

# CENTRAL AREA DESIGN GUIDE – TABLE OF CONTENTS

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# 1.0 Introduction to the Design Guide

This Design Guide offers general guidance to those wishing to undertake new building development or to refurbish existing buildings within the central area of Wellington City. It does not seek to impose rules on such development, but instead aims to identify the significant existing features of the central city and suggest ways in which new development can contribute positively to the area.

The Design Guide is based on the premise that the collective form of the city is more important than its individual components. As the city's cultural and business centre, the character of the Central Area is perhaps the most visible expression of Wellington's collective civic identity. Accordingly, any new addition to the area should not only have its own architectural integrity, but should also demonstrate a considered relationship with the local street environment and with the Central Area in general.

In the first part of this guide, the existing patterns and character which define the Central Area are described. The second part contains analysis of the key design issues affecting new development in the Area, and provides guidelines which address these issues.

The guidelines do not prescribe specific design solutions, but instead offer a flexible framework within which designers and developers can work. The aim is not to inhibit, but to assist new development which will enhance the public environment of central Wellington.

## The Design Guide and the District Plan

Under the District Plan rules, all new building development within the Central Area is a Controlled Activity in terms of the design, external appearance and siting of buildings. This Design Guide provides the standards or criteria against which controlled elements will be assessed.

As such, the Design Guide is an important point of reference for those seeking resource consent for new development in the area. Development proposals are expected to demonstrate a commitment to maintaining and extending the present and intended character of the Central Area, although there is considerable flexibility in terms of detailed design.

No precise formula exists for ensuring the skilful and innovative design of buildings. However, the intention of this Design Guide is to outline some clear urban design principles that new developments are expected to observe and interpret.

The Guide should not be seen as a requirement to replicate established patterns or design types within the Central Area. The illustrations in the guide are intended to further clarify principles outlined in the text, and are not intended to represent actual design solutions



*The whole is more important than the individual parts*

## 2.0 The Central Area

The city centre has a particular significance in the life of any city as it is shared, to varying degrees and at various times, by all the city's inhabitants. It thus has the capacity to draw together, to represent and to express the city's public life in some of its most populous and intense forms.

In considering central Wellington's character - those aspects which individually and collectively distinguish it from its wider surroundings - its role as the city's business and cultural centre clearly differentiates it.

Further, the Central Area contains most of the city's tallest and/or most visually prominent buildings. The architectural styles and construction dates of these buildings are quite mixed, with many of them built since the 1960s. Their diverse design and appearance have a direct bearing on the visual quality of the Central Area's public environment and the wider city.

Buildings within the Central Area have the potential to affect a large number of people. It is therefore one of the intentions of these guidelines to suggest design approaches which will allow new developments to avoid creating potentially adverse effects, not only for users of the Central Area but also for the wider community.



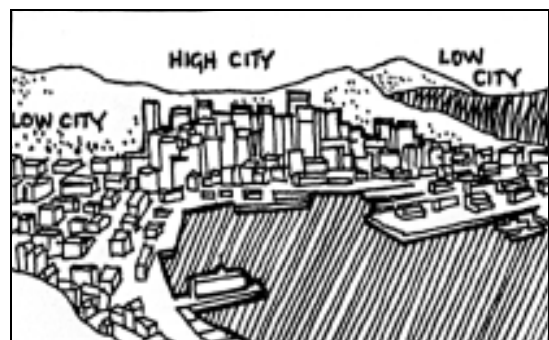
*The Central City*

### Existing Patterns

The Central Area of Wellington spreads across a narrow coastal plain centred on the inner Lambton Harbour. The overall physical setting of the central city is that of an amphitheatre. The Central Area occupies the floor of the amphitheatre. Its surrounding hills and ridgelines provide its enclosing structure.

The built form of the Central Area is in two parts - the High and the Low City.

The High City contains the city's central business district. As such, it encompasses most of the city's high-rise office buildings within a well defined corridor of high value land spreading south from Bowen Street to the intersection of Manners and Victoria Streets. Included are The Terrace, Lambton Quay, Featherston Street, Customhouse Quay, Boulcott Street, Lower Willis and Manners Street (to its junction with Victoria Street).



*Amphitheatre Setting*

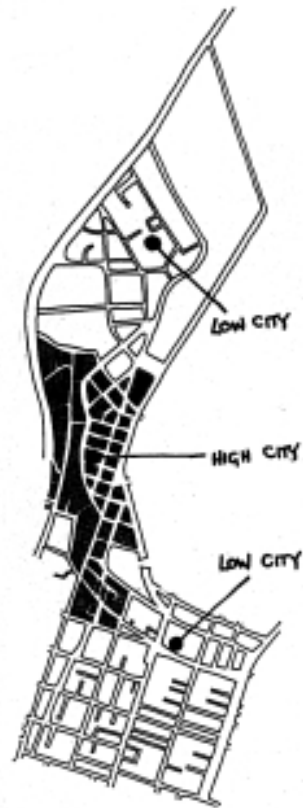
The Low City is a spread of generally low-rise buildings covering the balance of the Central Area. It comprises:

- the Te Aro Basin to the south and east of the High City
- the port and railway land, and the Hobson to Bowen Street shelf between the Motorway and the Thorndon Quay escarpment.

## Character

### Central Area as a Whole

- An area of intensive and continuous change.
- A block pattern determining the orientation of buildings.
- A division into two distinct areas of building form - a High and Low City.
- A predominance of narrow streets with only a few wide thoroughfares, coupled with a constrained land area. This has produced a central city environment generally conducive to easy pedestrian movement.
- An area that is often looked down on from elevated sites or from some distance away. This influences the way the city is experienced physically from different viewpoints.
- A site constrained by its surrounding hills and the harbour, and a general lack of flat land. As a result, the built character of the Central Area is marked by an ever-increasing intensity of development within its existing boundaries rather than by expansion beyond these boundaries.
- A district of buildings that are predominantly light in colour, set in contrast against the generally darker background of the bush-clad slopes of the Town Belt and the surrounding trees and gardens of the inner residential suburbs.
- A composition of clearly defined areas of individual character (e.g. Courtenay, Cuba, etc.), which also exhibit the larger patterns and more general character typical of the Central Area as a whole.



*The Central Business District*

## The High City

- Sited on a narrow corridor of land set between the harbour edge and The Terrace/Boulcott Street ridge.
- Composed of relatively small, intensively developed city blocks which are truncated or irregular in shape.
- A street pattern resulting from the interplay of multiple city grids and continuous, curving lines of present and former topographical features (eg the former beach line extending along Lambton Quay and Willis Street).
- The tall building district of the city in which building form becomes a silhouette against the background of the Town Belt and the Kelburn and Tinakori hills.
- Well defined and enclosed streets and public spaces of often irregular shape.



## The Low City

- Composed of three broad expanses of moderately flat land:
  - the Te Aro Basin to the south of the High City
  - the broad shelf of land between Bowen and Hobson Streets to the north of the High City
  - the flat area of reclaimed port and railway land north east of the High City.
- The port and railway land is in two land parcels and sits largely outside the block and street pattern of the rest of the Central Area.
- The Te Aro Basin is characterised by large rectangular blocks penetrated by minor side streets, lanes, cul-de-sacs and informal through-site pedestrian links.
- The Bowen-to-Hobson Street shelf exhibits a similar block and development pattern to the Te Aro Basin. It has, however, a more irregular layout due to the idiosyncrasies of local topography and the dispersed location of tall buildings which mark the gradual growth of a Government office district. Two blocks to the west side of Molesworth Street have acquired some of the intensity of the High City.
- Generally lower buildings than the High City, but with a greater relative variation in heights.
- Less intensely developed blocks with more private open space, often acting as an extension to street areas. Full site coverage for buildings is less common than in the High City.
- For the most part, buildings are aligned with the street edge and adjoin their neighbours along side boundaries.
- A wide variety of building types, including commercial and industrial structures and areas of old residential buildings.



Te Aro Basin



Lower buildings; greater height variations

- A wide variety of street types, including arterial roads, side-streets, lanes, etc.
- A great variety of activities reflecting the variety of building types (compared with the High City).
- The tops of buildings feature prominently in views from hillside suburbs. This is particularly so for the Te Aro Basin.



*A variety of streets*

## 3.0 General Design Guidelines

### Analysis

The following general guidelines are based upon three fundamental urban design principles:

**Legibility:** The appearance of a building should allow an observer to understand the nature and location of activities undertaken within it, and also the general architectural intention or concept underlying the overall design of the building.

**Context:** While any public building may have its own distinct identity, it is also part of a collective environment. The design of individual buildings should acknowledge and recognise their physical context, either by complement or contrast.

#### Design

**Coherence:** The visual qualities of a building should be considered in whole as well as in part. In respect of the Design Guide, a new building should not simply be a piecemeal assemblage of elements stipulated in the various guidelines, but have its own inherent design integrity and coherence.

### Guidelines

In practical terms, this means that the external design of new Central Area development should take account of the following :

#### ***G1 Communication Between Buildings and Public Space***

Buildings should communicate with their surrounding public environment. Every opportunity should be taken to provide an external expression of the unique spaces and activities contained within a building.

#### ***G2 Relationship to the Surrounding Environment***

The overall context of a building should be taken into account in its design. New developments should not occur in isolation. Their design should recognise the place that they occupy within the street and within the Central Area as a whole.



*Buildings that communicate their uses*



*Design integrity and coherence*



*Taking context into account*

**G3 Overall Building Composition**

The design of any building should derive from a coherent overall compositional idea. The development of this idea should reflect all the relevant design criteria set out in this Design Guide.



*Overall compositional idea*

## 4.0 Guidelines for Design Contexts

### Analysis

As a building becomes higher, it has a changing visual impact from various perspectives or contexts: the street, the neighbourhood and the skyline. The guidelines in this section acknowledge the way in which a building can influence the quality of the public environment from these multiple viewpoints.

### Definitions

First, some definitions of the various design contexts and the design issues relevant to each.

#### The Street Context

There is a special visual relationship between the space of a street and the buildings that edge it, shaped by the visual range of the pedestrian and the various ways observers in public spaces engage with their surroundings. There is also a special collective relationship between buildings at street level, where they are seen in close physical association with each other.

These design issues apply between ground and an approximate height threshold of 8 storeys above the street. (See “Notes” below for further explanation).

#### The Neighbourhood Context

Beyond the range of the street, there is a visual relationship where observers see a building from the interiors of other buildings or from neighbouring public spaces. In this context, buildings are still seen as collective entities in association with neighbouring buildings. From these distances some of the density, detailing and tactile qualities of a building appropriate to the street can be simplified, while still providing general visual interest and signalling the building’s size, relative use and architectural intention.

These design issues apply in an approximate range between the height thresholds of 8 and 15 storeys.

#### The Skyline Context

Above certain heights, tall Central Area buildings take on a collectively and individually prominent presence within the overall built form of the central city. This extends over a much wider physical range than just the Central Area or the districts immediately adjacent to it. The upper parts of Central Area buildings are seen from any parts of the Central Area, and from the surrounding hillside suburbs.

These design issues apply above an approximate height threshold of 15 storeys.



*Street*



*Neighbourhood*

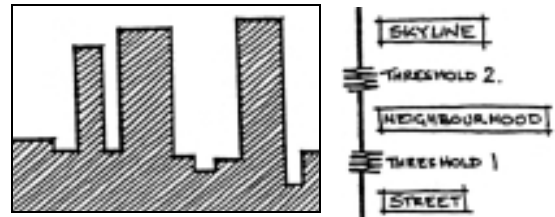


*Skyline*

Notes:

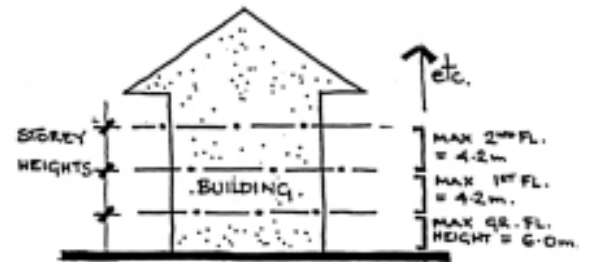
1. Height Thresholds

A height threshold is a notional building height above ground level. It establishes the approximate position where the design issues of significance in one design context begin to change to those of another. Threshold heights are intended to signal a transition in design issues and have no particular significance in their own right.



2. Storey Heights

The two height thresholds for Central Area buildings are defined in terms of storey heights (8 and 15 storeys respectively) and each individual storey height is defined in terms of a maximum height of 4.2 metres (with a possible maximum ground floor height of 6 metres, acknowledging a prevalent Central Area pattern).



## Design Issues

Four key design issues are relevant within these contexts. These are important because they influence the quality of the public environment.

They are:

**Relationship to context** - the reference a development makes to the form and detail of its built surroundings. This is based on three premises:

- that any building is part of a larger setting
- that one setting is different from another
- that the design of a building should acknowledge both of these.



Ensuring a building relates to its context does not mean designers are required to use any particular style. In the Central Area, architectural styles are quite mixed.

**Scale** - the relative size of buildings and their constituent parts. "Scale" refers to a dimensional comparison. It only has meaning when both the subject and the object of comparison are explicit. There are four common means of comparison referred to in the Design Guide:

1. A building's dimensions are compared with human stature. If a building contains features which are comparable in size with the human figure, the former may be said to have "human scale".



Human scale

2. A building's apparent size is compared with its actual size. In this sense of the word, a building "has scale" when its true size is obvious to an observer. Alternatively, buildings are referred to as "scaleless" where it is difficult to assign a correct dimension to them.

The terms "large scale" and "small scale" are related to this meaning. Large scale buildings consist of over-sized elements and features which are larger than expected. Small scale buildings consist of undersized elements and their features are smaller than usual.



*"In scale"*

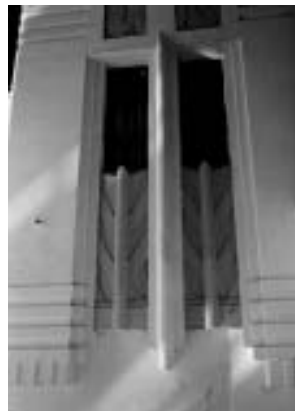
3. The dimensions of one building (or its components) are compared with those of another. In this sense, a building is "in scale" when a dimensional correlation exists between two or more neighbours in one of two distinct ways. First, the overall dimensions of the buildings are similar. Second, the buildings are different in stature but share similar architectural modules (commonly sized openings, structural bays, uniform floor levels etc). A third case may exist when a larger building contains visual components which are close in size to the overall dimensions of adjacent smaller buildings.



*Dimensional comparison*

4. Dimensional comparison is made between one part of a building and another, or between a single architectural component and the overall dimensions of the structure. Quite often the comparison is made within classes of similar elements, i.e. one window can seem "out of scale" if it is inexplicably larger or smaller than others within the same facade.

**Visual complexity** - the use of form and surface to provoke and sustain visual interest. This issue turns on the apparent details of a building's external design. "Detail" refers to discrete elements of articulation that form part of the overall composition of a building. They work across a wide visual range, some evident only in close-up while others are seen from much greater distances.



*Detail*

**Form and location** - overall compositional issues related to the building's individual design idea and its contextual setting. This issue refers to the "big picture" of a building's external design, and to the desirability for buildings to display a clear and complete architectural concept.

## Guidelines For Street Context

Street context issues apply to those parts of buildings between ground level and the first height threshold of around 8 storeys.

They apply to street frontages and to any other building frontage that edges some form of public space.

### *Relationship to Context*

- G1** New or refurbished buildings should provide visual links to adjacent frontages. These should strengthen the cohesiveness of the existing street frontage.
- G2** New or refurbished buildings should complement the following established features of a street frontage:
- consistent building proportions
  - common architectural materials, elements and details
  - uniform building dimensions.
- G3** Where there is little, or no, established building pattern, buildings should introduce sound design precedents for future street frontages. Such precedents would address all four basic design issues (refer to “Design Issues” above)
- G4** New development or building refurbishment should not necessarily reproduce the appearance of existing street frontages.

### *Scale*

- G5** Up to the first height threshold it is important that a building’s dimensions:
- establish a clear relationship to human size
  - assist an observer’s understanding of the overall size and dimensions of the building
  - relate to important measurements within adjacent frontages.
- G6** A building’s external appearance should not be composed entirely of very large visual elements (such as the uninterrupted surfaces of curtain walls); nor should it be comprised solely of small elements (such as person-sized windows).

Legible building dimensions and “human” scale depend on a hierarchy of nested modules in which smaller elements are grouped, or otherwise composed, to form larger visual entities. In this way, the smallest elements (typically those which are commensurate with the human figure) “measure” the larger ones. In turn, these bigger units “project” intimate or human scale across the surface of still larger components of the building until the entire envelope has been dimensioned.



*Street context*



*Consistent building proportions*



*Clues to overall size*

For observers, familiar modules such as floor-to-floor heights and window openings are particularly useful indicators of scale as their conventional dimensions are well understood.

**Visual Complexity**

**G7** A contrast should be achieved between foreground and background elements of building frontage through the use of techniques such as the layering of architectural elements; contrasting surface finishes, colours or patterns; or emphasising part of the overall composition of a building's frontage.

**Form and Location**

**G8** Up to the first height threshold the shape of a building should strongly emphasise alignment with adjacent streets.

Buildings should be built to the existing street line and to the side boundaries of a development site up to the first height threshold of around 8 storeys.

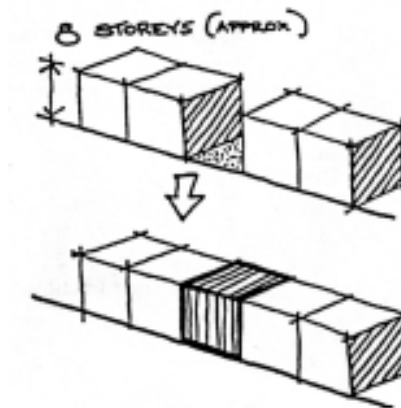
**G9** The first height threshold for new building development may be lowered to match a prevailing height of existing building frontages to a street where this is less than 8 storeys in height. In such cases, the Form and Location Guidelines for Neighbourhood Context would apply above this revised height.



*"Nested Modules"*



*Foreground/background contrast*



*8 storeys (approx)*

## Guidelines for Neighbourhood Context

Neighbourhood context issues apply to those parts of buildings between the first and second height thresholds of approximately 8 and 15 storeys.

### *Relationship to Context*

**G1** New buildings should establish visual links with neighbouring buildings. These connections should occur whenever groups of buildings will be experienced as an ensemble. Visual links between neighbouring buildings are also important within defined sub-districts of the Central Area which possess a distinctive local character (e.g. the Courtenay and Cuba Character Areas).

**G2** Neighbouring buildings should appear “in scale” with one another. This occurs where neighbouring buildings share some key observable dimensions (refer to “Scale” section of “Design Issues” above).

**G3** The shape and position of new buildings should conform to any existing compositional pattern established by neighbouring buildings.

**G4** Where there is little or no established building pattern, new buildings should introduce sound design precedents for future ensembles of neighbouring buildings. Such precedents would address all four basic design issues (refer to “Design Issues” above).

### *Scale*

**G5** Between the first and second height thresholds it is important that a building’s design:

- continues to assist an observer’s understanding of the overall size and dimensions of the building
- relates to important compositional measurements of neighbouring buildings.

**G6** Continue to observe the previous “street context” guideline for compositional scale (refer to Guideline 6 of the “Guidelines for Street Context” above).



*Neighbourhood Scale*



*Neighbouring buildings “in scale”*



*Reading size and dimension*

### *Visual Complexity*

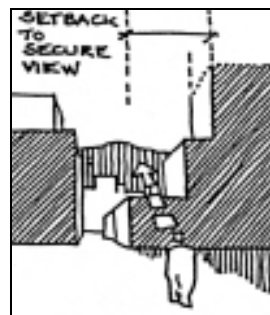
- G7** Elements of visual composition should be larger than those related to “Street Context”, as they will be seen from greater distances.
- G8** The articulation and compositional pattern of the building’s surfaces should promote visual interest within an overall compositional strategy.



*Articulation and composition*

### *Form and Location*

- G9** Beyond the first height threshold, a building’s form need not be built out to its street or side boundaries, but should still be aligned with adjacent streets.
- G10** Side boundary setbacks should be employed to provide:
- light and outlook from neighbouring buildings
  - glimpsed views from adjacent streets and major public places to the hills surrounding the Central Area and/or to the waters of the inner and outer harbour
  - sunlight to major city streets with an east-west orientation. This applies only to buildings immediately to the north of these streets.



*setback to secure view*



*sunlight access*

## **Guidelines for Skyline Context**

Skyline context issues apply from an approximate height of 15 storeys and above.

### *Relationship to Context*

- G1** The upper-most features of tall buildings raise particular design issues. Above the 15th floor, clear visual links with adjacent buildings become relatively insignificant. The primary role of a building’s top is to express its own distinct identity.

### *Scale*

- G2** Skyline features should be larger and more boldly expressed to carry visually over greater distances.

At the same time, these features should have a clear dimensional relationship to the parts of the building that are found at lower levels. This reflects the Design Guide’s intention that Central Area buildings



should display cohesive visual composition.

### **Visual Complexity**

**G3** Above the second height threshold, the articulation of form and surface should yield large, simple features that can be recognised from distant viewpoints.

### **Form and Location**

**G4** Above the second height threshold, a building's form need not be aligned with adjacent streets. There does, however, need to be a compositional relationship between the upper-most levels and the lower portions of a building.

## **Guidelines For Building Tops**

Wellington's rugged topography dictates that the tops of Central Area buildings play a significant part in the city's urban form.

Building tops feature prominently in both near and distant views of the Central Area.

The tops of office buildings along The Terrace and Lambton Quay make up the immediate foreground of city views from the residential suburb along the Kelburn ridge. From Mt. Victoria and Brooklyn, the roofscape of the Low City forms an important foreground and middle ground element of the view.

The design of the tops of taller Central Area buildings needs particular consideration to ensure they contribute to a strong and distinctive city form. This involves more than just a roof treatment at or above the top floor of these buildings.

For these reasons, the upper-most levels of new developments are subject to specific design guidance. While the composition and appearance of building tops may vary, four important design issues should always be addressed:

**G1** The top of a building should always be an explicit part of its overall architectural form and composition.

**G2** The top of a building should contribute to an intricate and interesting city skyline.

**G3** Emphasis should be placed on the design and appearance of building tops where they are viewed from ground level or from neighbouring buildings.



*Articulating skyline form*



*Foreground views*



*An intricate and interesting skyline*

**G4**

For taller buildings above the second height threshold of 15 storeys, the design of building tops should be considered as part of the architectural form of at least their top two storeys. How this occurs, or whether this consideration extends further down the building, is a matter of architectural judgement and will depend on the proportions and overall height of the building.



*Tops viewed from the ground*



*Tops as part of a buildings architectural form*

## 5.0 Guidelines for Building Bulk

### Analysis

Buildings of great size, or “bulk”, can easily overwhelm their immediate surroundings. Bulk is an important indication of relative size. It is a function of both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of a building and refers to the size of a building relative to its surroundings. A building may be bulky whether or not it is of great height.

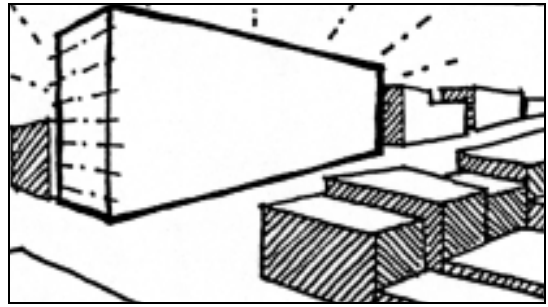
The visual impact of bulk is influenced by building shape and siting, as well as size. For example:

- although the narrow end of a building with an elongated floor plan may be gracefully proportioned, its broader side can appear so long and monolithic that it does not relate visually to neighbouring buildings
- large buildings are more intrusive when they are sited in isolation and where they contradict the characteristic block and street layout of the surrounding area.

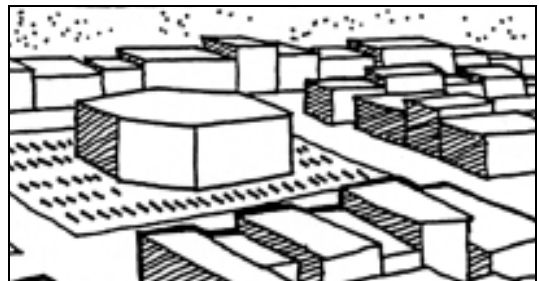
In the Central Area, issues of bulk generally occur with large/high, large/low and large/long buildings, especially where the combination of a building’s height, length and/or width is significantly greater than the scale of its built surroundings.

Wherever these buildings are located in the Central Area, the design strategies for dealing with their visual impact are very similar. Articulation of the building envelope and the careful design treatment of a building’s external surfaces can modify the visual impact of large buildings.

Beyond a certain size and height, the bulk effects of large buildings are difficult to modify without introducing dimensional constraint. In Wellington’s Central Area this threshold occurs at approximately 25 floors off ground.



*Elongated floor-plan buildings*



*Large buildings in isolation*

## Guidelines

The massing and design of large new buildings should ensure they do not overwhelm the built scale of their surroundings. The articulation of a building's form and surface treatment, and attention to its overall dimensions, are areas of particular concern. The following visual modifications and dimensional constraints will help to achieve this objective.

### Modifying Bulk

Where the length, width and/or height of a new development conflicts with the physical scale and texture of its surroundings, the design techniques outlined below may be employed to modify the visual impact of bulk.

#### G1 Contrast

Contrast between projecting and recessive elements on the elevations of a building may be achieved by:

- using contrasting surface finishes, colours or patterns
- the inclusion of discrete architectural elements
- the emphasis of a part of the overall composition of a building's form or surfaces.

Examples of these might involve the use of patterned concrete surfaces set against sheet metal finishes; the use of bay or recessed windows; porches or balconies; the use of projecting surfaces or ledges; or any other surface-modifying device which affects the overall composition of a building.

These elements should create strong shadow lines and be designed to interrupt the overall size and shape of the building envelope. An observer's eye should be drawn to the separate parts of a building, not just to the building as a whole.

#### G2 Sub-division of Frontages

A building should reflect the prevailing visual sub-division of neighbouring building frontages, where those frontages display a characteristic pattern of vertical and/or horizontal sub-divisions. In such locations these patterns should influence the positioning of architectural elements.



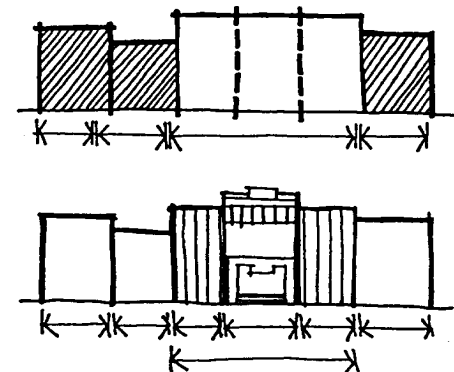
*Articulation of form and surface*



*Contrasting projections and recesses*



*Contrasting patterns and finishes*



*Frontage sub-division*

**G3 Building Form**

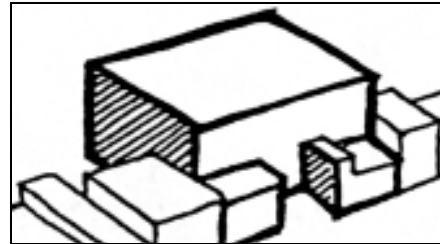
The overall form of a building may be articulated as a collection of sub-volumes.

Where a large building adjoins those of a smaller scale, two compositional techniques may be used to modify its bulk:

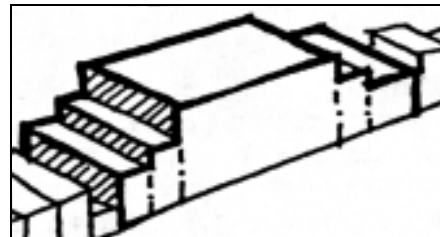
- introduce a secondary foreground volume to help obscure the primary building volume when viewed from neighbouring public spaces
- introduce transitional volumes between smaller existing buildings and the larger, primary volume of the new development.



*A collection of sub-volumes*



*Adding secondary foreground volumes*

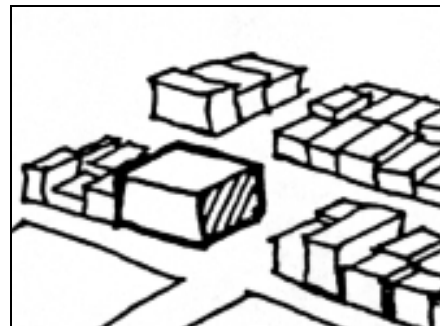


*Adding transitional volumes*

**G4 Adding to Existing Built Form**

Where a large new building is sited on part, or all, of a Central City block, and where siting choices exist, the building should be positioned:

- to adjoin existing buildings on the block
- to establish dimensional continuity with neighbouring buildings
- to align itself with the block pattern of its surrounding area, where there are no other buildings on the block.



*Adding on to existing buildings*



*Aligning with the neighbourhood block pattern*

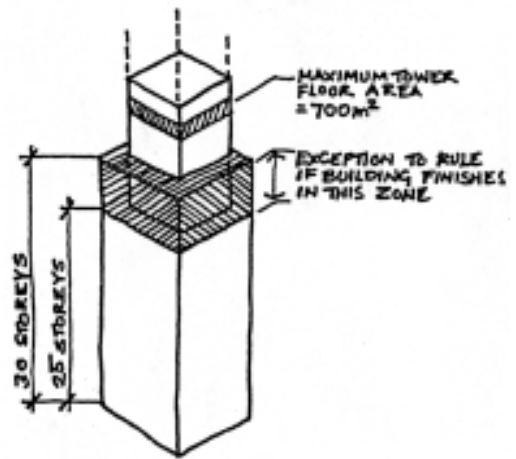
### *Elongated Plan Buildings*

- G5** Avoid elongated plan shapes for unusually large buildings.
- G6** Where site dimensions determine an elongated plan, employ the strategies for visual modification noted above.

### *Dimensional Constraint*

Where a large, tall building exceeds 25 floors above ground level, observe the following constraints on bulk:

- G7** Above 25 floors off ground level, the net area of each floor of a building must not exceed 700 square metres.
- G8** Exceptions to “G7” will be considered when a building terminates at, or below, the 30th floor. In such cases, the top of a building should satisfy the design criteria for “Guidelines for Building Tops” above.



*Dimensional constraint*

## 6.0 Guidelines for Reflective Surfaces

### Analysis

Glare off highly reflective building surfaces is an aspect of recent Central Area development. Where this impacts on the comfort of people using neighbouring public areas, it is an issue of public concern and therefore subject to design guidance.

### Guideline

To avoid adverse effects from reflective surfaces:

- GI** Limit, or avoid, the use of highly reflective cladding materials to new building development where this could create glare conditions in neighbouring streets and public spaces.



## 7.0 Guidelines for Buildings on Prominent Sites

### Analysis

Some Central Area sites are more conspicuous than others. Prominent sites occur:

- at the termination of viewshafts down street corridors (e.g. the cross streets between Featherston Street and Lambton Quay)
- at the bends of streets (e.g. Lambton Quay, The Terrace, Victoria Street and Jervois Quay)
- around important public spaces (e.g. Midland Park, Bunny Street and the Civic Square)
- at street corners
- along significant edges (e.g. Jervois Quay, Bunny Street, Victoria Street south, Cambridge Terrace, and Boulcott Street east side).

### Guidelines

#### *G1 Buildings at the Termination of Street Viewshafts*

Significant elements of the building's form and surfaces should be aligned with the axis of the street. These elements should have a comparatively larger scale to be clearly visible down the length of the street. This should occur in such a way that these larger-scaled features still form an integral part of the building's overall composition and do not compromise the continuity of the building's street wall.

#### *G2 Buildings on Bends and Street Corners*

At bends and street corners, buildings should:

- employ shape and surface treatment to emphasise the curved or angular shape of the street bend or intersection
- occupy as much of the site frontage(s) as possible
- continue to play their part in the general continuity of massing and street frontage alignments of their neighbouring street buildings.



*The Majestic from Bond Street*



*The Prudential Building and GBL House from Featherston Street*



*Bowen House corner*

**G3** *Buildings Fronting Important Public Spaces*

Where a building fronts an important public space, it should:

- present a positive front to the space
- avoid appropriating the space as a forecourt to the building
- define a clear edge to the space
- avoid large setbacks to the perimeter of the space
- provide, where possible, ground floor activities that support the public use of the space
- introduce a layered transition between the private interiors of the building and the public space it edges.



*The Civic Square*

**G4** *Buildings Along Significant Edges*

- Maintain the scale and continuity of the street wall to these edges.



*The motorway edge*

## 8.0 Guidelines for Fronts and Backs

### Analysis

High buildings are usually visible from all their sides. The topography of Wellington's Central Area ensures that even moderately tall buildings will be viewed from many directions.

There has been a tendency for one face of some tall Central Area buildings to become a relatively blank back wall. This is reinforced where plan layouts situate a building's service rooms, ducting and vertical circulation against these walls, resulting in a vertical surface with very few openings (e.g. the Shell Building and 96-102 The Terrace).

### Guidelines

**G1** One face of a tall building may take on primary importance as an expression of the building's entrance and street address. The other elevations also deserve careful treatment. They should be designed as secondary frontages facing different parts of the city.

**G2** Featureless walls to physically prominent buildings, especially their upper elevations, should be avoided. Large blank surfaces should not be visible from:

- public space within, or outside, the Central Area
- the residential neighbourhoods that overlook the Central City
- the Wellington Urban Motorway bordering the Central Area.



*Avoid blank walls*



*Secondary frontages*

