

15 SHOP FRONTS

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Shop fronts are the dominant visual element under the verandah, competing with each other to provide commodities and services we require. Well designed shopfronts can enhance the street and complement the design of the building in which they are set.

Shopkeepers need to make their whereabouts known and to display their merchandise. All this helps to create the busy, colourful and vibrant atmosphere we associate with traditional shopping streets.

Many existing shop fronts are subject to pressure for regular refurbishment, to maintain a “progressive” retailing image for the occupants, and so many have a relatively short life span. Because of this, and to maintain an overall street character, guidelines are desirable for existing and future occupants, developers, and designers.

A traditional feature of shops is the use of the recessed entrance way. Many town centres consisted predominantly of small specialist shops. The entrance way is a welcoming gesture; it is a space of human scale providing a transition or pause between the bustling dynamic street space and the individual shop space. It encourages window shopping without disruption to the pedestrian flow along the footpath, and allows a greater window display area to the street

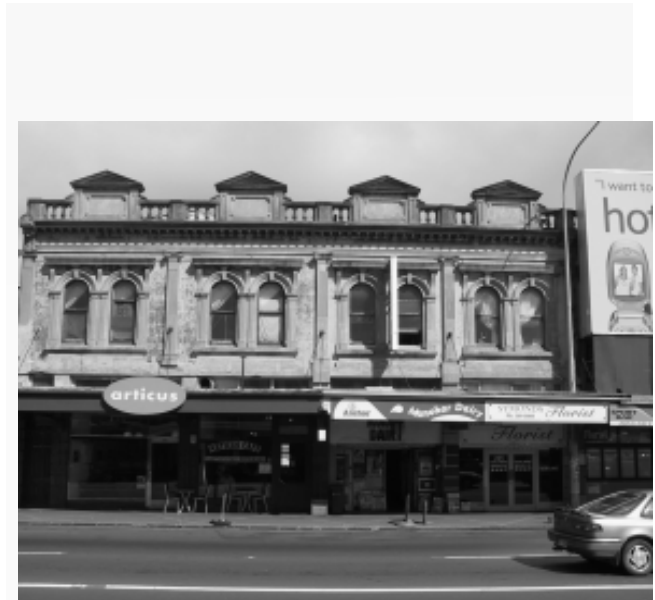


16 MATERIALS

Although there are still a few of the old buildings remaining which have frontages of timber detailed to imitate masonry, solid plasterwork is common to the frontages of many of the character buildings of the traditional town centres.

Solid plasterwork was a highly developed technique to create detailed decorative forms in cement or lime plaster. This was applied over brick or other solid substrates which “roughed out” the same forms to provide a base and key for the plaster. The plaster was easily worked into a variety of architectural styles and was often used to suggest stone construction.

The appropriateness of modern materials in the traditional town centres subject to the character overlay will depend very much on their position and function and the way they are used and detailed. Therefore, building materials suitable for town centre frontages should seek to achieve a similar visual effect.



Solid plasterwork illustrating a variety of structural and ornamental motifs
Exposed brick masonry as a counterpoint to solid plasterwork



17 DECORATION

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In the past, decoration was regarded as an integral part of design; as an expression of the building's individuality, it personalised and humanised architecture.

Decoration provided a further layer of complexity and visual definition. It was frequently applied as relatively small-scale elements which:

- give visual cues as to the function and importance of a building - civic and private buildings were often richly decorated, with the style, amount of decoration and materials involved reinforcing the use and significance of the building;
- provide a human scale to buildings, unlike plain frontages and simple unadorned shapes which provide few visual cues as to scale;
- enliven the frontage and enrich the streetscape by providing changing patterns of shadow, according to season and time of day - shadows from decorative elements such as window openings, cornices and pilasters projecting from the building face create a high degree of modelling;
- provide visual delight, especially on those parts of the building that are seen and appreciated by pedestrians;
- enhance a favourable building location or attract attention - buildings on corner sites are often more elaborately decorated to emphasise their corner position, landmark quality and sense of place.

Therefore, use decoration and art work in innovative ways to continue the tradition of decorative elements.



Throughout the traditional town centres colour has been used to decorate buildings externally, contributing much to the character of the streetscape.

Many frontages are in fairly subdued colours while some display a greater use of strong contrasting colours. A frontage may be unified through the use of subdued colours or be given a sense of individuality by emphasizing architectural features in contrasting colour. The use of colour can further distinguish one building from the next.

Colour used on frontages should be considered as a whole, integrating under-verandah shop fronts with the frontage above. Much of the street-level character derives from brightly coloured signs and shop displays and it is appreciated that individual shopkeepers and businesses use colour and detail to attract custom.

Originally, many plastered frontages within the traditional town centres were unpainted, but a surface of this type does not weather well in Auckland's humid climate, becoming a dull grey over the years.

Frontages were often painted to refresh buildings and improve their appearance, adding considerably to their "street appeal".

Colour was also used for separate tenancies to provide further vertical emphasis along the street.

In the Victorian and Edwardian period building colour was limited by the restricted range of colours then available. These were mainly muted "earth colours" such as rich brown, red brown, purple brown and dark green and a few lighter shades including pale grey, pale green, light stone and light brown. A rich and lively effect was produced by using these colours in varying combinations.

Bright colours using modern paint pigments should be used with restraint as they lack the subtlety evident in the original colours, especially if used in large areas of frontage.

A polychrome colour scheme is in keeping with the spirit of Victorian and Edwardian architecture, and can be used to emphasise the visual hierarchy of a facade. This period produced frontages of great interest and colour variety through the juxtaposition of the basic wall surface with plaster decoration and varying window designs.

A monochrome colour scheme conceals the richness of varying materials and structural image.

Therefore use colour to further emphasise the diversity and complexity of traditional streetscapes.



Advertising signs can have a dramatic effect on the appearance of a building frontage, and character of the street as a whole. This effect can be positive or detrimental to the streetscape and quality of the environment.

Signs on frontages or fascias are not isolated elements; they are part of the building frontage. It is accepted that signs are an essential part of the commercial character and activity of towncentres, but not at the expense of streetscape quality.

The Auckland City Consolidated Bylaw 1998 (Part 27 - Signs) regulates the design and placing of signs. The areas covered by the character overlay are 'special character areas' for the purposes of administering the provisions of the Bylaw.

One of the primary aims of this guideline is to encourage signs to be seen as an integral part of a frontage and to encourage good design practice.

There are many examples in the town centres where signs detract from the visual appearance of building frontages, particularly above verandah level. There are others which are unobtrusive and sympathetic with the architectural pattern of the buildings.

Therefore, all signs should be designed as an integral part of the building frontage, related to and not obscuring, or in conflict with other architectural elements.

20 GLOSSARY

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