

2.2 Central Area



The Central Area comprises Wellington's commercial and business heart. In addition to business activities, the Central Area is host to a wide range of political, recreational, cultural and entertainment activities of national and local significance. The built form of the central area has been shaped by this diversity of activities, by the presence of a busy port, and by the topography of the harbour and hills.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE DISTRICT PLAN:

- **Contain development within the Central Area**

Explanation

The central city is physically contained in a natural amphitheatre between the hills and the inner harbour, making the Central Area compact, accessible and intensely 'urban'. Consistent with its sustainable management objectives, the Council aims to contain the Central Area within a defined boundary, large enough to accommodate the city's development needs over the ten year lifespan of the District Plan and beyond.



- **Preserve the existing 'High City/Low City' urban form**

Explanation

The Central Area can be divided into two distinct parts: the well-defined core of high-rise buildings centred on Lambton Quay and Willis Street (the "High City") and the low-rise development towards the outer boundaries of the Central Area (the "Low City"). To preserve this well-established urban form, the District Plan controls building height (and, in some cases, height thresholds) beyond which certain design conditions apply.



- **Permit a wide range of activities, but control their effects**

Explanation

A wide range of activities and uses are permitted as of right in the Central Area, allowing building owners and developers to respond readily to changing market needs or other influences such as new technologies. However, the District Plan seeks to control the potential adverse effects of activities in the Central Area, such as noise, traffic or the discharge of contaminants.



- **Apply special controls at the boundaries with residential areas**

Explanation

The District Plan recognises the potential for activities in the Central Area to have unwelcome impacts on adjacent residential areas. For this reason, there are additional controls relating to issues such as building height, noise, lighting and signage in these sensitive areas.



- **Improve the quality of new developments through design controls**

Explanation

The District Plan recognises that the design, appearance and quality of buildings in the Central Area has a significant influence on the city's public environment. Areas of particular character are covered by separate Design Guides (see below). For new developments outside of these character areas, the overall Central Area Design Guide applies. The Council also has an Urban Design Strategy aimed at enhancing the streetscape of the Central Area. There are additional rules relating to the design of structures on and over roads, the continuity of retail frontages in certain streets and the provision of continuous verandahs on certain pedestrian routes.



- **Protect and enhance character areas through Design Guides**

Explanation

The Design Guides provide for the special character of certain areas of the central city to be retained: Courtenay, Cuba and the Civic Centre. The Design Guides list criteria against which new building proposals are assessed, and are intended to ensure appropriate design principles are incorporated without dictating the appearance of new developments.



- **Protect and enhance features which contribute to the public environment**

Explanation

The District Plan has specific provisions to help protect important public views and access to sunlight, and to reduce the effect of wind around buildings. All these factors contribute significantly to the quality of the public environment in the Central Area.

The Plan identifies significant views of the harbour, local hills and the townscape. Any developments that intrude on those views – especially the focal point on which a view is concentrated – are classified as Discretionary. The panoramic view from the top of the Cable Car is singled out for specific protection by means of height restrictions. To ensure people enjoy reasonable access to sunlight in the Central Area, especially in well-used parks and malls, the District Plan requires new buildings to meet performance standards. Recognising that tall buildings may create unpleasant or dangerous wind patterns at ground level, new buildings are also required to comply with wind standards intended to reduce the worst effects of wind for people on the ground.





- **Manage traffic effectively to avoid congestion**

Explanation

The Council believes traffic entering the Central Area should have a good reason for doing so, rather than simply passing through it to reach other parts of the city. It is for this reason that the Council supports the development of a bypass through Te Aro, which would allow motorists to skirt the Central Area. The bypass will help contain the Central Area and improve accessibility across the whole city.

Within the Central Area itself, the District Plan seeks to control the growth of commuter traffic by limiting the supply of parking spaces. New developments are allowed a maximum number of parking spaces, determined on the basis of the proposed gross floor area. Larger developments with more than 70 parking spaces must meet certain conditions to ensure the traffic they generate does not create problems for surrounding streets.