

Urban Design Panel Implementing Guidelines

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Table of contents

1	Description and role.....	3
2	Composition.....	3
3	Benefits.....	3
	To Council	3
	To the community.....	4
	To consent applicants	4
4	Panel meetings.....	4
5	Project triggers	5
6	Design considerations	6
	1 Effects on	6
	2 Context.....	6
	3 Design elements	6
	4 Public perception	7
7	Documentary requirements	7
8	Notes	7
	1 Guide to documents.....	7
	2 Stage of project.....	7

1 Description and role

- 1 The Urban Design Panel is a group of Council staff who can promote and facilitate best practice in urban design and can contribute to developing Whangarei through good urban design.
- 2 Contrary to other panels in New Zealand, the panel is not an external and independent entity and is intended to operate only until the urban design guides become fully operational (*tentatively in August 2012*). The design guides are assumed to provide a sufficient basis for designing and assessing urban development projects in Whangarei in the future.
- 3 The panel provides free impartial advice to developers, individuals, and Council on the design of project proposals and strategic initiatives that may affect public environments in Whangarei.
- 4 It does not have a statutory authority to accept or reject a proposal but can recommend ways as to how the design elements can be improved to fit the project into and function in the context of Whangarei. A written report of the recommendations may be requested from the panel.
- 5 The panel will not delay projects or burden developers in obtaining building and resource consents. The intention is to provide advice for them to be able to create positive design outcomes and enjoy the associated long-term economic benefits of good urban design, apart from helping them to achieve certainty in the eventual resource consent process.
- 6 The service in essence empowers residents, developers, and professionals to make a positive contribution to improving the quality of Whangarei's urban environment, while accommodating change and taking advantage of the economic opportunities that come along the way.

2 Composition

- 1 Five Council staff will form the core panel but substitute members may be designated and approved by the environment group manager should any of the core members go on leave for more than one week.
- 2 A quorum of four panel members will be required for all meetings.
- 3 Due to staff constraints, any two or more of similar expertise may attend a panel meeting. However, at least one in the panel should be able to assess the projects booked for the panel date.
- 4 Ideally, the pool of core and substitute panel members should have at least one staff with sufficient background in each of the following:
 - a Urban Design
 - b Architecture and Fine Arts
 - c Landscape Architecture
 - d Planning
 - e Property Development
 - f Community Service
 - g Infrastructure Development
- 5 All staff in the pool of panel members will be required to sign an Urban Design Panel Code of Conduct that will outline the responsibilities of panel members in terms of attendance, professional conduct, confidentiality, and conflict of interest.
- 6 The meetings will be facilitated by Council's urban design champion or other designated Council staff who will also prepare the panel agenda. The design champion will prepare and sign off the panel report upon recommendation of the other members in the sitting panel, and prepare the monthly monitoring reports to the environment group manager.

3 Benefits

To Council

- 1 Urban design has been in the national agenda since the launch of the MFE's Urban Design Protocol in 2005. Council became its latest signatory in November 2008 and an Action Plan has been submitted to MFE in February 2010. Among other initiatives, the panel will help kick-start the implementation of this Action Plan.

- 2 Internationally and locally, urban design guides and independent urban design panels have been two common tools simultaneously used by councils to promote good urban design. While ideal, it is however costly for smaller councils like Whangarei. Thus, in the spirit of efficiency, the exchange of information and expertise created by panel meetings will be used as a consultation exercise needed in the preparation of the design guides. An independent Urban Design Panel may however be eventually created in the future should urban development intensify and thereby demand for this service increases.
- 3 Since the preparation of the design guides progresses in tandem with the operation of the Panel, as draft design guides become available, they can be tested and used in reviewing project proposals submitted to the panel. The draft design guides will then temporarily become the basis for the panel review on the following tentative dates:
 - a Urban Design Strategy – adopted on March 9, 2010
 - b Urban Design Framework – June 2011
 - c Urban Design Guidelines (*Intensification*) - June 2011
 - d Urban Design Guidelines (CBD) – September 2011
 - e Urban Design Guidelines (*Suburban Growth Centres*) – December 2011
 - f Final and operational design guides – August 2012 (*time when Panel ceases operation*)
- 4 Promote quicker and easier consent process through early identification of urban design issues.
- 5 Gain enhanced Council image, public support and satisfaction.
- 6 Maximise the use of Council staff's other special skills and talents.

To the community

- 1 Good urban design results to higher quality of life, economic growth, and infrastructure efficiency. The panel will ensure implementation of high quality design.
- 2 Contribute to the achievement of the LTCCP community outcomes since the panel's function of promoting wider quality design initiatives addresses all four well-beings.

To consent applicants

- 1 Achieve greater certainty at the consent application stage through early identification of design issues. The panel review allows proponents to incorporate recommendations into their final design.
- 2 The recommendations of the Panel can be considered in assessing consent applications and should carry similar weight as other technical reports (*e.g. engineering*).
- 3 Gain community and Council support for proposed projects by demonstrating commitment to quality urban design outcomes.
- 4 Advice is given at no cost to applicants.
- 5 Quality design adds value to proposed developments.

4 Panel meetings

- 1 The availability of Council's Urban Design Panel will be made public. Any enquiries including booking a panel date will be made through the Urban Design Champion or other designated Council staff.
- 2 Developers, individuals, or Council voluntarily request the service of the panel prior to consent application, especially when they are of the view that their proposals have potential significant effects on the quality of the urban environment. (*The succeeding section lists these project triggers*).
- 3 For resource consent applicants who did not use the panel prior to lodging an application, the processing resource consent planner may offer the applicant free advice of the panel and to make some changes if they so desire prior to the planner accepting the application.
- 4 For projects already part way through the consent process when the panel becomes operational, the processing resource consent planner may book a panel date for advice in terms of assessing related environmental effects of the project.

- 5 To avail of the service, applicants will need to book a date with the Urban Design Champion or other designated Council staff on a first come first served basis and submit the requisite documents (*outlined in another section below*) by 12 noon one week to panel date. Incomplete applications will not be placed in the agenda and will be advised.
- 6 Depending on the availability of projects to be reviewed, the panel will meet with applicants and their consultants on a two-hour weekly basis to consider maximum of two projects only. The timing and venue of these meetings will be agreed with the panel members and will be made available on Council's website.
- 7 Following confirmation of panel date with the applicants and the panel members, the agenda along with the requisite documents will be sent out to panel members, no later than five working days before the panel meeting.
- 8 A quorum of four panel members will be required for all meetings. The Urban Design Champion will determine and advise the panel composition for all meetings. If due to unforeseen circumstances, only 3 or fewer panel members can attend, the applicant will be given the discretion to decide whether to proceed or reschedule the meeting to the next available date.
- 9 Meetings are not open to the public. All information presented to the Panel is deemed confidential unless the project is post-resource consent, a public project, or when the applicant has given permission for the report to be circulated. For post-resource consent applicants, the panel's report shall be kept confidential until the decision relating to notification has been made. Public projects will not be treated confidential unless a specific request for confidentiality has been made.
- 10 Each project will be allotted maximum of 1 hour. For very large and complex projects, the meeting format may be extended into a workshop and all participants will be advised. Generally, 15 minutes will be allotted for the applicant to present the project and its effect on the public environment. Then 40 minutes will be used for deliberation, recommendation, and confirmation.
- 11 Following the advice of the panel, the applicant may book for a further meeting. However, in the interest of efficiency, the aim is to get the most out of only one panel meeting.
- 12 While formal minutes of the meeting will not be kept, applicants may request that recommendations and their justification be incorporated in a written report. The Urban Design Champion will prepare and upon approval of the sitting panel members, will sign off the report. A standard report template and letter accompanying the report will be used. Reports will be sent within five working days of panel date. Any delay in the issuance of the report will be notified.
- 13 Panel members can view the report in TRIM on the day that this is sent to requesting applicants.
- 14 The effectiveness of the Panel will be measured by the Urban Design Champion through:
 - a Standard short survey form distributed to applicants and submitted at end of panel meeting;
 - b Ongoing survey to determine whether the recommendations are incorporated in the final design and implementation of the project; and
 - c Monthly report to the Environment Group Manager on the number and type of applications considered by the Panel as well as the feedback on its effectiveness in influencing good urban design.

5 Project triggers

Projects encouraged to go to the Panel are those that have potential significant effects on the public environment due to:

1 Scale

- a Multi-unit residential or commercial developments of 4 units or more
- b Planned unit developments of more than 20 units
- c Subdivision projects with more than 50 lots
- d Buildings with gross floor area (GFA) of at least 1500m²

2 Public nature

- a Council projects with a value of at least \$5 million and intended for public use or where public will have regular access

- b Streetscape/upgrades/beautification/public art projects
- c Community facilities
- d Major transportation and civic works projects

3 Activity

- a Hospitals
- b Retirement villages
- c Rest homes of 4 units or more
- d Civic buildings
- e Design competitions
- f Mixed-use developments

4 Location

- a Presence of covenant
- b Close to points of interest, nodes, routes, ecological features which are key to district identity
- c Project is on a land or property which has distinct history or amenity
- d All projects within the CBD, suburban nodes, and local centres
- e All projects adjoining a protected building, place, or object
- f All projects adjacent to any conservation or public open space

Note The Urban Design Champion, with the agreement of the panel, may reject an application for panel meeting if the proposal is considered to have only a minor urban design impact.

6 Design considerations

Prior to the availability of draft design guidelines, the following issues and design elements will be considered in the panel review:

1 Effects on

- a Pedestrian and vehicular movements
- b Visual amenity, near or far
- c Character of area
- d Listed heritage buildings and sites

2 Context

- a Relationship of project to public space, open space, street and surrounding buildings
- b Location of proposed ground floor activities in relation to the street and public spaces
- c How proposal fits into the existing environment (*e.g. use of detailing and materials to address consistency and variety with project type and context*)
- d How proposal improves the existing environment (*e.g. ability to improve and/or extend public and vehicular access*)
- e Recognition and relationship with existing heritage buildings and cultural identity of area

3 Design elements

- a Building bulk
- b Creativity in design
- c Curb appeal (*scale/composition, detailing, materials/texture, articulation of facade*)
- d Treatment of rooftops
- e Ground floor activities
- f Design of pedestrian, vehicle, and service entrances (*i.e., traffic ingress & egress*)
- g Visual representation if project is on a site of significance to tangata whenua
- h Integration of art works into the development

- i Sustainable design within building and in relation to entire development (*e.g. use of LIUDD principles*)

4 Public perception

- a Safety for users and passers by (*use of CPTED principles*)
- b The way people will use public building/space
- c Public amenity and quality of outdoor spaces associated with the development (*e.g. outlook, sunlight access, visual and acoustic privacy, ventilation, size and design*).

7 Documentary requirements

The following documents will be required to avail of the panel review and should be submitted to the Urban Design Champion or designated Council staff by 12 noon one week to panel date:

- 1 A completed application form.
- 2 A brief urban design statement that articulates how the project positively contributes to the urban environment and how it addressed urban design related objectives and policies of the District Plan.
- 3 Coloured aerial photo of site to show neighbourhood context, the viewpoints for Item 8 below, highlighting relevant sites such as parks, community facilities, and transport linkages such as walkways, cycle routes, public transport and major roadways, bus stops (*e.g. from Google Earth*).
- 4 Coloured zoning map showing site (*from District Plan*).
- 5 Site plan/analysis showing contour lines, roof plan, landscaping, and pedestrian/vehicular circulation.
- 6 Floor plans.
- 7 Coloured elevations from street/open space level showing proposed signage, main exterior wall materials, colours, textures, in scale with photos of adjacent properties.
- 8 Sections showing relationship with adjacent properties.
- 9 Coloured street elevation photos of project site showing adjoining properties at both sides of street and within 75 m radius of site.
- 10 At least one coloured eye-level perspectives of the project showing neighbourhood context such as buildings, forms, and setting (*exclude landscaping that obscures any part of the proposed project*).

8 Notes

1 Guide to documents

- a Five complete sets
- b Drawings can be CAD or hand sketched but scaled (*metric ratio or graphical*)
- c Maximum of 10 A3 and/or A4 sheets (*including application form*), single sided
- d North arrow on all plans
- e All information should be readable, i.e. use appropriate working scale and text sizes

2 Stage of project

Depending on the stage of project conceptualisation, some of the above requirements may be omitted at the discretion of the Panel Administrator and, when needed, approval of the Panel Chair.