

2. URBAN DESIGN PROTOCOL SEMINAR

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The purpose of this report is to provide a starting point for a Committee discussion, leading to a submission to the Ministry for the Environment.

BACKGROUND

The Government's 'Sustainable Development Programme of Action' identifies improving the quality of urban design in New Zealand as a national priority. The programme recognises that urban design plays a crucial role in enhancing the liveability, competitiveness and sustainability of our towns and cities. The development of an Urban Design Protocol is one of the key actions in the programme.

The Ministry for the Environment has commenced a process for preparing the protocol. As a first step they wish to identify how we can achieve high quality urban design. This is taking the form of, firstly defining the problem and then considering possible solutions. To this end they have invited responses to three questions.

THE QUESTIONS

1. What are the barriers to achieving such high quality urban design in New Zealand that are seen to be an innovative international leader in this field?
2. How can we overcome these barriers in order to achieve widespread high quality urban design?
3. What urban design features 'on the ground' in New Zealand do you consider are most in need of attention eg walkability, character, public/private interface?

DEFINITION

In order to aid discussion it may be useful to refer to the definition of 'Urban Design' adopted by the Ministry for the Environment in their Design Guide for Urban New Zealand, which is as follows:

"Urban Design is about making the connections between people and places, between public and private space, between the natural and built environment, between movement and urban form and between the social and economic purposes for which urban space is used" - Ministry for the Environment, People + Places + Spaces, March 2002.

OTHER RESPONSES

The Canterbury Urban Design Forum and the City Development Group have made separate submissions. Some of the themes that arose from their submissions are:

- A public attitude which values individual private property rights rather than the collective good.
- Lack of urban design education at all levels.
- Lack of recognition of good urban design being something to strive for, particularly in terms of economic benefit.
- Lack of guidance and support from central government.
- Need for a more supportive legislative framework - Building Act, Resource Management Act etc.
- Unilaterally focused decision making by statutory bodies leading to a lack of integrated urban design.
- Architects and other building designers not creating buildings that respond to their context.
- Poor standard of buildings, partly due to lack of skills, which in turn is due to demise of building trade apprenticeships.
- New Zealand should develop an interpretation of urban design which is appropriate for its environment and culture, not import ideas slavishly from overseas.

Staff

Recommendation: That a discussion, based around the three questions above, be held at the meeting, leading to a submission to the Ministry for the Environment.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the issues identified from the questions asked be forwarded to the Ministry for the Environment.