

## **The Auckland Design Office (ADO)...enabling a design-led city strategy**

As our population grows, the way Aucklanders think about urban living and transport will need to change if we are to protect, preserve and enhance the things we love and cherish about Auckland. This will require a significant shift in mindset and behaviours.

This mindset change is fast happening and there is a growing sense of optimism, excitement and pride about what's been achieved to date. [The Design-led City Story](#) appended to this report by way of a hyperlink (<http://bit.ly/2BKCUjL>) outlines our Design-led City Strategy and progress to date. The article from Seattle's Runstad Affiliate Fellows entitled [A City to Love \(Auckland's Vision of a Public Realm\)](#) (<http://arcadenw.org/article/a-city-to-love>) exemplifies Auckland's growing global reputation for its urban design ambitions and achievement.

There is heightened excitement about Auckland's urban future but a realistic and growing concern that within this fast-paced changing environment quality urban design and place-making must be upheld. The Auckland public (including the design and development industry) is becoming more discerning and the market is demanding far better urban design. Auckland Council has a key role to play.

During the Auckland Unitary Plan deliberations Auckland Council made a promise to Aucklanders. We need quality, not just quantity.

As a team, the role of Auckland Council's Auckland Design Office is to bring its collective expertise and influence on city-shaping projects and initiatives to improve urban design outcomes for the city region. This includes: major private developments and broader regeneration and infrastructure initiatives across the region, as well as working hard to ensure that Auckland Council itself leads by example, in lifting the bar of quality urban design across the organisation. This includes the Council- Controlled Organisations such as Auckland Transport, Regional Facilities Auckland and Panuku Development Auckland in particular.

Cities are highly complex and it's so important that we work collaboratively to embrace the expertise of architects, urban designers, planners, traffic engineers, landscape architects, lawyers, sociologists, psychologists and even occupational therapists to create well performing, safe, healthy and inclusive places that people can fall in love with.

The Auckland Design Office is a tactical department of around 40+ passionate design professionals spread across three units: 1) City Centre Design Unit, 2) Design Review Unit and 3) Urban Design Strategy Unit.

*"We are small but we cast a big shadow!"*

The units work collaboratively, influencing the quality of council-led projects, private developers and individuals, as well as large-scale infrastructure projects.

*The City Centre Design Unit (CCDU):*

- The CCDU is focused on working alongside the Development Programme Office, Auckland Transport and Pānuku Development Auckland in implementing the vision for the [City Centre Masterplan 2012](#) and the [Waterfront Plan 2012](#).
- A priority is to refresh this to reflect the progress made to date and set the new agenda for the further growth of the City Centre.
- The City Centre Place Activation team sits within this unit. They have two main workstreams: 1) Place Activation and 2) Development Response.
- A key action of the Activation Strategy is to provide resource that will enable "Place Partners" (businesses, residents and place-users) to celebrate place through interventions and activities, create positive place-based experiences and in doing so foster an understanding and connection between communities and council. While a key action of the Development Response Strategy is to provide resource that will enable "Place Partners" (Council family, City Rail Link Limited, Business Improvement Districts, businesses, contractors, visitors, residents and all place users) to respond to

the development in the city centre through facilitating cross-council family teams to support Business Improvement Districts to survive and thrive through major disruption.

*The Design Review Unit (DRU):*

- The DRU is working closely with the council's Resource Consents Department within the Operations Division.
- The unit of 22 urban designers, landscape architects and architects work with other built environment experts to provide advice on approximately 1400 of the most significant schemes per year (approximately 7 per cent of all resource consents).
- The work is complementary to the expertise offered by the various design review panels which include the internationally-recognised [Auckland Urban Design Panel](https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/about-auckland-council/how-auckland-council-works/advisory-panels/Pages/auckland-urban-design-panel.aspx) (<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/about-auckland-council/how-auckland-council-works/advisory-panels/Pages/auckland-urban-design-panel.aspx>) and the Council Projects Design Review Panel as well as specialist dedicated panels for catalytic or city-shaping projects, such as Hobsonville Land, Tamaki Regeneration and Pānuku Development.

*The Urban Design Strategy Unit (UDSU):*

- As well as setting the overall direction for urban design, the UDSU works on major strategic projects such as Rapid Transit spatial planning, options for development following changes at the Ports of Auckland, design input on Structure and Local Plans, the [Auckland Design Manual](http://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/) (<http://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/>) and is leading the council's design response to Universal Access and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.
- A vital part of the programme is the formation, dissemination and grounding of Māori Design through the Te Aranga Design Principles and the [Māori Design hub on the Auckland Design Manual](http://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/design-thinking/maori-design) (<http://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/design-thinking/maori-design>)

**An Auckland Community of Urban Design Practice**

- Aside from the Auckland Design Office, other council agencies employ urban design professionals. Urban Designers in Pānuku Development Auckland and Auckland Transport assist with raising the quality of public sector-led projects. The Auckland Design Office is a focus for the design professionals in these organisations in the promotion of better practice in design.
- Consideration of the use of more design-led approaches to planning can also be explored as the place-based spatial planning programme continues. The Plans and Places Department within the Planning Division incorporates urban design analysis and outcomes in their local spatial planning projects including area plans, centre plans and structure plans. Plans and Places project leaders include Auckland Design Office staff in their project teams and are very familiar with the application of the principles of good urban design to the local context.
- The Auckland Design Office also supports the wider urban design community of practice. For example, outside council, but closely associated with the Auckland Design Office, the Tāmaki Makaurau Design Alliance is a built environment profession advisory body representing 11 organisations providing a focal point for the Auckland urban design community of practice and a source of advice and support for the Auckland Design Office. It is proposed that the Auckland Design Office utilise the Tāmaki Makaurau Design Alliance in a customer advisory capacity.
- It is important to acknowledge the role of design leadership and advocacy and this requires a stronger framework within which the key stakeholders and partners can work together to promote quality urban design.