordinated, transparent and consistent advice from all Council officers involved in assessing the proposal.

An efficient design and consenting process based on early Council engagement and clarity of Council's expectations are key outcomes sought through the application of the Design Guide.

Context and Urban Form

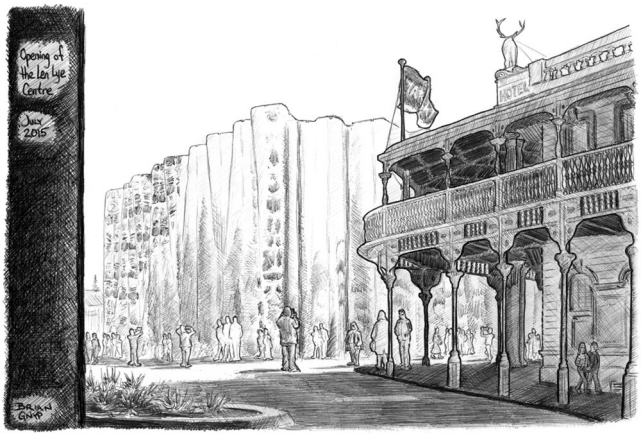
New Plymouth City Centre

The New Plymouth city centre is the principal centre and sits at the top of the district's centres hierarchy. It is a vibrant place with a wide range of activities serving the district and the Taranaki region. This area contains many tourist attractions, landmarks and historic features and is supported by strong business, retail, hospitality and entertainment sectors.

Looking back to early tangata whenua settlement of the area, Te Āti Awa, and in particular the Ngati Te Whiti hapu, traditionally used the once sandy beach foreshore, Huatoki Stream Basin and associated vegetation cover to support settlement and life. The coast and stream catchment provided for mahinga kai gathering/harvesting, with Puke Ariki Pa in particular being an important area of occupation.

The Puke Ariki landscape is difficult to discern today, because it has substantially disappeared beneath a confluence of streets, of what is now the commercial centre of the city. The present cenotaph, at the end of Queen Street, generally represents the centre of the pa site. Puke Ariki (Hill of Chiefs) strategically overlooked the mouth of the Huatoki estuary from a high ridge. The Huatoki Stream itself was long the source of tidal and freshwater fish. Fish-laden canoes rode the incoming tides upstream to their landing places.

The value of this location and these natural resources was recognised centuries later by the Pakeha settlers. Settlement began in the 1840s with temporary housing provided on Mount Eliot, the hill previously known by tangata whenua as Puke Ariki. As was common for colonial surveyors, the original 1842 survey plan by Frederick Carrington applied an English grid pattern but, unique to the New Plymouth context, also recognised the Huatoki Stream's estuary. Carrington's original survey plan formed the basis of the street layout in the city centre that can still be seen today. More recently, the Huatoki Stream has been partly uncovered and realigned for the purpose of beautifying the centre of the city. The watercourse and natural Basin landform remain a unique and dominant feature which continue to influence the urban form of the city centre.



At the heart of the city centre in the low lying landform of the Huatoki Basin is Puke Ariki Landing, the largest open space in the commercial centre of the city. The Puke Ariki Museum and Library located within Puke Ariki Landing acts as a cultural reference and reinforce the area's significance to both tangata whenua and Pakeha settlement. Other important civic amenities in this part of the Huatoki Basin are the Huatoki Plaza and the main access point to the Wind Wand on the Coastal Walkway. A short distance away are Devon and Currie Streets, which are the premier retail and commercial streets and include an attractive mix of modern shops, offices, heritage buildings and public spaces. To enhance pedestrian experiences along Devon Street, the southern side has a widened footpath and street trees which provide important levels of amenity. Importantly, a heritage character area is identified to recognise the city centre's cultural heritage and identity.

Moving out from the low-lying land, the taller buildings are located on the western and eastern flanks of the Huatoki Basin, i.e. on higher ground. The Govett Brewster Art Gallery and Len Lye Centre are high profile buildings located at the western end of Devon Street that are valued not just for their architectural merit and function, but also for their location around the historic White Hart Hotel.

Beyond the city centre to the south lie two important green areas, Pukekura Park and Pukākā/Marsland Hill. These landforms, combined with the state highway/one-way network, accentuate the existing topography and concentrate retail and commercial development within the downtown area of the city centre.

The physical character and urban form of the city centre has been shaped by two major factors - the character of the underlying landscape and the historic street grid laid out by Carrington in the 1840s. The coast and Pukākā/Marsland Hill, enabling expansive views to the wider landscape setting, and Huatoki Stream are the main natural features that underpin the local landscape of the city centre contributing to its strong sense of place.

The historic grid pattern with 20m wide streets has structured the city centre into rectangular east-west oriented blocks (typically 100m wide by 150-200m long). Longer blocks are often divided with smaller service lanes providing pedestrian shortcuts.

The regularity of the street grid and block patterns is altered by the landform in the vicinity of Huatoki Stream where blocks have become smaller and the continuity of north-south streets has been interrupted. It is this area that has become the focus of pedestrian activity and public life.

Apart from the buildings located in the heritage character area (discussed below), the character within the remaining parts of the city centre is diverse in terms of building height, scale, type and style.

Movement patterns, defined by State Highways 44 and 45, and the historic patterns of development have influenced land uses within the city centre by creating several informal activity areas. These include:

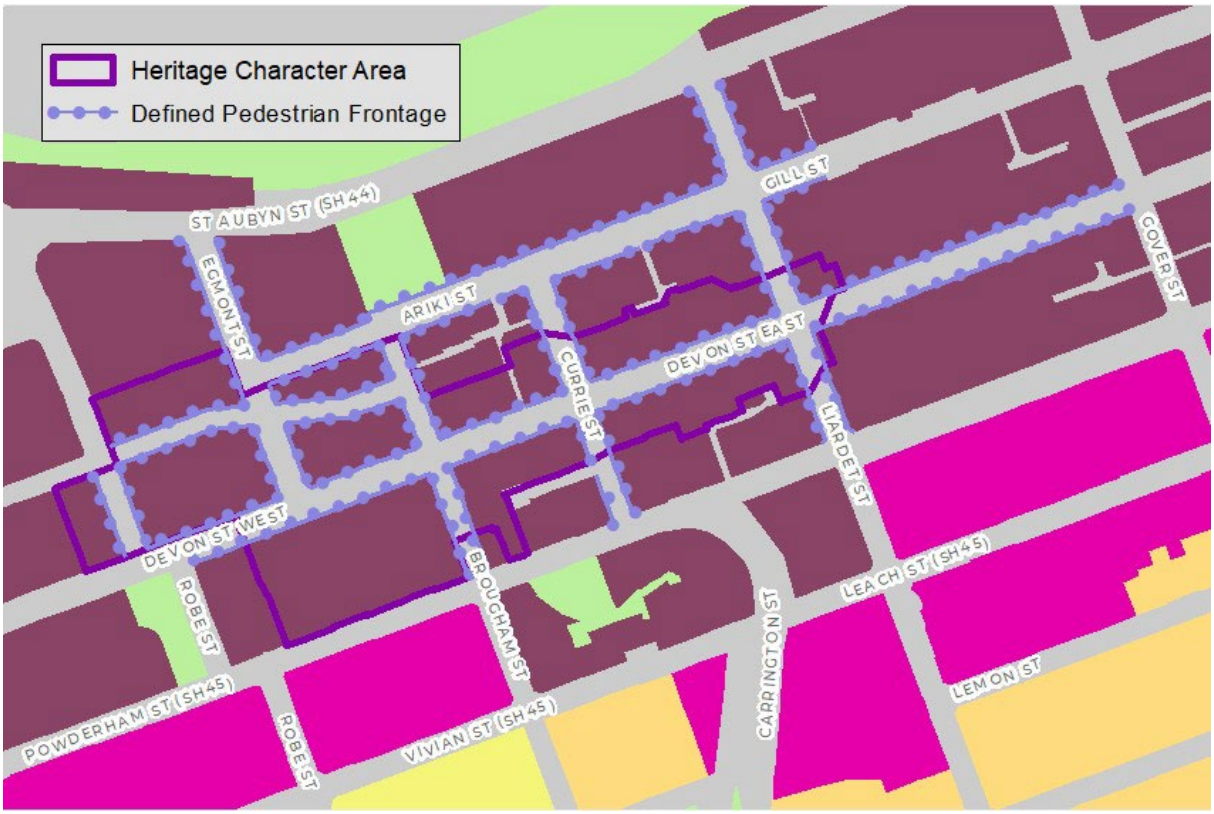
- a pedestrian-oriented retail and cultural area running along Devon Street and focused around Currie Street;
- an area containing a mix of retail and services easily accessible by both pedestrians and vehicleslocated to the east of Currie Street towards Gover Street; and
- a vehicle-oriented services area in the vicinity State Highway 44.

There is an opportunity to consolidate these areas (especially the pedestrian-oriented ones) and/or diversify them with other activities as well as to strengthen the connections between them by encouraging high quality new development and promoting walkability. The ultimate aim is creating a vibrant city centre that attracts businesses and commercial activity and brings more people to visit, work and live there.

New Plymouth Heritage Character Area

The District Plan identifies a heritage character area that is centred on the cultural and commercial heart of New Plymouth. Focusing primarily on buildings, the heritage character area also incorporates streets, open spaces, the Huatoki Stream, street furniture and art.

The heritage character area stretches along Devon Street from the west side of Queen Street to just beyond Liardet Street. It includes Queen, King, Egmont and Brougham Streets on the northern side and most of the block between Robe and Brougham Streets on the southern side. The following map shows the boundary of the heritage character area. “Defined Pedestrian Frontage” is also shown on this map. This matter is discussed later in this Design Guide.



The heritage character area contains a number of scheduled heritage buildings, as well as other contributory buildings that add visual interest or play an important role in the historic character of the precinct, but are not scheduled in the District Plan as heritage buildings. Architectural styles and construction materials on display in the precinct include 19th century and early 20th century timber and masonry buildings (largely Neo-Classical in style), concrete buildings from the first half of the 20th century (generally Stripped Classical and Art Deco styles), and a range of later 20th century buildings (in a variety of Modernist styles).

Although there are a few taller buildings within the heritage character area, the predominant pattern is of two storey buildings built to the street edge. This contributes to a well-defined and generally consistent streetscape character that is most pronounced along Devon Street.

The City and Town Centre Design Guide helps to ensure that new development in the heritage character area does not compromise either the individual value of the heritage buildings or the integrity of the precinct's streetscape and setting.

Waitara Town Centre

The Waitara town centre is one of three town centres forming the second tier of the district's centres hierarchy (the others being Inglewood and Fitzroy).

Waitara township is 15km north of New Plymouth and is populated by almost 8000 people. Situated on the banks of the Waitara River, Waitara has been settled for hundreds of years and is the traditional base and ancestral home for Te Ātiawa. Te Ātiawa hapu associated with the area are Manukorihi and Otaraua. Some of the earthworks of the extensive early pā Manukorihi, survive still in the grounds of Manukorihi Intermediate School on the bluff overlooking the town. Standing within this pā is ŌwaeWhai-Tara Marae, which is the central marae for Te Ātiawa and is the home of the impressive wharenui Whai Tara.

Waitara town centre is positioned on the western side of the Waitara River and has good community amenities. The town centre is busy, servicing the immediate residential catchment, with many shops and services attracting people from the wider North Taranaki catchment.

Notable features include the Waitara River which has an attractive boardwalk riverside walkway linking to Marine Park and the coastline, the architecturally prominent St Joseph's Catholic Church on Nelson Street, the Waitara cemetery and a number of prominent listed houses and trees. Waitara is also home to a number of ancient pā sites and other sites of significance to Māori.

The layout of the town centre is a grid pattern. This and the Waitara River have been the major influences of urban form. The core of the town centre is the intersection of McLean and Queen Streets which is marked by a roundabout. and a free standing town clock. Retail activity is focused around McLean Street, which has a traditional "main street" appearance with shops and street trees located each side of the road. It has distinctive blue lamp posts for street lighting and hanging baskets on the shopfront verandahs. This all combines to provide a co-ordinated main street and pleasant atmosphere.

In terms of building and streetscape appearance, there are a mix of one and two-storey buildings in diverse condition. There is also a significant amount of land dedicated to service lanes, car parks and hard standing which, coupled with gaps in the streetscape where buildings have been removed, disrupt the street character. There is an opportunity to improve the attractiveness of the town centre through urban design guidance.

Many of the commercial buildings that are located within the town centre are on land that was confiscated from hapu by the government of 1865. These sites have been leased, but due to lack of certainty regarding their future ownership, investment and development has been lacking. Many of the buildings and sites are vacant, which has had an adverse impact on the vibrancy of the town centre. The Waitara Lands Act 2018 has presented an opportunity to "unlock" 770 Waitara properties. This includes land returned to Otaraua and Manukorihi hapu, through Te Kowhatu Tu Moana Trust. The Act also gives leaseholders the right to buy land, and that the proceeds from the sale of land will be reinvested into the Waitara community. The opportunities created by the Act suggest an exciting future ahead for Waitara. It is anticipated that one of the outcomes will be investment and revitalisation of the town centre.

Inglewood Town Centre

The Inglewood town centre is one of three town centres forming the second tier of the district's centres hierarchy (the others being Waitara and Fitzroy).

Inglewood township is 16km southeast of New Plymouth and is populated by approximately 3400 people. Inglewood was founded in 1875, in a clearing in dense forest and settlers came under Julius Vogel's assisted immigration schemes. The Ngatimaru people formerly occupied land along the Waitara River. These people were descendants of the Tokomaru canoe who generally occupied territory around the Mohakatino River before spreading south and dividing into several tribes. Ngatimaru spread inland along the Waitara River land. Tarata, Purangi and Matau are within their territory but relatively little is known of the pre1800 era.

Inglewood town centre is busy, servicing the immediate residential catchment and a wide rural area with a dairying focus. It is focused along the main roads of Rata Street and Matai Street (part of the State Highway 3 network), which curve at an almost 90 degree angle in the heart of the town centre.

This is the main route south from New Plymouth, resulting in a high number of vehicles, especially heavy vehicles.

Inglewood town centre is faced with challenges due to its awkward road and rail layout. These challenges include two state highways, two major intersections, a heavy traffic bypass and a railway track. The shops on the eastern side of the railway track are also disjointed from those on Rata Street and Matai Street because of the railway track. However, consistent paving in a mix of colours and intricate patterns, seating, fencing and bins help to unify the area. The Inglewood War Memorial and its gardens, the band rotunda and Fritz Reuter Place are also beautiful features.

The activities in the town centre are a mix of residential, retail, agricultural service and community buildings. Buildings are generally in good condition, with most single storeyed. There are several that are two storeys or more in height, the most prominent being the Messenger Building on the corner of Rata Street and Richmond Street. The buildings are diverse in terms of age, design and colour. Like Waitara, there is an opportunity to improve the attractiveness of the town centre through urban design guidance.

As in Waitara, there is potential for significant investment and development in Inglewood. The Inglewood Railway land, which adjoins the eastern side of Matai Street for approximately 350m, is subject to a Treaty settlement claim. When this land, in the heart of the town, frees up there is exciting potential for urban development along this portion of the town centre.

Fitzroy Town Centre

The Fitzroy town centre is one of three town centres forming the second tier of the district's centres hierarchy (the others being Waitara and Inglewood).

Fitzroy is a coastal suburb of New Plymouth, located approximately 2.5km east of New Plymouth city centre. The area was initially named the Fitzroy Block after Governor Robert FitzRoy who reduced the land purchased by the Plymouth Company from local Māori to 1,500 hectares (from 25,000 hectares) in the mid-1840s.

Fitzroy town centre operates as both a local convenience centre as well a destination shopping centre with a particular focus on homewares and café/restaurant dining. The centre of Fitzroy is orientated around the Devon Street East / Sackville Street / Clemow Road intersection. The geometry of the intersection makes the centre a slow speed environment, despite the high volumes of traffic moving along the arterial road of Devon Street East.

Buildings in the town centre are contiguous and of similar height. Buildings are built right up to the edge of the footpath creating a sense of open/active business frontages. Shelter and shade are provided by covered verandahs which run largely uninterrupted throughout the centre. Unique street lighting, raised gardens and amenity planting within the road reserve help to delineate the centre and add to the sense of place in Fitzroy.

A focal point of the Fitzroy town centre is the Devon Street East/Sackville Street corner. This site has recently been redeveloped from a car sales yard to "The Residence", an attractive two-storey residential development with a retail element at ground level.

Fitzroy has a wide range of community amenities including a number of parks and reserves, good access to Fitzroy Beach, the Coastal Walkway and Lake Rotomanu, several primary schools, churches, clubs and organisations.

City and Town Centre Defined Pedestrian Frontage (see maps on previous pages)

The buildings that line streets and open spaces and the activities they accommodate play a significant role in the city and town centres influencing their quality, safety and vitality. Of particular importance are the main pedestrian-oriented and retail streets where continuity of street edge definition, verandah cover and interactive street frontages is most critical.

To help achieve this, the District Plan identifies the main pedestrian-oriented retail streets as 'defined pedestrian frontages' and puts in place specific standards to ensure:

- verandahs are provided to give shelter for pedestrians;
- glazing is provided to create engaging, retail focused spaces;
- an obvious public entrance is provided;
- parking and servicing areas are located within or to the rear of buildings; and
- the creation of vacant space, gaps in the streetscape or parking areas at street level is discouraged.

The Design Guide helps to further reinforce and implement the relevant District Plan standards.

Design Guidelines

1. Relationship with the Surrounding Environment

Developments which respond to the surrounding environment contribute positively to the streetscape and enhance the local sense of place. Well-designed buildings take cues from the natural environment and cultural heritage, the characteristic patterns of adjacent streets and take into account their location within the wider urban setting.

The guidelines in this section provide guidance on how to design new buildings and additions and alterations to existing buildings that fit in with and enhance their natural, cultural and built context while adding to the activity and vitality of the city and town centres.

Outcome: Developments that:

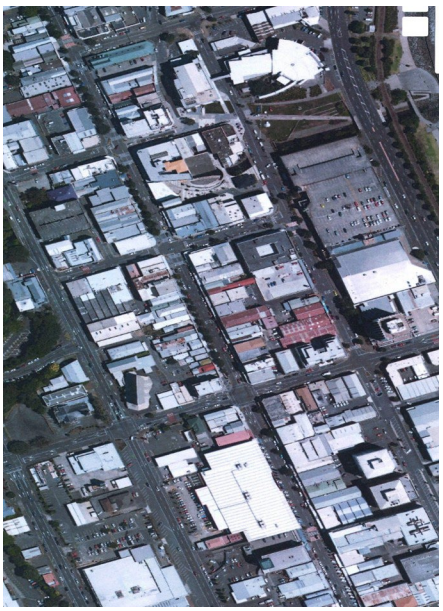
- are sympathetic to the natural and cultural features of the environment;
- integrate well with the character of the local streetscape and enhance the wider city or town centre; and
- maintain or enhance the setting of heritage buildings and the collective value of buildings within the heritage character area.

Identify Existing Context

1.1. Identify the defining patterns and characteristics of the surrounding environment including:

- Features of the natural and cultural environment.
- Open spaces.
- Street edge definition and frontage setbacks.
- Building alignment.
- Building height and scale.
- Building frontage width.
- Facade articulation.
- Materials, finishes, textures, colour.

The above characteristics are important as they determine the character of the streetscape and the scale and character of existing buildings. Identifying those characteristics is the first step towards creating developments that enhance their context.



New buildings should enhance consistency of defining patterns such as street edge definition, building siting and alignment and complement the height and scale of neighbouring buildings.

Respond to Existing Context

1.2. Integrate sympathetically with natural and cultural features of the environment by:

- Recognising Māori cultural connections with ancestral land and adopting Kaupapa Māori Design Principles.
- Preventing further enclosure of the Huatoki Stream and uncovering enclosed parts, where possible.

- Construction processes that protect natural areas, vegetation and ecological values, such as the bed, bank and waters of Huatoki Stream and Waitara River.
- Retaining a sense of openness around Puke Ariki Landing and town centre reserves through measures such as moderating building heights and using natural building materials.

1.3. Enhance consistency of defining street and building patterns including:

- Siting and building alignment.
- Building frontage width and orientation.
- Building scale, facade articulation and materials.
- Visual rhythm of windows.

1.4. Complement the height and scale of neighbouring buildings by considering:

- Alignment with key facade lines of adjacent buildings (e.g. roof, parapet, cornice, verandah or floor lines).
- Overall building height and/or floor-to-floor height of neighbouring buildings.
- Width and proportions of key facade elements.
- Window size and arrangement.

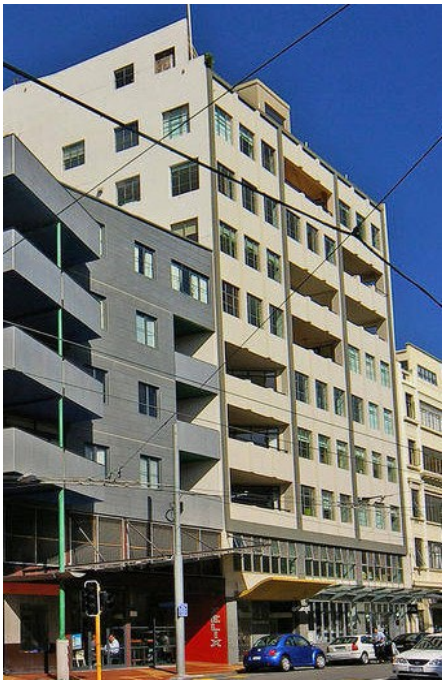
Consistency is most important when a new building is placed next to buildings with similar character or within a wider area with a distinctive local character.

When new development is located next to individual heritage buildings or in the heritage character area, it should be designed to be compatible with and enhance its setting. This does not imply replicating the form and/or style of existing buildings. Instead, the design should aim for similarity of frontage alignment, height and overall bulk, form and scale.

Where the built context is diverse, or the existing patterns are negative (e.g. do not contribute to the visual quality or safety of the street) the design should establish a positive precedent based on coherently designed buildings that support pedestrian activity and enhance safety (as specified by the other sections of the Design Guide).

Buildings that contrast with the character of their surroundings might be appropriate only if they accommodate unique or publicly significant functions. A good example in the New Plymouth city centre is the Len Lye Centre (image below).

Example of a new building to the right which complements the height and scale of the adjacent heritage building.



The new building façade to the left is aligned with key façade lines of the adjacent heritage building to the right (e.g. has similar floor to floor height and window size/proportions).

Sense of Place

1.5. Enhance the city or town centre's local identify and sense of place by:

- Respecting the integrity of the heritage character area.
- Acknowledging (where relevant) the site's association with Māori or the history of the site's development and use.
- Creating high quality memorable buildings and spaces.

High quality memorable buildings and spaces that enhance the identity of the city centre and its sense of place.

2. Siting, Height, Bulk, Form and Scale

The siting of buildings and their overall bulk, form and scale determine their visual impact and relationship to the streetscape, while also influencing the internal amenity of the development (e.g. access to natural light, outlook and ventilation).

The guidelines in this section outline the key principles of how siting, building bulk, form and scale can be addressed to achieve buildings that relate well to their neighbours.

Outcome: Developments that:

- complement existing patterns of siting and alignment;
- achieve a positive height/scale relationship with neighbouring buildings, natural landforms and public spaces; and
- enhance the informal pedestrian network within the city or town centre by enhancing existing or creating new pedestrian laneways.

Building Siting, Alignment and Street Edge Definition

2.1. Site and align buildings to:

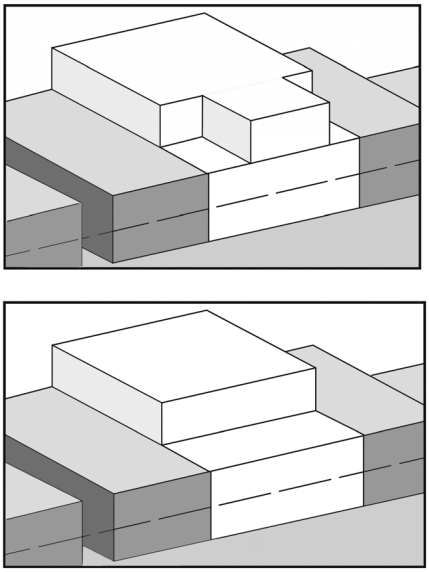
- Reinforce the street grid and enhance street edge definition through common building alignment and constructing buildings generally to the street edge.
- Define and enhance bends and street corners.
- Enhance natural light, outlook and ventilation, especially where adjacent sites can be developed to the maximum height anticipated by the District Plan (for detail see Guidelines 4.2, 5.2 and 5.3).

Development that reinforces the street edge definition and enhances its corner location.

2.2. Avoid development that results in vacant space, gaps in the streetscape and/or parking areas at street level, or mitigate its effects through high quality landscaping while providing opportunities for social interaction where possible.

Fronts of buildings should be generally built to the edge of adjacent streets and public spaces. Large or random setbacks, creating gaps in the streetscape should be avoided as they can compromise the continuity of street edge definition, expose pedestrians to adverse weather, and create left over spaces and personal safety issues.

Buildings at street corners are visually prominent and can become 'visual markers' helping people to find their way around. Buildings at street corners should employ shape and surface treatments that help to emphasise the curved or angular shape of the street bend or intersection.



Reducing height close to the street edge and using upper level setbacks moderates the height difference between new and existing buildings.

Height and Scale Relationship

2.3. Ensure new buildings:

- Maintain general consistency of building height at the street edge.
- Do not visually dominate lower neighbouring buildings by providing a height/scale transition through:
  - Moderating their height at and close to the street edge.
  - Providing physical separation between the new building and its lower neighbour.
  - Introducing boundary setbacks at upper levels.

Good street and public spaces are defined by buildings of generally consistent height. Therefore maintaining general continuity of height along the same street is important.

New buildings in the heritage character area should aim to be no more than one storey above the height of adjoining buildings when viewed from the street.

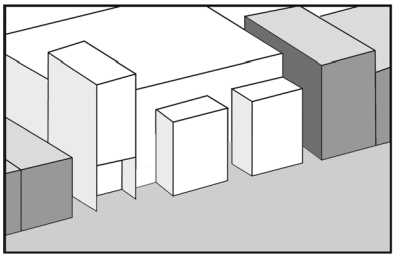
The lower building form along the street frontage provides a height transition and reduces the impact of the tall building behind.

Building Bulk

2.4. Mitigate the visual impact of bulk where a building is larger than its neighbours or other nearby buildings by:

- Breaking up the building bulk into smaller elements that reflect the frontage width, height and facade scale of neighbouring buildings.
- Using smaller foreground elements to help obscure the main building bulk when viewed from the street (see diagram to the right).
- Using facade articulation to create shadow lines and/or varying materials and colours.

Bulk relates to both the height and footprint 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.



Placing smaller foreground elements along the street frontage helps to reduce the impact of bulk and aids the scale relationship to adjacent buildings

Pedestrian Connectivity and Laneways

2.5. Maintain or enhance existing pedestrian thoroughfares and laneways through the development site and consider creating new public thoroughfares where this would enhance walkability or create new short cuts through the city or town centre.

2.6. When enhancing existing or creating new laneways (through Council-led projects) ensure the:

- Design appearance of the laneway responds to its site-specific conditions (e.g. scale/width of the laneway, character of defining buildings, type of uses in those buildings).
- Laneways are designed with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) objectives in mind.
- Laneways are well lit to make them safer after dark.
- Laneways are well-landscaped and provide an attractive setting for public art.
- Laneway is adapted in a way to make it more publicly accessible.

2.7. When developing sites adjoining an existing or new laneway (through developer-led projects) ensure:

- The buildings defining the laneway incorporate entrances and windows to provide informal surveillance.
- Ground level uses support pedestrian movement and provide opportunity onto 'spill out' on the laneway where appropriate (e.g. cafes/restaurants with on-street dining) (see also Guideline 3.1).

A connected series of pedestrian paths/laneways independent of a city or town's street system is important for people's orientation and their knowledge of different parts of the city or town, while promoting walkability.

Examples of mitigating building bulk through breaking it up into smaller elements and/or using planting, façade articulation, and/or variation in materials and colour.

New Plymouth, Waitara, Inglewood and Fitzroy centres all have existing through-block laneways. While the primary function of these laneways is servicing the buildings within the block, or connecting to parking areas, they also act as informal pedestrian shortcuts connecting neighbouring streets and spaces. Defined by 'backs of- buildings' many of the lanes do not invite pedestrian movement as they have vehicle-oriented character, are unattractive and/or feel unsafe to use.

Improving the quality of existing laneways and turning them into safe and attractive public spaces, will promote walkability and add vitality to the city and town centres.

This is best achieved through integrated public/private initiatives where private development on sites adjoining existing laneways provides activity along their edges and, by doing so, acts as a catalyst for the up-grade/enhancement of the laneway by the Council. Alternatively, a Council-led up-grade of an existing laneway can encourage the redevelopment of adjacent buildings or sites.

The Council encourages opportunities to make use of existing laneways for publicly accessible purposes. This may involve discussion with the Council to see if they can assist through a possible up-grade.

Examples of an enhanced pedestrian laneway and a through-block covered pedestrian lane with active edges.

Examples of upgraded laneways that promote connectivity and add to the vitality of city and town centres.

3. Street Frontages

The buildings that line the edges of streets and public open spaces determine their character, quality and attractiveness and provide the setting for the activities taking place there. Buildings that accommodate publicly accessible activities at ground level and incorporate entrances and windows oriented to the street provide a sense of occupancy and natural surveillance, contribute interest and safety and promote street life.

Outcome: Street frontages that support pedestrian activity, provide visual interest and enhance the safety and comfort of city and town centres' streets and public open spaces.

Building Frontages and Ground Level Activities

3.1. Create buildings that open up to and provide activity along the street edge by considering the following:

- Orientate the building frontage, including windows and the main public entrance to face the street.
- Place publicly-relevant activities within the ground floors of new buildings to create 'active' street frontages (frontages that show signs of activity in view from the street and enhance safety).
- Encourage appropriately located on-street dining of high-quality that is consistent with the Council's Encroachment Licenses for On-Street Dining Policy.
- Ensure ground level height is generous to allow for a wide range of activities and flexibility of use.
- Consider using lighting within shopfronts to contribute spill lighting to the footpath and make them attractive after dark.

A building with windows and entrances at ground level (as well as windows above) provides visual interest and opportunity for informal surveillance. Where a site is bounded by more than one street (e.g. corner site) or public open space it should establish its primary frontage along the most significant street edge or public space and provide a frontage with secondary entrances facing the other streets/spaces.

Publicly relevant activities include retail, event space, show rooms and any other activity accessible by the public. Streets and public spaces that have activity at their edges communicate that the building is occupied and contributes to the safety of the space by encouraging informal surveillance. Publicly accessible ground level activity is particularly important when a building fronts a retail-oriented street, park or a square.

The amount of glazing at the ground level of new building frontages should be consistent with the type of street or public space it adjoins and the importance of these streets/public spaces as pedestrian routes. There is a focus on ensuring that buildings along defined pedestrian frontages, as well as buildings adjacent to the Coastal Walkway, provide an appropriate level of ground floor activity and are designed to facilitate visual and physical interaction between the building interior and adjacent streets/public spaces.

(The specific amount of glazing required for building frontages along the main pedestrian routes is provided in the Defined Pedestrian Frontage Effects Standards CCZ-S2 and TCZ-S4 in the District Plan).

Examples of 'active street frontages' that support pedestrian activity, provide visual interest and add to the safety of the street.

More examples of 'active street frontages' that support pedestrian activity, provide visual interest and add to the safety of the street.

Verandahs and Building Entrances Enhancement

3.2. Provide new buildings with:

- Well-defined and sheltered entrances that are clearly visible from the street.
- Verandahs along main pedestrian routes to provide continuity of pedestrian shelter and promote pedestrian movement (e.g. along the District Plan Defined Pedestrian Frontage).

Verandahs and entrance canopies are desirable features as they provide shelter while enhancing the building entrance and its main frontage. Where a new building is located along a 'defined pedestrian frontage' shelter should be extended along the entire building frontage.

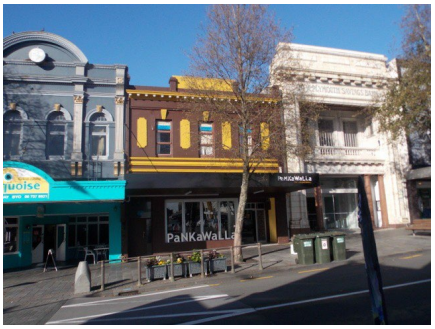
Adding shelter elements or verandahs to heritage buildings should not compromise the character, value and integrity of the building frontage.

Example of a well-designed verandah and enhanced pedestrian entrance.

Servicing, Storage and Carparking

3.3. Integrate servicing, storage and carparking functions in a way that does not dominate the main building frontage or compromise the quality of the building's main entrance.

Carparking is an undesirable activity at the ground level of buildings and sites in the city and town centres and should be avoided or located so it is not visible from the street. Parking should aim to be at the rear of buildings or above/below ground level.



New buildings should maintain existing continuity of pedestrian shelter along the defined pedestrian frontages within the city and town centres.

Ground level carparks along the street edge contribute little to the safety, activity and amenity of the local streetscape.

4. Building Design, Facades and Building Tops

The design of a building and the appearance and finish of its facade influence its overall quality. It determines the way a building relates to the streetscape as well as its functionality and its flexibility to accommodate a range of uses. Considering internal layout requirements and exterior design treatment in an integrated way is a key for delivering a successful and coherent building design.

Outcome: Coherently designed buildings that are fit for purpose, integrate well with the streetscape and offer flexibility of use over time.

Integrated Building Design

4.1. Consider internal layout requirements and design and external appearance objectives in an integrated way to maximise the internal amenity of the development while enhancing the character and quality of the streetscape.

Setting back new buildings from the side boundaries provides access to natural light and allows ventilation.

Internal Amenity

4.2. Maintain a good level of natural light, outlook and ventilation for any habitable spaces. To achieve this consider:

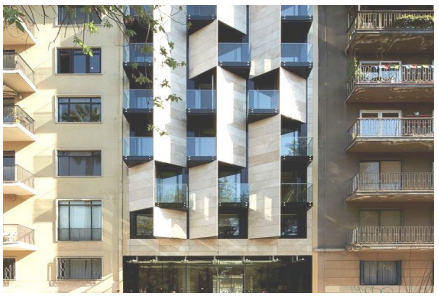
- Leaving open spaces at the rear of the site.
- Providing on-site setbacks from side and/or rear boundaries.
- Introducing atriums and light-wells (as well as windows).

Building Facades

4.3. The design of building facades should:

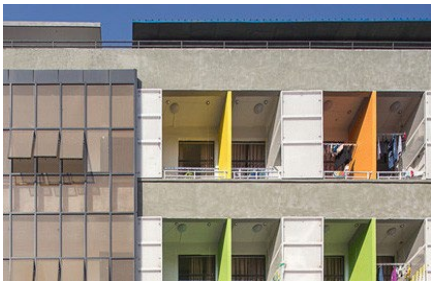
- Reflect the scale/proportions of adjacent buildings (see also Guideline 1.3).
- Be sufficiently articulated to provide visual interest, facade detail and a sense of human scale.
- Visually emphasise and enhance street corners when located on corner sites.
- Express the type of use accommodated by the building.

New development should aim to create visually interesting facades that reinforce the scale and character of the adjacent area, not to replicate existing elements, forms or styles. Featureless facades that are visible from the street or surrounding public space should be avoided. In cases where a 'blank' wall surface is required for the internal operation of the building, its visual effect should be mitigated through façade articulation and variation of textures, materials and colours.



The scale and quality of building facades are largely determined by the degree of facade articulation. Façade articulation refers to how the façade is broken up through recessed features or projecting elements such as structural bays, windows, verandahs and entrance canopies, horizontal or vertical elements and/or textures, materials and colours. Together these features and elements provide visual interest and a sense of scale that enhance the quality of the streetscape.

The design quality of building facades is particularly important for buildings along the defined pedestrian frontages as well as for buildings adjacent to Huatoki Stream and the Coastal Walkway.



Examples of facades (image above and images on previous page) that provide detail and visual interest through façade articulation and the use of materials and colour.

Additions and Alterations to Existing Buildings

4.4. When adding to or altering an existing building:

- Ensure any additions/alterations reflect the scale and character of the existing building and contribute to a coherent building image.
- Ensure the height/scale of proposed additions to heritage or contributory buildings in the heritage character area do not compromise either the value of the building or the integrity of the heritage character area's streetscape (see also Guideline 2.2).
- Where the addition/alteration is to a heritage building, consider reinstating missing architectural details or features where possible.
- When retrofitting existing shopfronts (or designing new ones) ensure the shopfront's width is aligned with the columns and other vertical elements of the upper level facade to maintain the visual integrity of the entire street façade.

Example of a rooftop addition to a heritage building that is compatible with its scale character.

Building Tops and Roofscape

4.5. In designing building tops ensure:

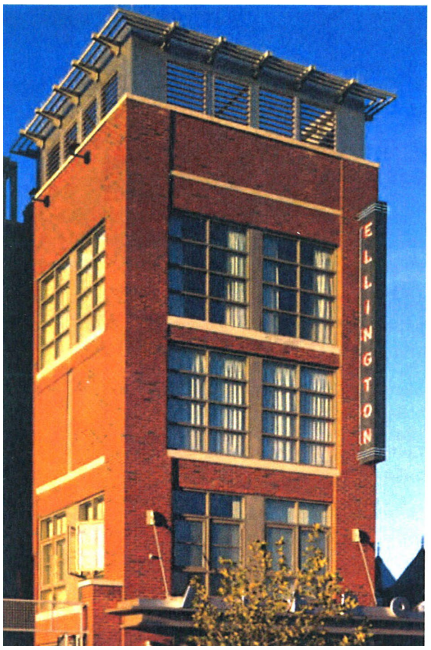
- The building top appears as an integral part of the overall building form.
- The appearance of building tops that are prominent in views across New Plymouth city contribute to the quality and identity of the collective townscape.
- Building tops do not compromise the value of the heritage character area skyline.
- Buildings tops of larger/taller buildings are designed in a way to reduce the visual impact of their height and/or bulk.
- Lift plant and mechanical services are well-integrated into the rooftop design so they do not dominate the skyline of the building.

The top of the building is more than just the roof. How much of a building comprises its 'top' varies, depending on its height and overall form/design appearance. For example, on a lower building

Examples of well-designed and interesting building tops that enhance the identity of the building and its setting.

the top might include the uppermost storey only, while in a taller building it might extend to the uppermost two storeys.

The city centre's urban form is strongly influenced by tall buildings, particularly those that are much taller relative to their neighbours. Such buildings are prominent on the skyline and can potentially impact on identified viewshafts. Therefore the design of their tops requires careful consideration.



Example of an interesting rooftop design that creates a memorable building top while screening rooftop mechanical services.

Materials, Textures and Colours

4.6. In choosing building materials consider the following:

- Employ materials that are consistent with the compositional theme of the building and its immediate context.
- Use physically robust materials that are easy to maintain and not prone to vandalism.
- Use glazing systems that maintain visual connection between building interiors and adjacent streets/public spaces.

High quality finishes and materials and good maintenance create an attractive building image and deter vandalism.

Use of materials and colour to provide detail and visual interest and accentuate key façade elements.

5. Residential Development

Residential living in the city and town centres, including apartment and townhouse development, is a desirable activity as it contributes vitality and enhances safety by providing 24/7 informal surveillance. To make it attractive, residential development in the city or town centre should provide a good level of amenity in terms of sunlight and daylight access, private open space, outlook and ventilation. A high standard of amenity means that city and town centre apartment and townhouse living is more likely to be a sustainable and long-term residential choice for a wide range of people.

The guidelines in this section apply to new residential development in the city and town centres as well as to conversions of non-residential buildings to apartments or the incorporation of a residential component in a mixed use development. The guidelines are focused on the on-site/internal amenity of new residential units and should be applied in addition to the guidelines in other sections of the Design Guide.

Outcome: Apartment and townhouse development that is healthy, comfortable and functional and integrates well with the adjacent streetscape.

Location, Scale and Design

5.1. When choosing a site for new residential development in the city or town centre consider the following:

- Developments incorporating ground level residential units are most suitable outside the area with 'defined pedestrian frontages' to maintain continuity of street activity/pedestrian shelter along those frontages.
- Above-ground residential units are encouraged along 'defined pedestrian frontages' as components of mixed use development.

Mixed use development with an upper level residential component are encouraged along the defined pedestrian frontages.

5.2. In designing apartments and townhouse developments ensure (in addition to the relevant guidelines in sections 1-4):

- The height and scale of townhouse development complements the urban scale and character of the city or town centre (e.g. townhouses are at least two storeys high and developed as multi-unit/'terraced housing' in the city centre. Single storey traditional detached townhouses in the city centre are not an efficient use of land and are discouraged).
- Building frontages of ground level units address adjacent street/s or open space positively by orientating their entrances to the street and providing windows and façade detail to create an interesting and engaging frontage.
- Where a residential development is setback from the street boundary, the space between the building and the street should be well-landscaped to provide an attractive open space enhancing the building entrance/s (not to be used as a 'fenced off' private open space).

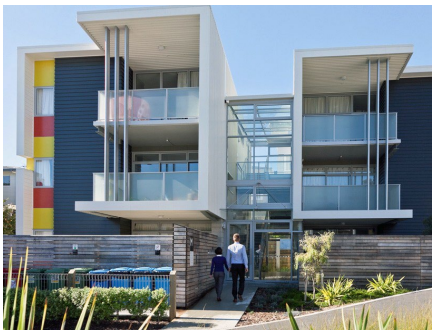

Example of well landscaped open space in front of ground level residential units.


Example of residential development that fits in with the height and scale of a city centre environment.

Apartment and Townhouse Development: Internal Amenity

5.3. Provide healthy, comfortable and functional apartment/townhouse units by considering the following:

- Ensure unit size and layout accommodates the needs of future residents and provides access to storage space.
- Orientate the building so that the main living area of most units in the development have a main aspect to the north, east or west.
- Optimise daylight access to main living areas by providing windows in external walls and provide each bedroom with its own source of daylight.
- Ensure bedrooms and main living areas incorporate an openable window in an external wall to allow natural ventilation (facilitate, where possible, natural through-ventilation by providing openable windows facing different directions).



Example of a development that maximises sunlight access to the main living area, provides sunny private balconies and a well-defined entrance facing the street.

5.4. Provide good quality usable open space by:

- Providing some form of usable outdoor space (individual balconies or small ground level open spaces and/or shared outdoor area that is safe to use during the day and night and accessible for all building occupants).
- Locating outdoor spaces to receive sunlight at some stage during the day all year round and achieve a reasonable level of visual privacy.

Examples of residential developments with entrances facing the street and well landscaped spaces along the street frontage.

5.5. In designing common and shared service areas:

- Provide functional, convenient and safe common areas within apartment buildings (main entrances, lobbies, corridors, stairwell, lift and service rooms) and design those spaces with crime prevention in mind.
- Orientate the main building entrance to face the street and consider individual entrances where the development includes ground level units.
- Ensure waste and recycling storage areas are located or screened so that they are visually unobtrusive, do not dominate the main building entrance and are well ventilated.
- Consider providing areas and facilities for alternative transport options (e.g. secure areas for bicycle storage and parking areas for motorbikes and scooters).

Balconies should be designed to maximise sunlight access and provide usable open space.

6. Efficient and Healthy Building Development

Well-designed buildings make efficient use of energy, water and sustainable materials while providing healthy environments for people to live and work in. Reducing the use of energy and water saves money and reduces the impact of buildings on the environment.

Outcome: Promote sustainable building development that creates efficient and healthy working and living environments through minimising the use of energy, water and toxic building materials.

Energy Efficiency

6.1. Design buildings so they require less energy for heating and cooling (passive design). To achieve this consider the following:

- Orientate the main working and living spaces to the north in order to maximise natural light and heat.
- Design with increased insulation and high performance glazing.
- Design eaves on the north of buildings where appropriate to let sun in during winter and keep it out during summer.
- Keep south-facing windows to a minimum to reduce heat loss in winter.
- Design and/or shade west-facing windows to prevent overheating in summer.
- Use natural ventilation where practical to cool internal spaces.
- Harness energy from the sun using photovoltaic systems (solar panels) or hot water heating systems on roof planes oriented to the north and north-west.
- Ensure that building size is fit for purpose avoiding unnecessary energy use.

Buildings with good orientation, natural ventilation and shading devices require less energy for heating and cooling while adding to the quality of the building facade.

6.2. When selecting materials:

- Consider the total life-cycle of products and materials from their creation to their end of life in terms of resource use, energy use and by products.
- Minimise the use of new resources (e.g. use recycled products and materials when available and safe).
- Target sustainable local products and materials when available.
- Select products and materials with ‘Environmental Choice New Zealand’ labelling and energy efficient rated appliances.

Select products and materials with ‘Environmental Choice New Zealand’ labelling.

- Use internal products and materials that are safe for occupants (e.g. low volatile organic compound paints).

6.3. During the construction stage consider the following:

- Good planning should result in minimal construction waste.
- Ask contractors for their waste management plan to detail how they plan to separate waste streams on site and what they intend on doing with them.
- Use energy saving construction methods.

Example of construction waste management.

Water Use, Conservation and Management

6.4. To reduce use of water resources in residential developments:

- Plant native species that provide habitat for native fauna and require minimal watering in summer.
- Collect rainwater and/or recycle grey water from laundries and/or bathroom/s (not from the toilet or kitchen) for re-use as landscape irrigation where appropriate.

Waste Minimisation and Recycling

6.5. To facilitate waste minimisation and recycling provide:

- A dedicated, enclosed waste and recycling service/storage space accessible to all occupants
- Integrated waste and recycling collection points that are well-located and appropriately screened to maintain the amenity of the site and streetscape while being convenient for occupants and collection staff.

Example of a well-screened area for rubbish collection.

7. Signage

Signs are essential to the city and town centres' commercial character and activity. They communicate information, add vitality and provide a sense of orientation. When designed well they enhance the city and town centre environment. However, if inappropriately located or poorly designed, they can overwhelm adjacent streets, open spaces, natural and cultural features, undermine streetscape quality and compromise the architecture of buildings they are attached to.

Outcome: High quality signage that relates well to the scale and character of buildings or spaces it is attached to, complements the character of the surrounding environment and does not detract from the value of heritage buildings or areas.

Signage Location and Design

7.1. Ensure that signs on building facades or within public open spaces fit in well with the character of the building or space and complement the surrounding streetscape. To achieve this signage should:

- Respect the natural and cultural features of the surrounding environment, where relevant.
- Be compatible with the building or space it is attached to in terms of location, scale and type. Refer to the Signs section in the District Plan.
- Be visually interesting, of good graphic design quality, and effectively convey information.
- Use high quality materials.
- Be designed in an integrated way where multiple signs are located on the same building facade or verandah fascia.

To enhance the quality of their setting signs should be appropriately designed. This means that signs are carefully considered in terms of their location, size and proportions and designed to complement the character of the building/space they are attached to while enhancing the amenity of the surrounding environment.

The design quality of signs is influenced by the form, materials, colour, graphic design and lighting of the sign as well as by the design of the supporting structure and fixing detail. To achieve high design quality all these elements should be considered together.

Well designed and appropriately located signage adds vitality and assists orientation.


Example of digital signage that fits in with and does not detract from the architectural or heritage value of the building.

7.2. For digital signage consider the following in addition to the Guideline 7.1:

- Font type/size and number of words to ensure clarity of image and messaging.
- Brightness (the sign should work well during the day as well as after dark).
- Framing of the sign should be considered as an integral part of the sign's design.
- The sign should not detract from the architectural or heritage value of the building it is attached to or surrounding public space.


Digital signage works well when installed on 'blank' walls (image above) or integrated into bus shelters or display panels in public space (image on next page).

- Digital signage works well when integrated into street furniture (e.g. kiosks, bus shelters, display panels in public space) or when installed on large blank walls.
- Cabling equipment should be concealed and integrated into the sign's design.

Signs and Heritage

7.3. Signs on heritage buildings should be (in addition to Guideline 7.1):

- Attached to the building with minimal intrusion into the building fabric.
- Attached in a way that allows easy removal without damaging significant building fabric.

Example of a corporate signage that does not detract from the heritage value of the building.

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