

SHAPING OUR PLACES

ADVOCACY KIT



Instructions for use of this kit

- This kit is designed to provide you with the basic tools to advocate on behalf of good design in the built environment. Please add to the content by including your own thoughts, experiences, and examples. This will only add to the quality of your advocacy efforts.
- This is not a covert campaign – hence the reason we have provided this kit for public use. Quite to the contrary, we want to create a national discussion on the value of good design in shaping our towns and cities and ultimately an appetite for action. We want all to participate in the discussion and we'll be completely transparent about what we're doing. Make sure you sign-up for our regularly e-newsletter to keep up-to-date with campaign developments.
- The draft text we have included is a guide rather than a script. You should feel free to add to, or make the text your own. Including your own thoughts, experiences, and examples will make your communications more persuasive.
- We have included draft text for an email or letter to your local MP or Mayor. This provides an idea of the type of content you could include. For the greatest impact it would be great if you could make the text relevant to the person you are addressing it to – i.e. why should good design be of interest to this person, the value case for good design, and a call-to-action (their support).
- In most cases, your representative will be prepared to meet with you and we would encourage you to set up a time to discuss in further detail the content of your letter or email. You just need to ask for an appointment.
- In this kit you will find a presentation template with some suggested draft text. This is intended to help you structure your thoughts for your meeting with representatives, and anyone else who is interested in good design. Feel free to amend and add to the presentation as you wish.
- Take your advocacy a step further and use the media to raise the profile of the value of good design. We have included draft text for a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. The content of this letter could also be expanded on and submitted as an opinion-piece to your local paper. We have also included a number of key messages. These messages simply articulate the contents of the website, and the manifesto.

Key messages

We have developed the below key messages. These are not intended as a script but rather as a prompt for you to express the value of good design in your own terms.

- **Critical moment.** Now is the time to be making these critical decisions for our towns and cities especially as the government commits billions to infrastructure development, the Auckland Council comes together, and resource management and urban planning reform progress. There needs to be a strong voice for the value of good design.
- **Key concepts.** The concepts of community, sustainability, affordability, heritage, and quality urban design need to be at forefront of decision making in New Zealand. These are the concepts on which we have based our campaign.
- **Cost of bad design.** Gridlock, urban sprawl, poor transport planning, and dislocated communities are some of the costs of poor design. We can do a better job at connecting communities, and creating safer communities through design.
- **More than aesthetics.** We are talking about more than just the aesthetics. This is about improving the quality of lives of communities – whether at home, work, or play – through good design. For example, Auckland's Talbot Park has created a safer community through opening up public spaces and narrowing streets.
- **Demand good design.** Experiencing great world class cities doesn't have to be confined to the overseas experience. There is no reason why we can't have towns and cities which we can be proud of here at home. We just need to demand them.
- **Long-term thinking.** At the core of good design is taking a long-term view. We need to consider future generations when we're making decisions about the shape of our towns and cities.

A few tips

- Talk about our towns and cities, and our communities rather than the “built environment”. The “built environment” term is meaningless to most people.
- Relate what you are talking about to the person at street level – what does good design mean for families and communities, how will it improve the quality of their lives. For example, community places will become increasingly important providing an escape as inner city apartment living becomes more commonplace.
- Acknowledge that design hasn’t always been done well in New Zealand – this is why we’ve got this campaign. What is important is that we know what needs to be done, and the value for New Zealand of doing it.
- While it is important to encourage debate and discussion we ultimately need action. This is the point of the Shaping our places campaign – to spark action.

Draft Letter/Email text to MP or Mayor

[Date]

Dear [Name],

I'm writing to you in support of the New Zealand Institute of Architect's campaign Shaping our places. At the core of this campaign is the basic premise that through good design the quality of life of our communities can be improved.

This is about more than aesthetics it is about creating long-term value – economic, social, and environmental. For example, international research has shown that well-designed neighbourhoods benefit from lower crime rates and higher property values, well-designed schools improve the educational achievement of their students.

[You could add your own local example of good design in action]

More than ever we need to pay closer attention to how we shape our towns and cities particularly as the government commits billions to infrastructure development. The concepts of community, sustainability, affordability, heritage, and quality urban design need to be at forefront of decision making.

We understand the important role that you play as a decision maker. Policy and legislative decisions on infrastructure development, local government reform, and resource management and urban planning all need a strong voice for good design.

[You could add your own examples of how national decisions could impact in your local area]

[You could suggest meeting to discuss further and how you could assist the MP's advocacy of good design]

I would hope that you see the value in shaping our towns and cities in ways which add to the quality of life of its citizens. For kiwis, experiencing great world class cities doesn't have to be confined to the overseas experience. There is no reason why we can't have towns and cities which we can be proud of here at home.

Yours faithfully

[Your name and return address]

Draft letter to Editor of local newspaper

[Date]

Dear [Name of Editor]

[You will be commenting on a local issue, for example a planning decision, a housing affordability issue, a heritage or urban design project. You will include your thoughts on the example, whether it is a good project or not, and what should happen instead]

These decisions affect the lives of communities. Gridlock, urban sprawl, poor transport planning, and dislocated communities are some of the costs of poor design and planning. Through good design we can connect and create communities that work better and are safer.

New Zealand is at a crossroads. Now is the time for smart decisions on the shape of towns and cities particularly as the government commits billions of dollars to infrastructure development, and resource management and urban planning reforms progress.

Five key concepts need to be at the forefront of decision making. They are: community, sustainability, affordability, heritage, and quality urban design. These concepts were the centre-piece in the New Zealand Institute of Architect's (NZIA) recently launched publication *Shaping Our Places: a Manifesto for the Built Environment*. Shaping our places also identified a number of policy priorities.

Over the coming months NZIA will campaign on these priorities at both the central and local government level. To keep up-to-date with what's happening, people can visit www.shapingourplaces.co.nz. We hope to trigger nationwide debate but more importantly action that supports the enhancement of the places where we live, work and play.

Yours faithfully

[Your name and return address]

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of this campaign?

The shape our towns and cities affects the lives of communities. Gridlock, urban sprawl, poor transport planning, and dislocated communities are some of the costs of poor design and planning. We are at a critical point in our nation's development as the government commits billions to infrastructure development, the Auckland Council comes together, and resource management and urban planning reform progress. Through good design we can connect and create communities that work better and are safer. This campaign aims to generate public support for the value of good design in shaping our towns and cities.

How will the campaign change things?

We want to raise New Zealanders' awareness about what is possible through good design. We want the public to demand policies which support good design and enhance the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Good smart design saves money and can make our lives better. NZIA has outlined a number of policy priorities to government which will ensure that we enjoy the benefits of good design.

What does the campaign consist of?

The campaign consists of mobilising stakeholders and the public to demand action on the shape of our towns and cities. Over the coming months we will be talking to politicians, the public, and other stakeholders, engaging with the media, holding events and running an advertising campaign. A new website www.shapingourplaces.co.nz is the main campaign hub. It includes advocacy and media kits, blogs, news items, and policy papers and submissions. The website will be regularly updated with developments on the campaign.

Why should we care?

Anyone who is part of a community, lives in a town or city should care because these decisions impact on everyone. They determine where and how we live, our available modes of transport and recreational activities. Good design is about more than just aesthetics. It is about creating long-term value – economic, social, and environmental. For example, well-designed neighbourhoods benefit from lower crime rates and higher property values, while research shows that well-designed schools improve the educational achievement of their students. Through good design we can connect and create communities that work better, are safer, and add to quality of life.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Wasn't the Urban Design Protocol set up to do this?

The protocol was launched in 2005 to provide a platform for enhanced urban design. A number of local councils have signed up to the protocol and appointed urban design managers and architects to assist with implementing aspects of the protocol in their areas. Quality urban design is one aspect of the built environment. Shaping Our Places identifies four other aspects/concepts.

What does "built environment" mean?

The built environment refers to the man-made surroundings that provide the setting for human activity, ranging from large-scale civic surroundings to personal places. Decisions on the built environment relate to how we shape our towns and cities. Through good design we can connect and create communities that work better and are safer.

What are the five manifesto concepts referred to?

NZIA have identified five concepts which we think need to be at the forefront of decision making on the shape of our towns and cities. The concepts are: community, sustainability, affordability, heritage, and urban design. It is our view that these are foundational concepts which need to underpin decisions on the shape our towns and cities.

Architects clearly have an 'interest' in advancing good design?

Of course architects have an interest in advancing good design. However, we would argue that everyone should have an interest in how we shape our towns and cities because it ultimately impacts on them and their lifestyles. Through good design we can connect and create communities that work better, are safer, and add to quality of life.

Where can I get more information?

Visit www.shapingourplaces.co.nz for up-to-date news and information about what's happening, campaign developments, policy information and submissions, and blog discussions. The website is the central organising and information hub for the campaign. You can also sign up for the e-newsletter.