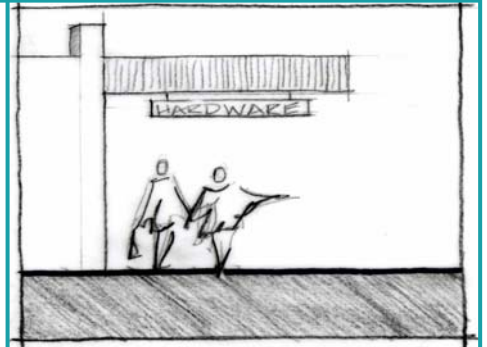


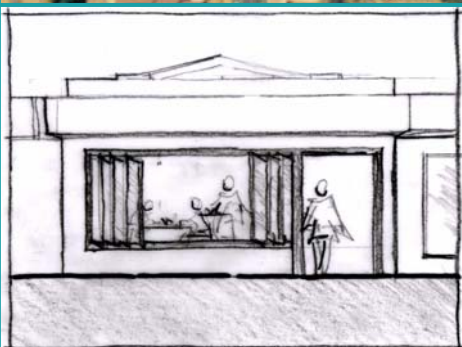
# TORQUAY TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION PROJECT

## Urban Design Guidelines



### Jump Starting the Heart

Amended February 2007



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**Note:**

These guidelines are an extract of the report *Torquay Town Centre Revitalisation Project 2001*. Implementation of the streetscape component of the *Revitalisation Project* report was agreed to by Council in November 2003 with a number of important changes. These guidelines comprise Part 4.4 (*Urban design guidelines*) of Chapter 4 of that report with amendments to reflect strategic work and implementation works that have been undertaken since its adoption. The more significant changes include rationalisation of the multiple sub-precincts and simplification of the landscape (and streetscape) works.

# Urban design guidelines

## Introduction

The Torquay Town Centre is characterised by its casual, relaxed atmosphere and strong associations with the coast and beach culture. There are a variety of building styles along Gilbert Street with no consistent or prevailing theme. However, the 'village' atmosphere often referred to derives from a low-rise built form and a consistent rhythm of relatively narrow shopfronts that provide an interesting, active and well-articulated streetscape.

The built form of Gilbert Street is well and truly grounded in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with no legacy of older buildings upon which to build a stereotypical heritage streetscape theme. The future built form should therefore avoid the adoption of a kitsch 'olde worlde' idiom and instead concentrate on celebrating the youthful, brash vibrancy that is associated with Torquay.

The following design guidelines are provided to encourage an innovative, adventurous approach to building design in the Torquay Town Centre. They are intended to stimulate ideas rather constrain or restrict. True to the culture of Torquay, individuality is to be encouraged and as such the use of diagrams has been minimised in order to avoid thoughtless replication.

The guidelines provide a canvas on which individual flair can be expressed, whilst preserving the fundamental and valued character of Torquay – human scale, interesting frontages, vibrancy - and complementing the streetscape plan outlined in the preceding section.

While the guidelines provide a framework for the whole of the expanded town centre, their core focus is on the central area (Area 1) depicted in the following diagram. For more detailed advice on Area 2 refer to *Torquay Town Centre, Foreshore Zone Design Guidance, Feb 2007*.

**Figure A: Urban design focus area**



## Building height and setback

The low rise built form of Torquay is an important element of the ‘coastal village’ character of the town. The comfortable, human scale of the existing buildings allows the sun to penetrate into pedestrian areas and provides expansive views of the sky – a contrast to the urban environments from which many visitors to Torquay are seeking respite.

In order to maintain the existing scale and avoid overshadowing of the main streets and public places, the height limits outlined in Figure B are recommended. Higher elements, such as flag poles, architectural features, roof treatments etc may be considered if they advance the coastal design of the building and are supported with a building that advances environmentally sustainable design principles. Further, these elements are not to cause overshadowing or loss of sunlight, create a sense of visual bulk, or compromise the proportions of the streetscape.

Building set backs are also an important element of the character of Torquay. Along Gilbert Street shopfronts directly abut the road reserve and there are few remaining vehicle crossings. This promotes a consistent image and enhances safety by avoiding pedestrian-vehicle conflict and secluded loitering places.

A zero lot line is therefore recommended for all boundaries, with two exceptions. A 7 metre wide splay is recommended at the corners of Gilbert Street and the Esplanade in order to open up views to the ocean and to provide an expansive pedestrian area and focal point right at the ‘front’ entrance to the Torquay Town Centre. In other precincts side setbacks may be necessary in order to accommodate vehicle access to rear car parks. Setback recommendations are also outlined in Figure B.

All plant, equipment, and plumbing must be located within the building envelopes outlined in Figure B and be located or screened so as not to be visible from the street.

**Figure B: Town centre precinct building heights and setbacks**

Location	Setbacks	Height Limit
<b>Core Area:</b>	Front: 0m Other boundaries: 0m*	Predominantly 2 storeys / 8.0 metres.  Higher elements must be supported with detailed design considerations for the whole building that respect the streetscape character and sunlight / shadowing impacts on adjoining premises, and advance coastal design and environmentally sustainable design principles.

\* Except where a building setback is required to accommodate on-site car parking or vehicle access lanes.

## Building design

Building design in the Torquay Town Centre should be innovative and adventurous, drawing on the coastal and surf theme, whilst contributing interest, vitality and interaction. The *Surf Coast Style and Colours Policy* provides an invaluable starting point, however references may also be made to the simple, unpretentious building forms of the 1940s and 50s – a seminal period in the development of Torquay.

Interaction with the environment is fundamental to the Torquay ethos and as such building design and the choice of materials should be based on principals of ecological sustainability. The use of durable and recycled materials is particularly encouraged.

The identity of shops should be enhanced through innovative design rather than size and bulk. Forms may reflect natural elements with free flowing wave like structures or more rigid forms conveying juttied or rugged cliff faces.

Where larger buildings are proposed, façade detail, materials and colour should be designed to provide interest and articulation. The traditional 'strip shopping centre' image of multiple shopfronts should be maintained.

Roof forms and materials, where visible, should be designed to complement the building design and contribute to the interest and variety of the streetscape.

Facade detail should be in keeping with the 'surf/beach' theme, incorporating colours and materials that complement the existing natural and built environment. Materials might include weathered timber, corrugated iron or mosaic tiling.

Blank walls should be avoided, particularly on commercial street frontages. Where it is impractical to provide windows, consideration should be given to the use of glass blocks or other design features, which break up the surface and provide interest.

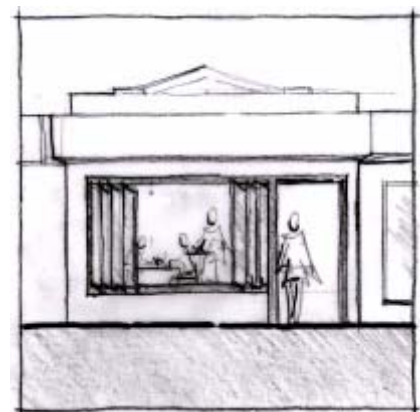
The general proportions of building facades can be improved with the addition of parapets. The individuality of small shop fronts will be reinforced by a diversity of parapet shapes.

At ground floor level shop fronts should be inviting and encourage interaction. The use of a combination of solid and glass is preferred to fully glazed shopfronts.

Al fresco dining can be encouraged by designing shopfronts with fully or partially opening windows and doors, allowing the smell of food and a festive atmosphere to spill into the street.



*Docklands, Vancouver*



Weather protection should be provided on all retail frontages.

Simple, cantilevered awnings reflect the modernist styling of some of the older buildings in Gilbert Street and avoid cluttering the pedestrian space with veranda posts.

First floor setback areas on the north side of Gilbert Street may be used for outdoor dining, providing an entirely new dimension to street life and offering attractive views along the street to the foreshore.

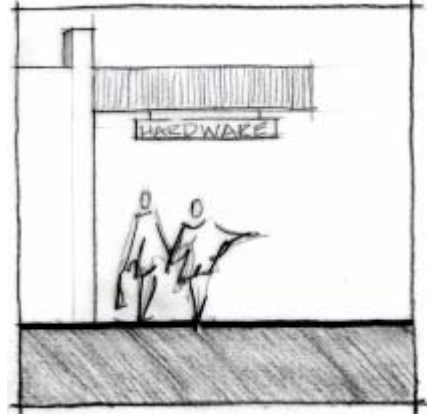
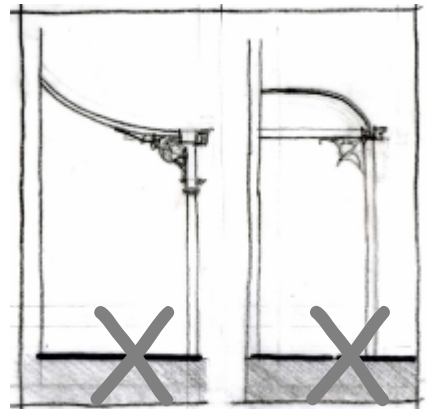
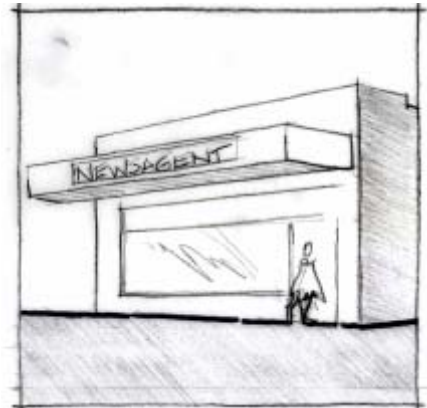
Reproduction heritage verandas and post-supported awnings are strongly discouraged as they are inconsistent with the character of Torquay, add to visual clutter, and impede pedestrian movements.

Veranda posts would conflict with the streetscape plan for Gilbert Street, which integrates pedestrian and vehicle spaces and utilises contemporary feature bollards and street furniture.

Awnings should be located at a height and width to provide enclosure and weather protection without creating a sense of claustrophobia.

The underside of the awning should be approximately 3 metres above footpath level to allow room for business identification signs.

Awning widths should match existing awnings, provided that a sufficient setback from the vehicle carriageway is provided to avoid damage by trucks. The appropriate width may need to be determined on a case-by-case basis, particularly on corners and where there is a road camber adjacent to the awning.

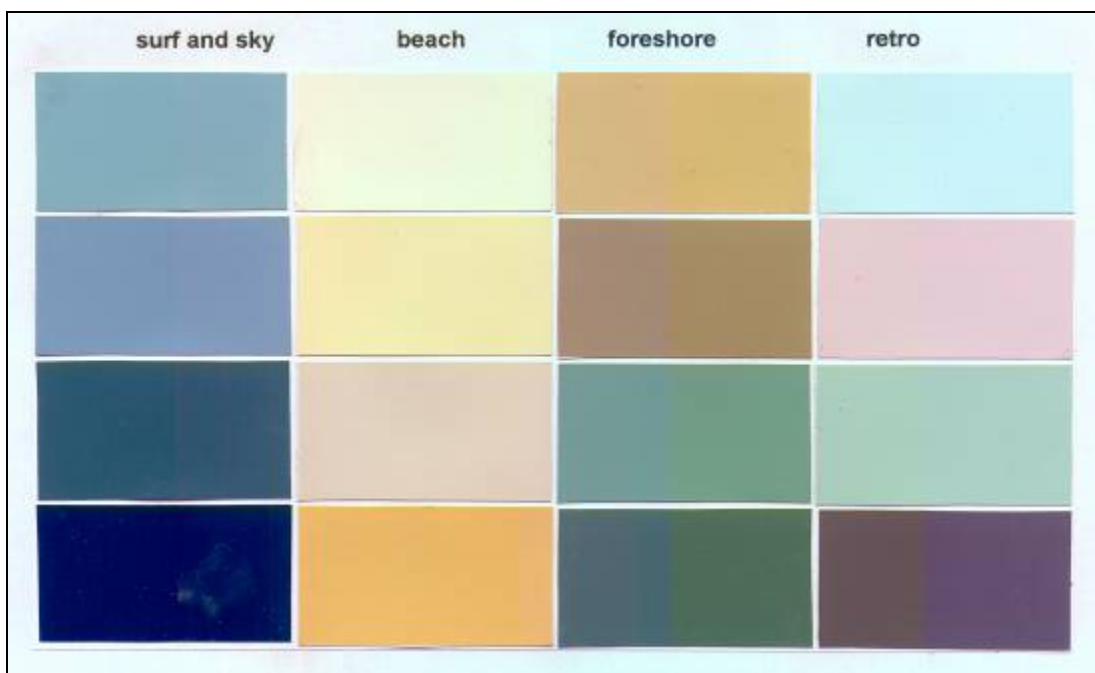


## Colour Schedule

The *Surf Coast Style and Colours Policy* states that ‘in the commercial areas and tourist precincts in coastal townships, colours should be used which assist in creating a vibrant and colourful streetscape. Generally it is envisaged these would be quite bright and vibrant conveying a feeling of beaches, sand, water and “activity”.’

An indicative palette of colours (Figure C) has been selected based on these themes and including a selection of ‘retro’ colours which recollect the pastels of the 1940s and 50s. The palette is not intended to be prescriptive; its purpose is illustrative.

**Figure C: Colours encouraged within the precinct**



## Planting

Mounded garden beds add sculptural form and visual interest to streetscape, with the organic forms contrasting with the right angled geometry of the built environment. Local boulders combined with indigenous grasses and shrubs are used to reflect the rugged coastal environment of Torquay.

Street tree planting combines the existing trees with supplementary native planting of *Banksia marginata* (Coast Banksia), *Allocasuarina littoralis* (Black Sheoak), *Eucalyptus bellarinensis* (Bellarine Yellow Gum) and *Melaleuca lanceolata* (Coastal Moonah). Positioning of the major street trees will be to highlight entrance points, meeting areas and to create landscaped links to Taylor Park and the foreshore area.



Planting in the town centre, beyond the Gilbert Street precinct incorporates a variety of native trees, shrubs and grasses to provide thematic links to areas adjoining the Torquay Town Centre and the natural, coastal environment beyond. This is particularly emphasised through the reoccurrence of distinctive vegetation including feathery Black Sheoaks and the robust Coast Banksias.

### Objectives

- To provide protection from the sun and wind and to soften the dominance of hard surfaces and car parks.
- To reinforce a sense of human scale and enclosure to the village.
- To use native Australian plants with preference for species indigenous to the area.
- To enhance existing views within and along Gilbert Street and provide visual links to the foreshore and Taylor Park.
- To minimise water consumption and maintenance costs through the use of native and indigenous vegetation.

### Design guidelines

- Street planting within the shopping centre area will provide a thematic link to the natural surrounds with the selection of species that evoke the nature of the coastal environmental context.
- Extensive use of trees is promoted throughout car parks to provide shelter and break up the visual impact of hard surfaces. A combination of the trees, shrubs and groundcovers provide visual relief and shelter without obstructing vision.
- Understorey planting of shrubs and grasses in the garden beds introduces a lower level of vegetation focusing on form, colour and texture. The grasses and flowering groundcovers will consolidate planting and strengthen the coastal theme.

The action plan for the Torquay Town Centre landscape works is presented in Figure D. This action plan has been largely implemented.





## Signage

Signs are an essential promotional tool for businesses and assist shoppers in identifying destinations and making choices. Well-designed signage can also add vitality to commercial streetscapes, promoting a perception of excitement and a sense of place.

On the other hand, in a competitive environment the desire for an individual business to be noticed creates the temptation to use large or garish signage. Such an approach promotes an obtrusive, cluttered appearance that detracts from the architectural qualities of buildings and undermines the positive impact of streetscape works.

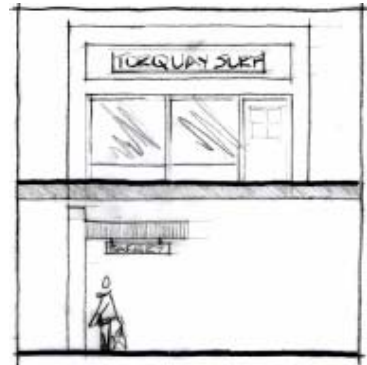
The *Surf Coast Planning Scheme* provides a statutory framework for the control of advertising signs within which the recommendations of this study must fit. The level of control applied to signs depends on the relevant land use zone and a comprehensive list of definitions exists to cover all types of signs. The core area is subject to minimal control, meaning that many signs can be displayed without a planning permit

No decision guidelines currently exist with respect to business signs in the core area. Free-standing signs located on the footpath are exempt from planning scheme controls due to the operation of a local law.

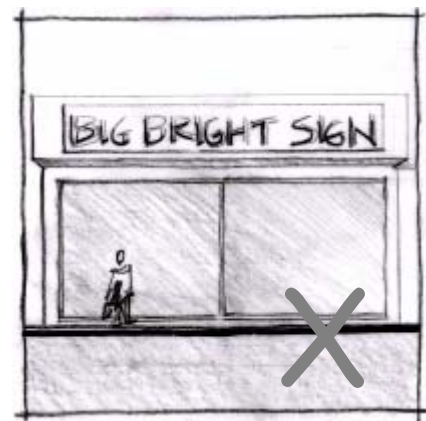
Figure E is a table which summarises the advertising sign controls in the planning scheme and provides specific decision making guidelines to be applied where a planning permit is required. The guidelines are derived from the objectives listed immediately below.

### Signage Design Objectives

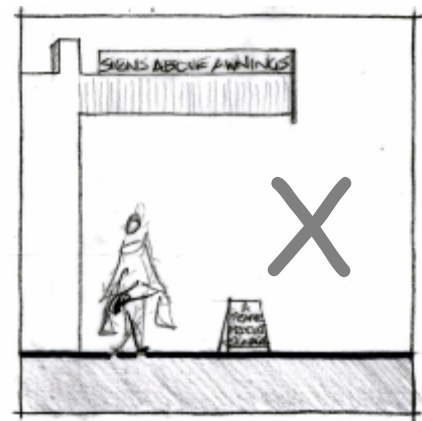
- To encourage effective advertising signage that enhances streetscapes and individual buildings.
- To ensure that advertising signs complement urban design initiatives outlined in the precinct master plan and streetscape concept plan.
- To discourage advertising signs and structures that disrupt the streetscape and create a perception of clutter.
- To ensure that signage is scale in proportion to buildings and verandahs and does not obscure building features.
- To encourage consistency in signage with respect to location and the information conveyed.
- To promote pedestrian safety and convenience by discouraging the placement of signs in pedestrian thoroughfares.



*Well-proportioned signs serve to promote and identify businesses without detracting from the streetscape environment.*



*Large, disproportionate signs detract from the design of the building and reduce human scale and streetscape amenity.*



*Above veranda signs are ineffective and detract from the appearance of the building. Free-standing signs disrupt pedestrian flows.*

The sign descriptions used in Figure E are taken from the *Surf Coast Planning Scheme*. The definitions cover different attributes of the sign, such as information content, illumination, location and structure. As such a single sign may fall into more than one category. The decision guidelines should therefore be read carefully to ensure that all facets of a particular sign are properly considered.

### **Signage design guidelines**

The following design guidelines apply to all signs where a permit is required.

- Advertising signs should be designed to integrate with the architectural style and character of a building and where possible should be included as an integral part of the design theme of a development.
- Advertising signs attached to buildings should not obscure architectural features and supporting structures should not be obtrusive when viewed from public areas.
- The advertising area should be proportionate to the existing building or structure on which the sign is located and should not unreasonably obscure views to surrounding signs.
- Advertising schemes should be consistent with the concept of Surf Coast Design by incorporating graphics, symbols and colours that reflect themes of beach, ocean and natural environment.
- Above veranda height advertising should be limited to shop and business identification and/or name painted on, or fixed flush to, the building facade (eg. Real Estate, Jetset Travel, Thrifty Link Hardware).
- At verandah level advertising signs should provide information about the nature of the shop, name and phone number (eg newspapers, vegetables, fresh meat).
- Below veranda level detailed and specific information about the goods and/or services offered may be provided.
- Promotional and product signs are strongly discouraged.
- Portable/temporary signage is strongly discouraged.
- Signage on shop fronts should allow for individuality whilst avoiding reflective surfaces and treatments that create visual clutter.

**Figure E: Advertising sign controls and guidelines for the Core Area**

<b>Sign</b>	<b>Planning scheme controls</b>	<b>Guidelines</b>
Above-verandah sign Animated sign High wall sign Major promotion sign Panel sign Pole sign Reflective sign Sky sign	<u>Permit required</u>	Avoid.
Bed and breakfast sign Home occupation sign Promotion sign	<u>No permit required</u> if the total advertising area of all signs to each premises does not exceed 8sqm (excluding a sign with an advertising area not exceeding 1.5sqm that is below a verandah, or if no verandah, that is less than 3.7m above pavement level).	If condition not met, avoid.

<b>Sign</b>	<b>Planning scheme controls</b>	<b>Guidelines</b>
Business identification sign	<u>No permit required</u> if the total advertising area of all signs to each premises does not exceed 8sqm (excluding a sign with an advertising area not exceeding 1.5sqm that is below a verandah, or if no verandah, that is less than 3.7m above pavement level).	Refer to general decision guidelines above.
Bunting sign	<u>Permit required</u>	Temporary banners and flags may be permitted for promotional purposes. Bunting and streamer signs should be avoided.
Direction sign	<u>No permit required.</u>	Not applicable.
Floodlit sign	<u>Permit required</u>	Illumination levels should not cause detriment to the amenity of nearby dwellings. Refer to general decision guidelines above
Internally-illuminated sign	<u>No permit required if:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The total advertising area to each premises does not exceed 1.5sqm</li> <li>• No part of the sign is above a veranda or, if no veranda, more than 3.7m above pavement level</li> <li>• The sign is more than 30m from a residential zone or traffic lights.</li> </ul>	Illumination levels should not cause detriment to the amenity of nearby dwellings. Refer to general decision guidelines above