

## 2.0 DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

These design guidelines are specifically directed at building frontages (the street faces, whether on site boundaries or not) in various traditional town centres that have developed along main streets in the Auckland Isthmus.

The streetscape quality of the centres is a summation of all the elements of individual frontages defining the street space. In some areas the message is remarkably coherent and, in spite of some losses of individual buildings, largely intact. This consistency of image persists in spite of a relatively large disparity in the age and style of frontages in a particular centre.

Public affection for this character which results is probably based partly on a feeling of intrinsic cultural, architectural and streetscape value. It is also based on an apprehension that this unique and complex quality, once lost, may never be recreated.

Each of the town centres has a degree of similarity in that they are traditional commercial centres for Auckland and were often developed over similar eras. However, there is a degree of uniqueness to each individual centre that has come about because of a variety of factors, such as geography, transportation routes, surrounding history, development patterns etc.

The aspects that contribute to the character of each centre are made up of the following:

- Underlying landscape context
- Urban structure
- Street dimension and enclosure
- Streetscape
- Built environment

The character overlay and centre plans seek to retain the character of the traditional town centres. Therefore, detailed historical and character analyses for each centre have been prepared as part of developing the design guidelines and changes to the District Plan.

A summary of the elements for each centre and how they interrelate and contribute to the character for that centre has been developed. These character summaries are provided in Appendix 11 of the District Plan, or in the centre plan text. Less detailed versions for those traditional centres within the character overlay have been provided in these guidelines. When attempting to design something 'in character' reference should be made to the relevant character summary for that particular centre. Photos have been used to illustrate positive

examples of character features that the design guidelines are attempting to encourage.

### 2.2 GENERAL CHARACTER OF TRADITIONAL TOWN CENTRES

All of the traditional town centres in Auckland were initially developed during the late 1800's and early 1900's and usually along both sides of a ridge-top main public road transport route to provide a diversity of commercial and community services from a range of individually managed buildings for the local area. Essentially they are linear urban centres formed along a main street with direct pedestrian interaction between the street and each building or tenancy.

These guidelines define the predominant generic character of the traditional town centres. Their basic urban structure is made up of linear development fronting both sides of a main street providing almost continuous active edges to the street. Relatively narrow site frontages have generated a rhythm and diversity of individual buildings and enterprises along the street. Building height generally varies from one to three storeys but with a predominant continuity of two storeys. Building façades are highly modulated, both horizontally and vertically and a family of parapets, verandahs and cornices also contribute significantly to a coherent street character. Street corners and intersections are celebrated by architectural means. For example, by continuing the same architectural elements around the corner, by locating entrances at the corner and by incorporating vertical elements at the corner. Further, traditional building materials, predominantly plastered brick work, have generated rich architectural details including deep reveals to window and door openings and sculptural decoration.

More recently, the traditional character of these centres have, in some cases, been eroded by modern developments which are set back from the road, include carparking between the road and the building fronts and use design elements which do not support or reference the predominant traditional character.

These design guidelines are intended to enhance the traditional character of the town centres by conserving existing traditional buildings, retaining intact groups of character buildings, and designing new building infill and additions that do not necessarily replicate historical styles and construction methods, but reinforce the predominant streetscape character.

The production of architecture "in character" lies in the hands of those to whom this guideline is directed. Like any aesthetic design matter, character preservation in the town centres can never be legislated for or otherwise coerced. It can perhaps be stimulated through an enhanced awareness of a sense of direction towards those facets of character dissected, discussed and promoted in these guidelines.





## 2.3 SPECIFIC CHARACTER OF TRADITIONAL TOWN CENTRES

These generic design guidelines, when applied to specific town centres, should be interpreted in the context of the specific centre.

Appendix 11 of the district plan includes summaries of the historical development patterns of each of the centres, which should be referred to for an explanation of their traditional form. Specific character descriptions of each of the traditional town centres are further set out as follows:



### Upper Symonds Street

This is a relatively large centre formed along Symonds Street but also along the adjoining Newton Road, Khyber Pass Road, New North Road and Mt Eden Road. The centre functions as a major gateway between the central area and the southern suburbs.

Thus, the centre includes several important street intersections and these are celebrated with significant corner buildings. An important aspect of Upper Symonds Street is the distinctive character of the group of historical buildings along the western edge of the street. Traditional buildings are predominantly two to three storeys in height and of

substantial urban appearance, and they positively define the street space.



### West Lynn

The West Lynn Town Centre is formed along Richmond Road. A mix of commercial, residential and church uses exist within the centre and the inclusion of landscaped front yards to some residential sites provide a diversity of frontage treatment. This village character is further defined by a diversity of building types and materials.

An important character element of West Lynn is the interplay between strong built elements and specimen trees. Further, the distinctive bends along the alignment of Richmond Road define the entry points of the centre.



### Ellerslie

The Ellerslie Town Centre is situated on a main road which was severed by construction of the southern motorway resulting in a very short main street with a reduced commercial role.

Ladies Mile has become an important access road to the centre and its intersection with Main Highway is of significance.

Similarly, the western gateway at Robert Street, adjoining the southern motorway, lacks appropriate building definition. This centre is in close proximity to the Ellerslie Railway Station.





### Grey Lynn (Surrey Crescent)

The Grey Lynn Town Centre is a compact centre developed along Great North Road and, to a limited extent, in depth along Williamson Avenue.

Entrances to the centre are defined by bends along Great North Road. The traditional retail patterns are relatively intact within the retail core.



### Kingsland

The Kingsland Town Centre is formed along New North Road and has direct access to the Kingsland Railway Station, which forms a significant intersection and public place. The centre has a dominant urban character relatively intact on both sides of the street, particularly along the middle part of the centre.

The traditional character of this centre has been partly eroded by some modern buildings set back from the street disrupting the traditional structure and form of the town centre and by the provision of on-site parking between the street and building frontages.



### Eden Valley (Dominion Road)

The Eden Valley Centre is one of several centres formed along the Dominion Road corridor. The historical pattern of this centre has been seriously eroded by the removal of traditional buildings and the development of new buildings set back substantially from Dominion Road with carparking located in front, weakening the continuity of the pedestrian-related environment along Dominion Road.

The intersection of Valley Road / Walters Road / Dominion Road is a significant intersection for the centre.



### Balmoral

The Balmoral Town Centre developed in the early part of the 20th century with a major period of built development occurring in the 1920's. At the northern end of the centre, the built form retains the most intact and consistent groups of commercial buildings on Dominion Road and this is where the Balmoral character overlay is focused. These buildings are good examples of the type of mainstreet commercial buildings being built at this time.





### Sandringham

The first buildings in Sandringham were constructed around 1915 followed by rapid development in the 1920's and it is many of these buildings that remain today. Sandringham is a reasonably unified and compact centre. The solid building frontages and continuous verandah cover creates a strong enclosure to the street and a continuous retail frontage. The centre has a unique focal point at the intersection of Sandringham Road, Kitchener Road and Calgary Street, as the intersection is located on a slight bend.

## 2.4 ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The dominant character of the traditional town centres is not dependant on particular architectural styles but rather on the repetition of architectural elements and design principles described by these guidelines.

The traditional town centres contain pockets of consistent architectural style, but areas of mixed styles and ages dominate.

The vitality and character of the traditional town centres are generated by both this unity and diversity of architectural styles, an understanding of which is essential for the refurbishment of existing buildings and the design of new ones which respect and enhance the overall streetscape.

In the case of new developments, these guidelines do not promote particular architectural styles nor traditional styles. What they do promote is the design of new buildings, which will inevitably in-corporate new materials and construction techniques, that respect and reinforce the existing traditional streetscape context and which incorporate the design principles described in these guidelines in innovative ways.



## 2.5 STREET DEFINITION

Generated by public road transport of their time, traditional town centres formed along both sides of a main street, usually incorporating an important intersection. The buildings defined a linear "enclosed" street space with direct pedestrian interaction along the street edges.

The generally two-storeyed buildings formed a continuous "wall" along both sides of the street. Therefore, new buildings should be located on the street boundary and provide continuity of the street "wall" where applicable.

Uncharacteristic gaps or breaks in the street "wall" should be in-filled to complete and enhance the linear street space.



As a consequence of vehicle crossings interfering with the movement of pedestrians and buildings which front the street the design guidelines encourage vehicle accessways to be obtained from service lanes, right of ways or side roads.



## 2.6 SITE FRONTAGES

Sites within the traditional town centres have relatively narrow street frontages. This subdivision pattern has generated a series of different buildings along the main street, giving a repetitive vertical rhythm to the street "wall" and a diversity of architectural character along the street.

Therefore, maintain and enhance this diversity of building frontages based on the original subdivision pattern even if

sites are amalgamated or comprehensive redevelopment occurs.



## 2.7 ACTIVE FRONTAGES

An essential characteristic of traditional main street development is the continuity of active building frontages promoting public interaction between the street and the buildings.

At street level this takes the form of continuous glazed frontages and multiple access doors in the case of retail shops and a multiplicity of windows and doors in the case of other services. Upper floors have a multiplicity of windows overlooking the street.

Most buildings are further subdivided into separate tenancies fronting the street, creating a diversity of shops and services each with direct pedestrian access to and from the street.

Therefore, maintain and enhance the continuity of shop front glazing, the multiplicity of direct access to the street and the ability to overlook the street from upper floors. Large areas of blank walls fronting the street are not in character with traditional town centres.



## 2.8 BUILDING HEIGHTS

The streetscapes of the traditional town centres are characterised by a general continuity of building height, typically two storeys. While a variation of height (one to three storeys) provides some diversity and visual interest, the general continuity of a consistent building height contributes to the coherence and enclosure of the street space.

Therefore, seek to maintain general patterns of building height where this contributes to streetscape character, or step buildings above adjoining buildings consistent with height variation and façade edge detailing elsewhere along the street.

Buildings that are lower than adjoining buildings result in the exposure of the blank sidewalls of adjoining buildings (not designed to be seen) as well as erode the continuity of building enclosure to the street. Buildings with frontages lower than those of adjoining buildings are therefore generally not in character with traditional town centres.



## 2.9 STREET CORNERS AND INTERSECTIONS

Street corners are important strategic places, defining activity nodes at intersections, where a sense of place and a feeling of arrival are experienced.

Formerly, corner locations were highly prized and owners recognised the landmark qualities of a corner, enthusiastically celebrating it with buildings using elaborate parapet features, re-entrant corners, towers, turrets, elaborate corner entrances or other special features.

At intersections the perceived space is greater than the street width. Corner sites possess a potential landmark quality which can be easily identified from many directions, creating a sense of place and legibility of access. Corners are gathering places where people pause to cross the road, or arrange to meet a friend. Corners are vantage points where a captive audience is exposed to many views; and in Kingsland for example corners are especially important because of their ridge-top location. Buildings here are seen from some distance away silhouetted against the sky. The views over the city from these corner locations are significant ones.

At corners, the buildings are seen in three dimensions compared to the usually perceived two dimensional frontages of infill development. Buildings which address the corner allow easy transition around that corner especially where unusual angles are encountered. Therefore, throughout the traditional town centres make major intersections pivotal "places" with all corner sites responding in this manner. Further, accentuate corners by vertical emphasis of corner elements including doors, windows, parapets, verandah and towers.



## 2.10 VERANDAHS

The function of the verandah is to protect public pedestrian space from wind, rain and summer sun. It was originally designed as an integral part of the building and was used to achieve a spatial transition from building frontage to street carriageway.

Auckland has a moderately windy and capriciously wet climate. Over-footpath canopies (from building frontage to kerbside) are a valued city asset acknowledged in the District Plan.

Although the verandah was built primarily as a transitional shelter space, it also forms an enclosed space of human scale at street level; a secure haven for people separated from the traffic in the roadway. In the past verandahs were supported on posts (often decorated) at the kerbside, creating colonnade-like space, separating the carriageway and the footpath.

Curved verandahs (or high verandahs with "shelter skirts" dropping from the outer edge) maintain a sense of containment.





## APPENDIX 11

Modern verandahs hung from the building by tension stays create an open-sided space while letting in the light and exposing the visual continuity and coherence of the frontage.

Therefore, maintain the continuity and diversity of verandahs which provide pedestrian shelter, define the pedestrian edge of the street, and reinforce the identity of individual buildings along the street. Further, use verandah design variation to emphasise main building entrances and facade design.

Glazed verandahs can be used to provide additional light and to establish visual links between the footpath space and the building above.



SECTION CONTINUED

