

DESIGN GUIDELINES

A typical Karangahape Road frontages is a rich and complex synthesis of building elements. Although the total effect is greater than the sum of its individual parts, the isolation of those various elements is the only practical way to analyse its character and prepare guidelines.

The following guidelines are not to be read as an attempt to re-create buildings indistinguishable from the original Victorian and Edwardian ones. Rather by analysing the many different facets of those buildings we can develop a springboard that will help architects to capture **SOMETHING** of their spirit and character, in sympathetic refurbishment work, or in new buildings true to their own age, but rich in empathy for the character of the street.



FRONTAGE MODULATION

In accordance with the design philosophy of their time, frontages were modulated vertically and horizontally, resulting in subtle three-dimensional rhythms.

The mechanical repetition of elements across a frontage was avoided by the architects of the time. Windows were nearly always grouped in twos and threes, even on frontages devoid of any other vertical elements:



A simple paired grouping of windows



A symmetrical grouping of windows

A central bay of the building was often projected forward slightly, or distinguished by grander windows, pilasters, ornamentation, or parapet elements. On longer frontages bays to each side also received such treatment. Rather than the bland homogeneity or repetition of most modern buildings, a rhythmic hierarchy of bays was built up, each bay in turn being a composition of windows and ornamentation. This subdivision of a building into visually digestible elements related back to the human scale and suggested the variety of spaces behind the frontage.

The many vertical elements combine to give a visual intricacy to a frontage when seen in perspective along the street.



Division into bays, reflected particularly at the parapet



Human scale and a sense of the hierarchy of levels in a building were achieved by dividing a frontage into three or more horizontal bands.

These horizontal bands are:

- Ground floor defined by the verandah line (and sometimes by a cornice).
- Second and subsequent levels defined by spandrel panels, windows and cornices. In three-level buildings in the middle level is usually higher and grander in its detailing than the top level.
- Roof level, visually distinct from the occupied levels, defined by a plasterwork cornice with a substantial parapet above. Over the years many buildings have had parts of their parapets removed for reasons of structural safety, reduction of maintenance costs, or “modernization”.



Levels defined in a variety of ways including window proportions and detailing.



DESIGN GUIDELINES:

Frontage Modulation (1) Horizontal

Subtle symmetrical modulation reinforced by textural material and decorative detail



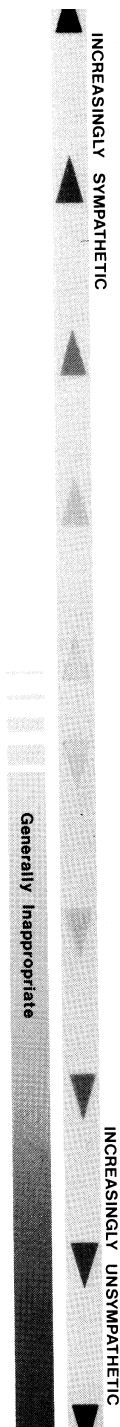
Horizontal modulation of frontage emphasized by projecting bays, windows and parapet level



Grouped openings on flat create some interest and modulate the length of the frontage



Mechanical repetition of openings increases apparent length of frontage and creates a bland out of character image



DESIGN GUIDELINES:

frontage Modulation (2) Vertical

Strong horizontal banding and emphasized parapet feature give a well - balanced frontage



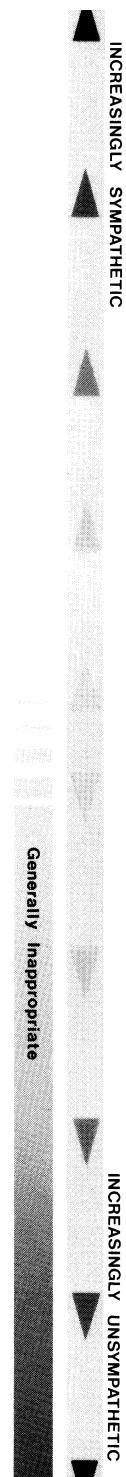
Vertical modulation and definition of levels provided by window elements only; moderate parapet terminates the upper frontage



Spandrel units provide only a slight definition of levels; tiken parapet weakly terminates the frontage



Top-to-bottom glazing overrides any definition of levels and expression of human scale; no upper termination



WALLS

The manner in which a wall is detailed and perforated dictates the way in which an observer perceives its structure

The constraints of brick masonry construction have resulted in Karangahape Road frontages which appear visually monolithic: thick walls perforated with individual door and window openings. Regardless of whether their structure was brick, reinforced concrete or structural steel, buildings were generally finished so as to resemble solid masonry, and thus maintain this permanent, monolithic image.

The continuity of the wall predominates over openings within it: above verandah level, the area of wall generally comprises 3 to 6 times as much of the frontage as the aggregate area of window openings. This ratio is critical to the apparent solidity of the wall.

For the wall to be read as a solid integrated mass rather than a post-and-beam structure it is also important that individual openings for relatively small, that their proportions generally be vertical rather than horizontal, and that their surrounds be detailed as part of a continuous wall structure (e.g. arch forms). Glazing should be inset deeply so as to show or suggest the thickness of the wall.

Similarly, vertical or cut-out parapet features can also demonstrate the solidity of a wall by exposing its thickness at the top.

The wall surface as a whole should be visually continuous without negative detailing which visually fragments the surface: separate structural elements can be tied together with ornamentation or colour, or their joints can be visually suppressed.



A “monolithic” frontage with narrow arched windows.

Note how window openings and the perforated parapet reveal the thickness of the wall



DESIGN GUIDELINES:

Walls (1) Wall Detailing

Grouped windows and projecting bay strongly unify frontage and avoid fragmented image of precast unity construction. Parapet detail clearly reveals wall thickness.



Modelled parapet, absence of overt structural jointing, horizontal banding and slight modulation of window shapes assist to integrate frontage.



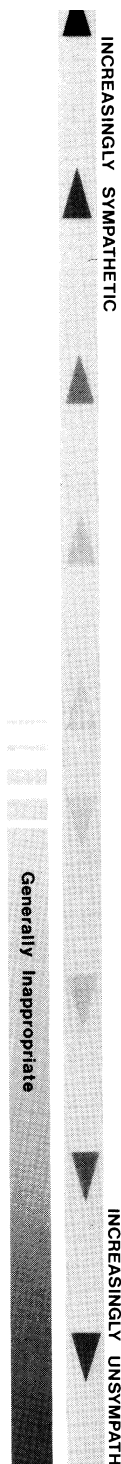
Suppressed but visible structural jointing, and token parapet challenges the unity of the frontage. Moderate window-wall ratio.



High window-wall ratio in precast units with obvious jointing gives a fragmented, non-structural look to frontage.



High window-wall ratio, lower floor setback, and overpowering use of horizontally-proportioned precast frontage units is completely out of character.



DESIGN GUIDELINES:

Walls (2) Window Openings

Window fully expressed as perforation of a visually solid wall with an implied load-bearing quality

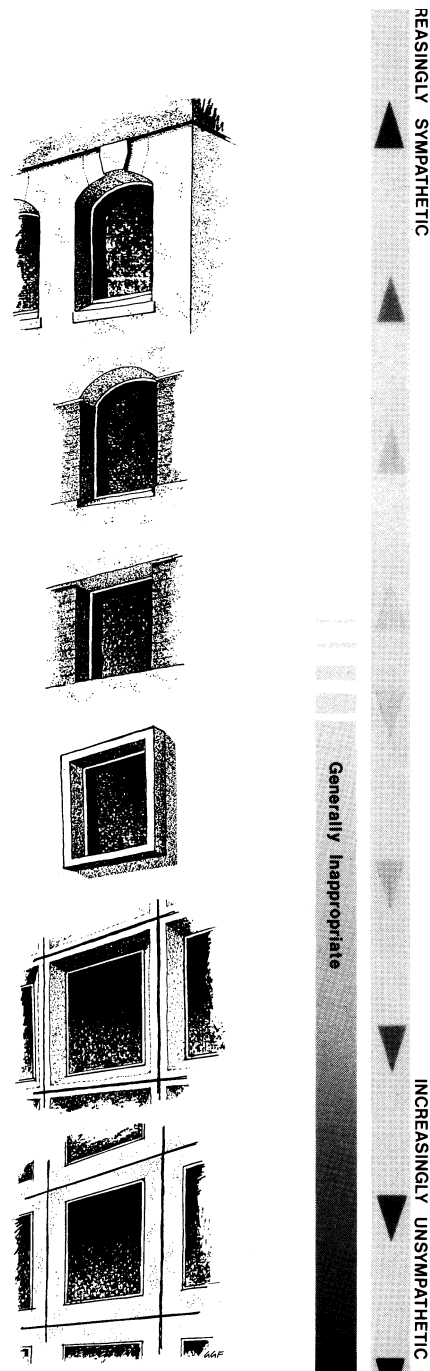
Window openings modulate adjacent elements and thus better express structural interaction between solid and void; wall thickness is clearly expressed.

Window opening has a structural relationship to surrounding materials but fails to interact with them.

Raised frame around window simulates wall thickness but isolates window/wall relationship and gives no cues to thickness of actual wall.

Recessed glazing in precast unit conveys some implication of structural wall thickness, but precast unit jointing produces a fragmented image of the frontage.

Flush-glazed panel implies a thin, non-structural wall surface, and precast unit evokes a fragmented image of the frontage.



WINDOWS

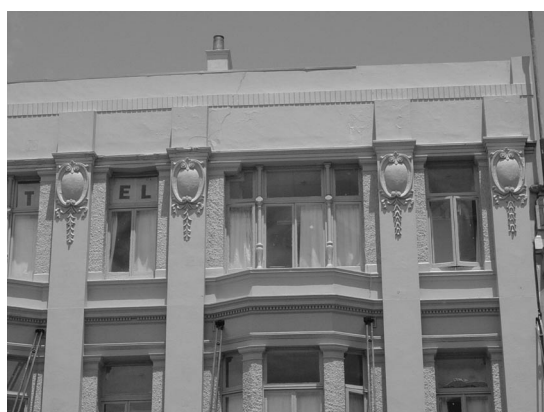
Windows are the “eyes” of the building; their shape and arrangement on the frontage gives pattern, rhythm and a human scale to the streetscape

Windows were often spaced along frontages to present a symmetrical ordered appearance to the street. In Victorian and Edwardian times shops often had living accommodation on the first floor, with the shape and placement of windows conveying this domestic scale. Construction techniques and the small unit sizes of materials used allowed a high degree of variation and individuality to be expressed.



Windows give scale and rhythm to the street: by contrast blank frontages without windows present a dispiriting prospect when viewed from the street

Bay windows projecting from the frontage reflect the importance of the interior space while giving the occupants better lighting and improved street views.



Narrow windows arranged in vertical “strips” alternate with the wider bay window module to provide interest and rhythm to the frontage.



Similar fenestration pattern with original detailing intact



ANNEX 3

In the 1920's and 30's improved building techniques and the use of reinforced concrete post-and-beam construction permitted larger areas of glass to be used. A human scale was maintained by dividing these large windows into smaller units through the use of glazing bars.

Floors above ground level were not used for living accommodation in this period but rather as additional office or retail space, and so the domestic fenestration pattern evident in the Victorian/Edwardian period disappears.



Larger glass areas are used, but the windows are divided by glazing bars to reduce the impact of large glass areas



Windows expressed as a horizontal band

Contemporary buildings in Karangahape Road tend to use windows in broad horizontal bands rather than expressing them as individual openings. The increasing use of tinted glass and slimline joinery emphasizes the wall surface rather than the windows.

