



Art Deco Trust (Inc) • Deco Centre, 163 Tennyson Street • P O Box 133, Napier NZ
Tel (06) 835 0022 • Fax (06) 835 1912
Email trust@artdeconapier.com Web Site www.artdeconapier.com

ART DECO TRUST INFORMATION SHEET 14

© ART DECO TRUST (INC) APRIL 2008

ART DECO TRUST POLICIES ON PRESERVATION, DESIGN & COLOUR SCHEMES

The Art Deco Trust is opposed to the demolition or insensitive alteration of any historic Art Deco era building in Napier.

Napier's fame as 'The Art Deco City' is due not only to the architecture of the 1920s and 1930s buildings considered individually, but more to the overall townscape of predominantly Art Deco buildings of similar vintage, scale and style. The collective value of the Art Deco City is far greater than the sum of its constituent parts, and any demolition weakens the entire city in a way that can never be repaired.

Visitors to Napier come here to enjoy and study the authentic earthquake-era architecture - not the modern buildings. Hence the loss of even a modest Art Deco building leaves Napier the poorer, regardless of the merits of any modern replacement. - even one which attempts to be sympathetic in scale and design.

Any reduction in the number of remaining Art Deco buildings in Napier is a threat to Napier's tourism potential, and is culturally and historically insensitive.

It has always been the Trust's policy to work for preservation by promoting the tourism potential of Napier's Art Deco buildings rather than by taking direct action against building owners. The Trust undertakes to assist with the promotion of businesses occupying Art Deco era buildings through the media, publications, advertising, activities and the Art Deco Weekend, to reinforce the commercial viability of the buildings.

The Trust has a very pragmatic approach to preservation, and one of our objectives is, and always has been, "to work for the preservation of Napier's Art Deco buildings as viable commercial properties." This means that we accept that the buildings need to adapt to changing needs and to commercial pressures. We work closely with building owners, when we have the opportunity, with the goal of achieving a win/win outcome for everyone - the building owner, the Trust, and of course the community. Our suggestions do not usually create the problems that a developer might expect, and we appreciate and sympathise with the developer's need to find profitable solutions.

So in order to dissuade building owners or developers from demolishing or inappropriately altering a building, the Trust will:

- Ensure that building owners are aware of the value and potential of Art Deco buildings.
- Discuss with building owners alternatives to demolition or alteration, and advocate creative re-use of older buildings to ensure their continuing commercial viability.
- Act as catalyst and facilitator to assist owners in maintaining and improving their buildings.

While the Trust is aware that it is usually a property owner's right to do as they wish with their property, it also believes that with such rights come responsibilities to the wider community. So if a building is endangered and its loss or alteration will adversely affect a unique community asset, and if the cooperative approach has failed, the Trust may take direct action.

ACTION WHICH THE TRUST MAY TAKE

The Trust can mobilise public opinion by encouraging newspapers, television and radio to inform the public and to condemn the proposal.

Mobilise the Trust's membership, the Hawke's Bay tourism industry and the broader public in boycotts, letter writing campaigns etc.

Alert Art Deco societies around the world to join the campaign.

Work with the N Z Historic Places Trust and other interested parties to bring pressure to bear on the owner.

Use all possible influence on local government to oppose the demolition or alteration as far as its powers permit.

POLICY ON THE DESIGN OF NEW BUILDINGS IN NAPIER

The Trust encourages new buildings in Napier, and especially in the Art Deco Quarter, to be designed in a style **compatible** with the Art Deco character of the city, rather than to be designed in the Art Deco style. Tourists visit Napier to see the authentic heritage buildings, not to see modern reproductions.

If an Art Deco building is being extended however, the appearance and construction should match the original.

The Trust believes that -

A well-designed building has its own integrity. It should be designed for today and tomorrow, and it is to be hoped that in 20 years time it will still be considered a building of merit and representative of its time.

New buildings in Napier should not be facile attempts to emulate buildings of the 1920s and 1930s.

New buildings should be stylish buildings of today, as befits a city of style.

They should not have token Art Deco elements added to them which are or will become clichés. New buildings should rather use symbols of today as decoration, or symbols related to the history of the site or area. If decoration is used, it should be added to a good building, not added with the intention of making it a good building.

New inner city buildings should be in harmony with the scale of the inner city area.

They should acknowledge the character of the city. While concrete may not be the material used, new buildings should reflect the solidity and permanence of the Art Deco buildings.

Art Deco references can be effectively used if this is done with wit and style. But a building should be designed as a modern interpretation of Art Deco, as was done with the UFS Dispensary, rather than as an attempt to look like a 1930s building.

The chief characteristics of Napier's Inner City buildings which should be considered when designing new buildings are:

- Human scale.
- Solidity (ie concrete construction).
- Simplicity.
- Window layout and grouping in threes or fives.
- The use of leadlight glasswork.
- Low relief decoration enhanced by soft colours.
- The imaginative use of electric lighting.
- Dates of construction on buildings.
- The use of decorative motifs, but relevant to the period of their construction or to the history of the company, the site, or the area, rather than Art Deco motifs.

The Trust recommends that the Napier City Council's **Art Deco Design Guide** be used when new buildings or the remodelling of existing ones is being considered.

And remember - retaining an existing Art Deco era building is always to be preferred to demolition and replacement. Tourists visit Napier to see genuine examples of Art Deco architecture, not modern imitations.

POLICY ON COLOUR SCHEMES FOR NAPIER BUILDINGS

Napier's Reconstruction buildings, erected between 1932 and 1939, were almost without exception finished in stucco tinted with pigment, giving a muted but colourful effect which was (apart from Hastings) unique in New Zealand at that time. In most cities, downtown buildings were finished in grey stucco, brick, stone veneer and cream painted wood. Colours used on the stucco buildings included cream, ochre, buff, pink, lime green, chrome green and blue, and usually two or three colours were used on one building to accent decorative details.

By the 1960s, buildings had begun to look shabby, and surface hair-cracking sometimes appeared. Most buildings were painted to disguise these faults, especially after the introduction of water-based paints which, unlike oil-based paints, could be applied to plastered concrete surfaces. In the 1950s and 60s, most were painted all over in cream or white, while during the 1970s some had treatments similar to the originals but in dark or earthy colours.

The Trust's policy has been to encourage the use of polychromatic schemes in soft pastels for the following reasons -

- To create a streetscape of warmth, colour and vibrancy, reminiscent of the effect when the buildings were new. However, the original colours are not replicated, except in special cases, because although colourful in the 1930s, they are sombre by the standards of today's paint palette, and because it is impossible to reproduce in paint the exact effect of tinted stucco.
- To allow the shadow effects of the decorative *bas relief* modelling to be appreciated, something which is not possible with darker colours which give the impression that a design has been painted on to a flat surface.
- To draw attention to the decorative areas, which to the unobservant eye are not apparent unless they are highlighted.
- To introduce sufficient 'edge' into the scheme to prevent the buildings becoming so 'tasteful that they are taken for granted'.