Napier’s Art Deco Quarter is an important heritage area that has been described by international experts as the most complete and significant group of Art Deco buildings in the world. Today the heritage value of the city is widely appreciated by locals and visitors alike and is celebrated at special events throughout the year.

The Art Deco Trust has actively promoted awareness, education and preservation of the Art Deco attributes of the city since 1985, and in 1995 the Napier Art Deco Quarter was recognised and registered by the Historic Places Trust. More recently the city has been identified as a site of World Heritage potential.

The challenge for any city with such an impressive historical heritage is to protect the gifts of the past while providing a place for present and future generations to live, work, visit and enjoy.

Napier City Council periodically reviews the heritage provisions of the city, and a review of the city’s signage policy is appropriate during this process. Signs are essential to modern life, yet poorly designed signage can detract from the experience of the city. Napier’s signage policy is in place to ensure signs are effective, attractive and sympathetic to Art Deco style.

These Signage Guidelines have been written specifically for the Napier central business district but its principles may be applied to other heritage buildings elsewhere in the city. It provides businesses, building owners and developers with a practical and useful reference to the key principles of Art Deco design in general, and Napier’s Art Deco design in particular.

Ideally, these Signage Guidelines will be used as a source of inspiration for redevelopment so existing buildings can recapture their original style, and to ensure new buildings respect the scale and style of their 1930s neighbours.

Barbara Arnott
Mayor
Introduction

Signs are a vital part of the city, providing information and direction. Well designed signs add vitality and enhance the cityscape. However, poorly designed signs can detract from the experience of the city, obscuring building features and giving a cluttered, disorganised impression.

The principal aim of these Signage Guidelines is to encourage appropriate signage that contributes positively to the city, by preserving the unique Art Deco character which makes the city a site of national and international importance. Enhancing the visual appeal of the city will maintain it as a compelling place for shoppers, visitors and investors alike, stimulating the economic, tourism, cultural and social wellbeing of the city.
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Scope

These Signage Guidelines have been written specifically for the Napier central business district, but the principles may be applied to Art Deco and other heritage buildings elsewhere in the city. They are intended to be used as a working tool for owners, designers and the city of Napier, with latitude for individual expression.

A working tool for owners, designers and the city of Napier...
Since 1985 the Art Deco Trust has been actively promoting awareness, education and preservation of the Art Deco attributes of the city.

Context

NAPIER’S ART DECO QUARTER IS WIDELY RECOGNISED AS A SIGNIFICANT HERITAGE AREA.

In 1995, Napier’s Art Deco Quarter was recognised and registered by the Historic Places Trust as an historic area under the Historic Places Act 1993. The purpose of the register is to identify and inform the public about significant and valued historical places and assist in their protection and conservation.

Napier’s Art Deco Quarter has more recently been identified by the Department of Conservation as a site of World Heritage potential. In 2006, the area was nominated as one of the top ten cultural and natural heritage sites in New Zealand. The area meets a number of criteria relevant to World Heritage status. Its buildings, architectural ensemble and landscape illustrate important developments in architecture, town planning and landscape design, relating to a significant period in human history – the Great Depression.

There are only a few rare concentrations of Art Deco buildings in the World. Napier can be compared to South Beach, Miami, Florida, USA (also a seaside resort); Bandung, Indonesia (originally planned as the future capital of Java); and Asmara in Eritrea (built by the Italians as a model colonial city). Napier has been more closely compared to the city of Bath, UK, by Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman of English Heritage, who wrote:

‘Napier represents the most complete and significant group of Art Deco buildings in the world, and is comparable with Bath as an example of a planned townscape in a coherent style. Napier is without doubt unique.’

Art Deco style is celebrated at special events throughout the year.
PRIOR TO 1931, NAPIER’S ARCHITECTURE WAS COMPRISED OF A MIXTURE OF VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN BUILDINGS MOSTLY BUILT FROM TIMBER OR BRICK.

Buildings of this period had ornate embellishments; columns and cornices, statuettes, finials and chimneys. Many buildings had verandahs supported on cast iron or timber posts and along the streets a forest of power poles was festooned with overhead wires.

The cataclysmic earthquake which occurred on 3 February, 1931 had far-reaching effects on the future appearance of the city. The central business district was almost totally destroyed; most of the buildings collapsed in the quake or were burnt in the ensuing fire. This led to a massive rebuilding programme of an unprecedented scale, under the guidance of the Napier Reconstruction Committee.

Because of the extensive damage to timber and unreinforced masonry buildings, not to mention the number of deaths and injuries caused by falling masonry and heavy cornices, the Napier Reconstruction Committee considered alternative construction methods and design styles. Reinforced concrete was selected for the new buildings and the modern design style emerging in Europe and particularly the United States was seen as very appropriate, with its sleek streamlined forms and simple, low-relief approach to decoration.

This style is known today as ‘Art Deco’ and became the prevalent style for the new Napier, together with the Spanish Mission style which had been adopted in the rebuilding of Santa Barbara, California after an earthquake in 1925. The two styles were cost-effective to build during a period of economic hardship, suitable for concrete construction, lacking in heavy unstable decoration and were perceived as modern and progressive, which epitomised the mood of the rebuilt city.
The consistency in **height, scale, materials, age and design** is what makes Napier’s built heritage so **unique**

**TOP RIGHT:** Hastings Street near Emerson Street, prior to 1931. Ornate parapets would fall in the earthquake, causing many deaths. Verandah posts, power poles and overhead wires contribute to the cluttered appearance of the street.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** The new buildings and verandahs are of a consistent height, with no posts or power poles to clutter the street. The Market Reserve building in the distance is an example of a splayed corner, effectively widening the street and contributing to the sleek modern appearance.

Since the buildings were generally reconstructed on the same site, the city blocks were still made up of individual small buildings and there was a reluctance to build more than two storeys in height, partially due to the economic depression, but also for safety reasons.

In addition to the new architectural styles, other changes were adopted to improve the rebuilt city and ensure it had an uncluttered, modern look. Verandahs were standardised in height and suspended from the building façade rather than supported on kerbside posts. Power and phone cables were laid underground, streets were widened and corners of buildings splayed.

This consistency in height, scale, materials, age and design is what makes Napier’s built heritage so unique. There are few collections of buildings in the world which represent this period, mainly because of the virtual cessation of construction during the depression era. Napier is therefore one of very few early 1930s architectural ensembles to be found worldwide.

**Photos:** Collection of Hawke’s Bay Cultural Trust – Hawke’s Bay Museum, Napier, New Zealand.
Architectural Styles

Art Deco

Popular in the 1920s and 1930s, this style was used primarily in the design of buildings, furniture, jewellery and interior décor.

The term ‘Art Deco’ comes from the title of a major Paris exhibition held in 1926: ‘Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes’ (‘International Exhibition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts’), where the style first became evident. The clean lines, streamlining and symmetry of Art Deco designs reflect the increasing importance of industrial products and interest in the beauty of machinery during this period.

Building features include:
- Simple decoration, usually geometric, stylised plant forms, or Maori motifs
- Consistent skyline (one or two storeys, roofs not visible from the street, parapet may be stepped)
- Windows often in pairs or groups of three
- Horizontal proportions emphasised by verandahs, bands of decoration, low height, shop front design

Shop fronts:
- Slender frames (bronze or timber)
- Horizontal band of leadlight above door height
- Glazing does not extend to footpath (stall board at footpath)

Examples include: The former Hotel Central and The Daily Telegraph building.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
The horizontal proportion of the Masonic Hotel is emphasised by decorative bands.

Ziggurat forms emphasise the entry of The Daily Telegraph building.

A trio of windows of the former Hotel Central is decorated with geometric, ziggurat and sunburst shapes.

Art Deco style demonstrates clean lines, streamlining and symmetry
Spanish Mission

What is now called the Spanish Mission style developed in California from the simple adobe buildings of the early missions. Walls are flat with a smooth or textured plaster finish, sometimes relieved with barley twist columns or plaster detailing. Terracotta tiles are common on parapets and window hoods.

Building features include:
- Terracotta tiled roof/parapet/window hoods
- Barley twist columns and flat pilasters
- Balconies or galleries at first floor
- Windows relatively tall and narrow, or in groups of three, sometimes with arched heads

Examples include: Criterion Hotel, Provincial Hotel, Harston’s building and former State Theatre.
Architectural Styles

continued

Louis Hay: The Chicago School
Napier architect Louis Hay designed a number of buildings strongly influenced by the work of Chicago architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan. Pilasters and fins give the facades a more vertical emphasis and texture is achieved by the use of different materials and incised patterns on the plaster surfaces.

Building features include:
- Semicircular arched doorways
- Windows recessed between columns
- Often no verandah
- Emphasis added to the entrance, by recessing the door between pilasters

Examples include: Old AMP building, Hay building and old Fire Station (now The Deco Centre).

TOP: The old Fire Station has a horizontal 'eyebrow' above the recessed windows, balanced by vertical pilasters.

MIDDLE: This detail of Hay's own building shows the use of different materials to create texture. Pilasters extend as fins above the parapet. The construction date is also used as a decorative element.

LEFT: The old AMP building is given a strong vertical emphasis by recessing the windows deeply between pilasters. The main entrances are given prominence by bold semicircular arches.

Pilasters and fins give the façades a more vertical emphasis
**Stripped Classical**
The ornate Victorian and Edwardian classical revival decoration was refined and simplified to give a flatter and more modern appearance. This style was popular for public buildings, banks and professional offices.

**Building features include:**
- Vertical emphasis, columns expressed, often two storeys
- Often no verandah
- Simplified classical decoration; pilasters, fluting, low-relief motifs

**Examples include:** Old State Insurance building, ASB Bank and old Ministry of Works building.

**Stripped Classical** style was popular for **public buildings, banks and professional offices**

Stripped Classical buildings were also influenced by Spanish, Greek and Maori motifs.

**TOP:** Old Ministry of Works building.

**MIDDLE:** Old State Insurance building.

**BOTTOM:** ASB Bank showing Maori motifs above the window line.
Architectural Styles

continued

Modern

The ‘Modern movement’ was the predominant architectural influence from the 1940s until the 1970s. Characterised by the design principle ‘form follows function’, these buildings use the rhythm of the structure, rather than applied decoration to provide visual interest.

Building features include:
- Relatively large areas of glazing
- Beam and column construction
- No applied decoration

Examples include: Old Red Cross building and Maritime building.

Purpose of Signs

Signs serve five main purposes:
1. Identification of site, building, building use, building occupants
2. Site-related advertising to promote the goods and services available
3. Third party advertising, which may be part of a nationwide campaign or acknowledge a sponsor
4. Direction finding, such as street signs
5. Safety, such as traffic signs

Direction finding and safety are controlled by statute and are not discussed in depth in these Signage Guidelines.
Statutory Requirements

Policies are in place to protect the character and appearance of Napier’s Art Deco Quarter by:

- Controlling the form, size, position and lighting of signage, thus minimising the visual impact on the buildings and the streetscape
- Restricting signage to what is necessary to effectively but discreetly identify businesses and building occupants

The District Plan contains rules for a range of ‘activities’ relating to signs:

- **Permitted Activity**: you are allowed to do this subject to certain rules, such as the size of a sign.
- **Restricted Discretionary Activity**: you need a Resource Consent to do this. There is a limited range of factors which the Council can consider in relation to your application (such as design, location, heritage effects). If a Resource Consent is granted, Council may impose conditions and the decision is at Council’s discretion.
- **Discretionary Activity**: you need a Resource Consent to do this. The Council may take into consideration any factors deemed relevant to your application, and may impose conditions.

Given the significant number of heritage buildings in the central business district, erecting a sign or making any other external or internal changes to a shopfront is likely to require a Resource Consent as a discretionary activity.

**Before designing new signs it is recommended that you first discuss your proposal with Napier City Council, who may refer your proposal to the Art Deco Trust and/or Historic Places Trust for additional comment.**

TOP: Public Trust building.
BOTTOM: Masonic Hotel.
Principles of Signage

Signage can enhance or destroy the visual integrity of the streetscape. Well designed signs can add to the vitality of the street while clearly directing or attracting the public.

Scale and location

Signs should integrate with the building where they are located.

A well designed sign should:

- Have dimensions that relate to the dimensions of the building façade
- Be located to suit the building elements (windows, columns, parapets, verandahs)
- Respect the proportions and composition of the building

Signs should not:

- Dominate façades
- Obscure windows or architectural features
- Extend beyond the building ie above the roof or verandah fascia

Signs are intended to attract attention, so are often placed in prominent locations.

Before designing new signs it is recommended that you first discuss your proposal with Napier City Council.

BELOW: A sign using individual metal letters fixed to the verandah fascia emphasises the horizontal lines of the building design.
Well designed signs can add to the vitality of the street while clearly directing or attracting the public.

Context

Signs do not occur in isolation, and co-ordination between the signs in any area is essential.

A well designed sign should:

► Integrate with the architectural features of the building and its neighbours
► Be sized and located to form a cohesive part of the building
► Be sized and located to integrate with neighbouring buildings and landscape features
► Relate to the distance from which it is most likely to be viewed

Signs should not:

► Be located at random on the building
► Attempt to ‘stand out’ by excessive use of colour, shape or style

Obtrusiveness

Signs are intended to attract attention, so they are often placed in prominent locations where they can be seen by as many people as possible. This can cause conflict in a heritage area, obscuring building features and dominating the streetscape.

A well designed sign should:

► Be considered from the full range of viewing distances. Generally, signs intended to be viewed from close range should be smaller and contain more information than those viewed from further away
► Have individual letters applied or fixed to the building which tend to be less obtrusive than those painted on a backing board

Signs should not:

► Interrupt the line of the building (parapet, windows, verandah)
► Use jarring colours, flashing or overly-bright lights
► Use movement to attract attention
► Project above the roof line
► Extend beyond the verandah fascia or the building
Design and installation of signs should be undertaken by qualified professionals.

Clutter
Visual clutter can occur where there are multiple building occupants or a variety of signs unrelated in shape, size or position.

A well designed sign should:
- Avoid a proliferation of signs in a confined area
- Form a cohesive group if there are multiple building occupants

Signs should not:
- Advertise brand names (third party advertising)
- Use shapes or colours out of context with the surroundings
- Be randomly positioned
- Overlap or obscure other signs
- Duplicate information
Safety

Road users
A well designed sign should not:
► Obscure road signs or sight lines
► Create distraction or confusion for motorists

Any sign located on or over a road is a discretionary activity and must comply with the New Zealand Traffic Regulations (1976). Refer to the Planning Department for advice.

Disabled and partially sighted users
Many people with disabilities have limitations in movement of their head and reduced peripheral vision.

A well designed sign should:
► Have text located between 750mm and 1700mm above the footpath
► Be grouped together if there are multiple building occupants
► Have clear and legible lettering contrasting with the sign background

Signs should not:
► Obstruct the footpath
► Have a gap beneath of more than 500mm if they are freestanding

Design quality
Many interrelated factors are important when designing quality signage:
► Materials: low maintenance, high quality
► Colour and graphic design: clear and simple
► Lighting: unobtrusive
► Integration of the sign with the building and its neighbours
► Supporting structure (where relevant) sturdy, stable, not obtrusive
► Fixing detail should be robust and corrosion resistant
► Fixing detail should enable removal of the sign without damage to the building

Design and installation of signs should be undertaken by qualified professionals.

Below: Clear and simple graphic design and quality materials.

A balance between commercialism and conservatism is required
Fonts and colours
A wide variety of lettering styles (fonts) are used on Napier’s heritage buildings. Generally the letters are upper case and traditional in style. A selection of suggested styles is illustrated below, but many others are appropriate.

Most of the fonts shown can be downloaded for free. To do this, enter the font name into your internet search engine and select either a Mac or Windows version.

Your building may still have the owner’s or building name visible. Look for photos in the Art Deco Trust or museum archives. Check with your signwriter or design consultant for a font which is suitable for internet use and printing so you can create a streamlined look for your business.

Recommended fonts include:

**Baby Teeth**
**Sandwich**
**Betty Noir**
**Broadway**
**Casady**
**SF Diego Sans**
**Lemon Chicken**

**Nadall**
**Parisian**
**Peignot**
**A.D., Mono**
**Niteclub**
**City**
**Tall Deco**

A well designed sign should:
- Have a lettering style compatible with the building
- Use a lettering colour that contrasts well with the sign background
- Adapt corporate colours (where possible) to suit the heritage environment

Signs should not:
- Use fluorescent or highly-saturated colours
- Use inappropriate lettering styles (seek advice from the Art Deco Trust)

Maintenance of sign
High quality materials and a maintenance policy will help minimise deterioration and extend the useful life of signs.
Special provisions for heritage buildings

‘A balance between commercialism and conservatism is required.’

Director of City Development, The City of Edinburgh Council

If your building is a Heritage building or is listed in the District Plan, any change to the exterior, including signage, will require Resource Consent.

Restoration or reinstatement is preferable but must:

► Be based on sound historical precedent (such as photos or drawings)
► Complement the architectural form
► Relate to the building

If the business operates from more than one building individual buildings should be visually identifiable.

If the verandah is continuous the fascia may be painted the same colour across both premises.
Locations for Signs

Signs in Napier's Art Deco Quarter
Napier City Council will consider all signs in relation to the following criteria:

- Impact on the amenity of the area
- Effects on heritage values
- Design, appearance and size
- Location and placement
- Hazards, health and safety, wellbeing

As well as these general criteria, signs and their support structures must:

- Be within site boundaries and only on the site to which they relate
- Comply with height conditions (lowest height prevails)
- If no verandah, signs at right angles to the building must be at least 2.5m above the footpath

Signs must not:

- Obscure any significant architectural feature of a heritage building
- Be located over a road or road reserve
- Exceed the height of the building to which they are attached

Signs must not obscure any significant architectural feature of a heritage building

Signs on the building façade

- Position signs so building features are not obscured
- Vertical proportion: between windows
- Horizontal proportions: below or above windows
- Hanging sign perpendicular to façade may be appropriate
- If parallel, maximum thickness 50mm
- If perpendicular, maximum width 1.2m, maximum thickness 50mm
- 1.2m² maximum area
- Only one sign per business
- Multiple occupants: should be grouped and design of signs should be integrated
- Base of sign 2.5m minimum above ground level
- Verandah + façade sign = no sign allowed on verandah roof

Signs on verandah fascias

- Individual letters applied directly to the fascia, or painted directly on the fascia
- Sign must not extend above or below the line of the fascia, except a sign may be up to 600mm high over a distance of one metre
- Sign must not extend beyond the length of the fascia
- 2.5m minimum from footpath to underside of sign

Below: Raised letters on façade.
Below: Sign painted directly on façade.
Signs under verandahs
► One sign per business or one sign per building entrance
► 2.5m minimum from footpath to underside of sign
► Maximum area 1.5m²
► The sign must not extend beyond the verandah at right angles to the footpath

Signs on a verandah roof
► One verandah roof sign is permitted, if no façade sign is present
► Perpendicular to façade, at front edge of verandah roof
► Area 1.2m², maximum height 700mm including support structure
► Thickness of sign 50mm maximum
► Verandah roof signs often obscure building features and should be avoided

Continued over page...
Locations for Signs

**Signs on a building side wall**

**Signs on side walls should:**
- Be set back from the corner of the wall
- Be aligned with significant elements on the main façade, such as cornice or parapet or windows
- Allow for only one sign per business
- Not exceed an area which is limited to the lesser of 8m² or 5% of the side wall

**Corner sites**
- One sign is permitted on each face of the building
- One sign is permitted on each verandah fascia
- One sign is permitted under the verandah on each street frontage
- One verandah roof sign is permitted (if no façade signs) on each street frontage

**Signs on windows**

Signs applied to windows are particularly useful for upper-storey businesses or where a building has no verandah.

**Signs on windows should:**
- Contain individual letters, perhaps with gold or shadow outline
- Use film, logos, lettering, or frosting to replicate an original sign or to indicate a building feature which may have been destroyed

**Illuminated signs**

Neon lighting was ‘the latest’ in the Roaring Twenties, although it was not a common feature of Napier’s Art Deco buildings. The neon light’s modern counterparts (made with plastic tubes instead of glass) are still effective as attention-getters but should be used with care. Fluorescent tubes with gel coats and L.E.D.s with brightness controls are economical options.

**Illuminated signs should:**
- Use coloured strip lighting to enhance building features
- Use only static illumination
- Not show red or green in close proximity to traffic signals
- Comply with the light spill controls (see Art Deco Quarter Condition Table of the district plan)
Signs for multiple tenancies
(upper storeys/more than one occupant)

Where a building has multiple tenancies for example, buildings with more than one floor; arcades; or larger buildings with several businesses, integrated signage will be more effective than a jumble of individual signs. Brass signs are a traditional solution. Freestanding permanent signs are an option at the entrance to an arcade, or signs may be displayed in a window adjacent to the entry.

A well designed sign should:

- Relate to the form and proportions of the buildings in the heritage area
- Have simple, unified graphics
- Group names on a single sign, rather than a plethora of individual signs
- Be designed to allow easy updating of information (for example when businesses move)
- Be located at main entry points or in an adjacent window
- Use high quality materials suited to the climate.

Signs for multiple tenancies should not:

- Advertise brand names
- Compromise pedestrian movement
- Have a gap beneath it of more than 500mm, if it is a permanent free standing sign

Signs on movable items

Movable items such as umbrellas, tables, chairs and screens provide visual interest in the street, but can also add to visual clutter. These items should be well designed and of good quality. Items damaged by weather conditions should be replaced in a timely fashion. Moveable footpath signs are not appropriate.

Signs on moveable items should:

- Display the business name or logo discreetly
- Not advertise branding on street furniture

LEFT: Business name and logo painted directly on the glass of a traditional shop front. Note the band of lead light above the windows.

ABOVE LEFT: Sign for multiple tenancies in adjacent window.

ABOVE RIGHT TOP TO BOTTOM: Traditional metal name plates.

BELLOW: Contemporary window signs.
Building Names and Numbers

It was common for the name of the building and/or the date of construction to be included on the façade, either raised or incised. This information is historically valuable and if it has survived, it should be preserved. It should not be removed or obscured by new signs.

The visual impact of the lettering can be reduced by painting the name the same colour as the building.

The street number was often displayed on the top light over the doors. Advantages of this tradition include:

➤ Couriers can easily find the premises
➤ A customer who knows only the street address can find the business
➤ Another chance to discreetly display the business or building name above or below the number

Building Services and Other Fixtures

When considering design of signage it is a good time to look at the building as a whole. Perhaps there are air-conditioning units or satellite dishes which obscure building features, or items of maintenance which could be attended to, thus improving the overall appeal of the premises?

Air-conditioning units and similar fixtures should be:
➤ Placed in the least visible location (including visibility from vantage points)
➤ Painted to match the surroundings

They should not:
➤ Obscure building features (windows, parapets, decorative features)
➤ Be reflective
➤ Be visible from the street
➤ Have visible cables, wiring or pipe work

Removal of old signs from the verandah fascia may reveal the original fascia and mouldings. This is an ideal time to repair and restore mouldings and soffits.

ABOVE: Building names displayed on building façades and top lights above doors or shop front windows.

ABOVE: Air conditioning units disrupt the rhythm of the façade.
Appendix

Glossary of architectural terms
Cornice: a continuous projection at the top of a wall
Facade: the front face of a building
Fascia: a plain horizontal surface, such as the front edge of a verandah
Finial: moulded or carved ornament on the peak of a roof
Former: the building is no longer referred to by its original name (e.g. former Hotel Central)
Old: the original occupant has moved to a new building (e.g. old Fire Station)
Parapet: the extension of a wall above a roof line
Pilaster: a rectangular column which is attached to the wall, only projecting a small amount
Relief: a raised design on a surface
Soffit: the exposed underside of a verandah or eaves
Stall board: a solid panel supporting the base of a shop window
Splayed: cutting a corner on the angle

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- Bruce Jenkins Photography  www.thephotographers.co.nz
- no9 marketing + design  www.no9.co.nz
Further information
For a copy of these Signage Guidelines please contact the Napier City Council Planning Department or The Art Deco Trust.

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