

Urban Design Panel Recommendations - MFC Building

Applicant	Willis Bond
Architects	Athfield Architects
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Panel members	Sally Ogle, Megan Walker, Graeme McIndoe

Building Massing / Overall Height

1. We support the breakdown of the massing of the overall form into the two 'wedges' and the 'lantern' component, and note that the wedges have been carefully considered to have polite and respectful relationships with their adjacent buildings - particularly the foyer of the Michael Fowler Centre (MFC), and the John Chambers building. These wedges contribute to the proposed building fitting comfortably with the fine grained urban environment of the Te Aro area and the form and scale of adjacent civic and heritage buildings.
2. The distinct, refined facade treatments and materiality of each mass of the building is successful. The yellow of the western wedge is appropriate in the Cuba Street context and the boldness of colour signals the corner and public space well. This bold colour choice should be retained through development of the design.
3. We support the proposed height of the 'lantern' portion of the building. Although this exceeds the height limit for the area we consider the similarity of height and generous setback from the MFC ensures that it complements and does not visually dominate that building. The height is also appropriate in relation to the surrounding buildings, particularly One Market Lane to the east, and Anvil House and the Civic Chambers building to the south. We do not see a logic to suppress the height of the 'lantern' below what is proposed, and believe that the building may seem out of scale with the surrounding context if it was to be significantly reduced in height.
4. We note that the applicant presented images of two other massing tests, both with increased height to the lantern. We would not support any such increased height, as the proposed visual balance would be lost and the building would begin to visually dominate the MFC.
5. We note that the relationship between the heights of the 'wedges' and the 'lantern' is an important part of the overall composition of the building massing; reducing the height of the 'lantern' would change that relationship, compromise the proportions of the building, and would be to the detriment of its overall massing and aesthetic quality.
6. The opposing curves of the MFC and the western wedge of the proposed building combine well to frame the waterfront connection, with this curve lessening the volume of the building at the Cuba/Wakefield corner. These are both considered to be successful arrangements.

7. The generous height of the colonnade / overhang to the waterfront connection pedestrian access is successful. We believe this is important to ensure that this space feels public and welcoming, and to ensure sun access into the space.
8. We support a simple, low key approach to the rooftop and plant room. Given that there is complexity to the overall massing it would be preferable for this to read as an integrated part of the 'lantern' rather than as an additional element.

Urban Connectivity / Building Edges

9. The provision of a connection from Cuba Street through to the waterfront is a key part of this scheme, and we feel this has been well considered in the design.
10. We support the provision of a connection through from Opera House Lane, acknowledging that this will be available to the public only during working hours. Could this link be strengthened with greater spatial generosity as it moves into and through the building?
11. We note that the main commercial space entry is from Jervois Quay, with the Wakefield Street entry as a secondary entry. We suggest that the Wakefield Street entry should be strengthened as a 'front door', and made more legible from the Cuba Street approach. The route to this door from Cuba Street feels somewhat circuitous with the ramp leading up to the podium and then around the EOT/ bike parking area.
12. The ramped / accessible entry point to the building, from the Jervois Quay side needs to be resolved. As the main commercial entry, this should be more equitable for users, with the base of the ramp and the base of the stairs ideally starting from the same point. The ramped entry treatment from the waterfront connection to the Jervois Quay remains as yet unresolved and overtly secondary in status and quality. A sketch has been attached in relation to this point.
13. The EOT / bike parking and truck dock and servicing areas mean that there is a significant amount of 'closed' or 'back door' facade onto Wakefield Street at ground level. While we appreciate that this building is viewed in the round, and there are limited options for the location of these facilities (and the provision of generous bike parking and EOT facilities is strongly supported), this does contribute to the secondary feel of the entry on this side of the building. We question the need for a truck dock within the building, and suggest that the applicant investigates the possibility of the building being serviced from a loading zone on Wakefield Street. We believe this would allow for a stronger connection to the entry from the Cuba Street approach. The pre-app notes indicate that reversing onto Wakefield St will not be supported by the WCC traffic engineers. We consider that provision of truck turning within the site / building footprint would significantly compromise the ground floor edge conditions and street activation to the Wakefield St facade. Given the low traffic nature of Wakefield Street currently, and the

limited pedestrian use of that section of the street (particularly on the northern side of Wakefield Street) we do not see this as inappropriate in the urban context.

14. We question the need for a verandah to the Wakefield St side of the eastern wedge, particularly given this is a low pedestrian area. We would support the removal of this element.

15. We support maximising the openings/glazing from tenancies 1 & 2 to the waterfront connection to ensure this is an active edge to the building, and note that the aspect supports this use.

Open Space / Landscaping

16. We support the design of the northern garden - which is of significant importance to both the definition of the waterfront connection walk-way and the comfort of the western external space. The garden could include mounding to further support buffering of traffic visibility and noise. We support the use of coastal landscape character in lieu of a visual connection to the waterfront.

17. The pedestrian access from the front door to the water garden area to the south of the building feels marginal and may not be necessary. We would support the removal of this in favour of landscaping up to the building edge.

18. We support the low height of landscaping in this southern area in part to mitigate any possible CPTED concerns.

19. The threshold between the public (waterfront connection) and the outdoor terraces (for the use of the ground floor tenancies) is well managed by the height difference / base isolation threshold.

20. Assuming tenancies 1 and 2 are likely to be hospitality spaces, we suggest that the applicant demonstrates how they might use this space: is it large enough to accommodate doors opening into the space (if not sliding doors), along with outdoor dining and the movement of people along the edge? How does this space feel when it is less inhabited?

21. The logic of the landscaping generally - wilder toward Jervois Quay and more formal to the Wakefield St boundary - is supported and feels appropriate to the site.

22. The direct street connection to Jervois Quay should be supplemented by a more convenient and generous link to and from the waterfront connection.

23. We support the acknowledgement of the waterway. We suggest that the applicant directly engages with mana whenua (if this has not already taken place) to explore the opportunity for cultural expression, particularly given the prominence of the corner and the connection of the waterway between Te Aro pā site and the wharewaka/waterfront.

24. We support the application of water sensitive design where possible.

25. We support the idea of a 'green gateway' as indicated on the WA concept diagrams and see value in exploring ways to emphasise the experience of moving through a landscape threshold.

Related Public Realm Works (beyond the site boundaries)

26. We note that some of the landscaping and waterfront connection is outside the boundaries of the site proper and therefore is likely to be subject to separate design and implementation processes. Whilst we would not describe it as critical to the proposal, the northern garden does contribute significantly to the success of the waterfront connection and the tenancies opening onto this space, and the possibility for a strong connection with the ground level spaces of the MFC. We hope that the council are able to progress this work concurrently with the site works around this building to ensure a high quality urban outcome.
27. The large existing pohutukawa adjacent to the MFC needs to be treated carefully to ensure that the waterfront connection is legible from Cuba Street and the health of the tree is not compromised by the development.
28. Similarly the road crossing at Jervois Quay - the future resolution (and generosity) of this crossing of Jervois Quay will impact on the waterfront connection, and desire lines through this space, and the way in which the lobby / commercial entry of this building are approached. The work on the road in this area may also impact the landscaping design on the north-eastern corner of the building. Ideally a generous signalised crossing would be in this location, enabling people to follow desire lines through the site, acknowledging the importance of this crossing as the primary connection from the Cuba Quarter to the waterfront.
29. The existing sculpture on the site would be well suited to move to the northern garden where it would have the most opportunity to be viewed by the public.
30. We support the upgrade of the currently asphalt space between the MFC and the proposed building to become a pedestrian orientated laneway/shared space. Given the location of the MRT route there is likely to be an increase in foot traffic through this space, particularly if a stop is associated with Cuba Street/Te Ngakau Civic Square.