



Graduate perspectives

Last year I returned to university to study towards a Master of Urban Design at the University of Auckland. The decision to go back was due to a desire to gain more technical skills in urban design, to add to the urban policy and project work I had done previously. In brief, it was one of the most stimulating, yet intense years of my life.

Compiled by ANNA WOOD, Urbanismplus

Design studios provided the focus of the programme and this is where techniques were taught and mastered.

'Live' sites from the Auckland region were used for master planning exercises. For our class this included Swanson, Avondale, Henderson and Wynyard Quarter – enabling a focus on transport orientated development (TOD) and sustainable intensification.

Three of my classmates from the 2010 MURbDes programme are profiled here, presenting their studio submissions.

Hayley Fisher and **Grant Neill** both showcase Wynyard Quarter – developing master plans and designs for the brown-field site on Auckland CBD's harbour edge.

Students tackled residential intensification, establishing central city communities and supporting the marine industry that exists on the site.

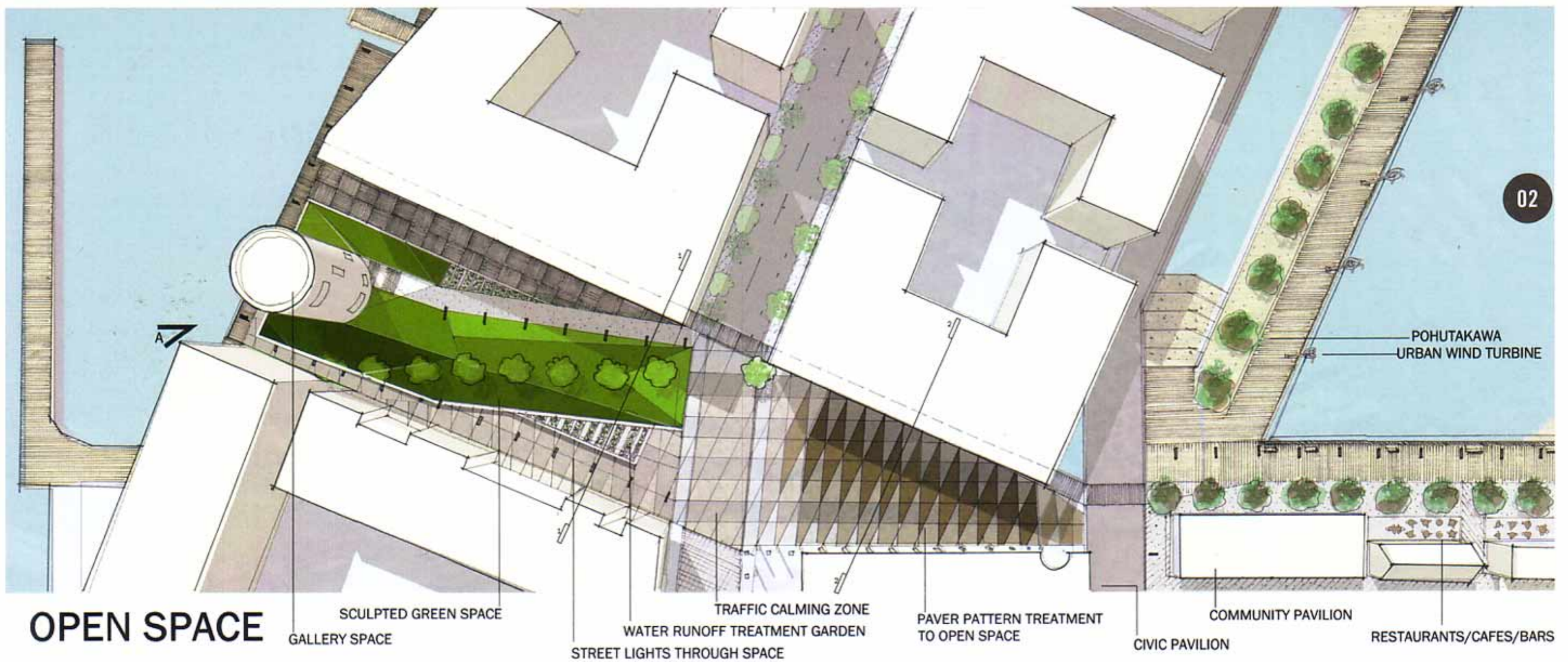
Jere Wilks shares his work for Henderson – presenting a design response to enable a sustainable future for the mixed industrial/suburban area. Work here explored opportunities for intensification at growth nodes along the western rail corridor.

The course, and in particular the studios, encouraged us to research, test and apply design principles and techniques. A focus on building typologies was something I found particularly interesting and was a useful addition to my planning background. A

research project enabled me to focus specifically on the perimeter block typology and its application to the New Zealand context.

At the conclusion of a busy yet invigorating year, we left the programme with the knowledge and techniques to work on urban design projects at a range of scales. The course enhanced our passion for the design and function of the urban environment and left me with no regrets for temporarily reverting back to student life. **U**

Anna Wood
 MURbDes (Hons), MPlan (Hons), BPlan (Hons)
 Urban Planner/Designer, Urbanismplus



WYNYARD QUARTER – HAYLEY FISHER

Our challenge at Wynyard Quarter on Auckland’s waterfront, was to develop a master plan illustrating how the site would function in the future, successfully responding to its currently industrial and under-developed nature.

Wynyard Quarter is a much-debated corner of Auckland and presented an opportunity to challenge ourselves as budding urban designers within a realistic context.

My project investigated the concept of ‘local culture’ by creating spaces that responded to our values in a contemporary society. The Auckland waterfront is steeped in a rich history both colonial and Maori. Consideration of this historical context was also infused into the scheme to create identity and a sense of place.

One example was the inter-relationship between the natural landscape and built form, which is privileged within the master plan. Although the site was designed to be densely urban, the implementation of a swale to collect water from buildings presents an opportunity to reduce ecologically damaging stormwater runoff, as well as create an attractive setting for new local communities. It also allows an incorporation of native coastal planting which imparts a sense of identity and grounds the space to its context.

The role of open space within the Wynyard Quarter was to facilitate a range of different

spatial experiences both intimate and formal. It was also designed to allow the functioning of everyday life and cultural exchange as Auckland society moves from a bi-cultural context to a more diverse multi-cultural network. A civic space is incorporated into the master plan, achieved through a pavilion and a formal plaza. The constriction of the eastern edge of the plaza physically concentrates the experience of entry to the large open space. This area can accommodate large outdoor performances as well as create a powerful presence when occupied by only a few. Columns flank the pavilion, softening the boundaries of interior and exterior. The columns’ form references the Kuta reed that once grew in the streams around the area. The position of the pavilion is also important as it is situated at the hub of the Quarter and responds to the wider context orientated to Rangitoto cone with the main entry facing the rising sun. [02]

This civic space was designed as a pause along a greater journey of experiences around the Wynyard Quarter master plan. A series of spaces with differing characteristics and purposes, nomadic, conversational, powerful and insignificant, all contributed to creating a ‘place’ adding to Auckland’s waterfront experience.

*Hayley Fisher
B.Arch (Hons), M.Urb Des (Hons)
H.Fisher Architecture Ltd.*

WYNYARD QUARTER – GRANT NEILL

Life

Wynyard Quarter is a CBD “bookend” positioned on an edge to the sea [01]. It celebrates multiple urban roles while offering the opportunity for life at its edges to be permeated by the life of the harbour.

It anticipates public use, high-density residential living, and commercial activity: the life of the CBD is extended to the Wynyard Quarter and the harbour edge.

The peninsula offers unique opportunities for public life on a regional scale, by ensuring the majority remains publicly owned and used. An urban regional park is accessed past a sculptured lake that signifies arrival, beyond an intensely activated “blue square”. [03]

Space and connections

Common social and activity precincts are created by contextually consolidating compatible activities; public use on the harbour edge, residential in the enclave of the basin area, and commercial buffer strips to Fanshawe Street and the marine industrial area. A marina, maritime tourism base and a beach face the recreational area of Westhaven.

Wynyard Quarter connects directly with the



CBD and the region, Quay Street extends and terminates with a large public space. A transverse connection runs to the end of the peninsula from Fanshawe Street serving the public, park and residential areas. Another serves the existing marine industrial areas, separating potential conflicts.

Public transport systems are integral. Within the residential and commercial precincts a pedestrian scale "T.O.D." environment is created by breaking down the existing large grid with lanes and paths; transport interchanges are at the centre. Public transport loops through the regional park.

Public space in the residential precinct is purposeful and hierarchical; a central square is a space of gathering and meeting, an outdoor living room for the residents; a water courtyard public space is an intimately scaled bay with vistas out of the precinct. A connecting street continues by pedestrian bridge to the existing viaduct precinct, with spaces for pedestrian engagement, movement and encounter. Perimeter block courtyards are opened up into publicly accessible shared spaces – apartments orientate toward the shared spaces for 'ownership' and security [04].

Buildings

An urban contextual scale is achieved by the existing city street grid continuing over the site.

Facades facing each other in the street

house common activities and form legible streetscapes with purpose, by activities changing mid-block, instead of whole blocks of activity changing at streets.

Perimeter blocks change to singular buildings toward the openness of the peninsula, as the direct connections force block sizes to reduce; giving potential for dramatic public architecture of a scale commensurate with the harbour it sits in.

Grant Neill
Registered Architect, BArch, MURbDes (Hons)
Grant Neill Architects Ltd

HENDERSON – JERE WILKS

Following a site visit to the Henderson valley, it was considered that an opportunity for redevelopment existed within the large industrial area slightly south of the town centre. This brown-field land displays several 'deficiencies' antithetical to a TOD proposal, including single use zoning; relatively poor connectivity through the road network; inefficient use of land displaying outdated industrial buildings and the adjoining residential areas being poorly connected to nearby rail stations.

In seeking to address these issues, the

design project sought to create a mid-valley TOD predicated on altering the current built form parameters. These amendments included changing the current zoning to allow for mixed use capabilities while still recognising the economic opportunities created by the industrial zone. Architecturally, a distinct built form differentiation was proposed to encourage a sense of place particular to the neighbourhood. The adaptability of building design for future uses, specific materiality and small building design was also considered, aimed at both economic affordability and aesthetic variance within the urban fabric.

The economic mechanism for delivering this design proposal was via the identification of an industry that could reward the region in growth opportunities and by tailoring the TOD around that industry's requirements and support services. The three film studios within the immediate vicinity of the proposed TOD were highlighted as just such an industry. Their requirements would include cost-effective and adaptable large buildings with ease of access to transport systems. Supporting businesses would be required in transport, accommodation and communication to name a few. Therefore the inclusion of small business neighbourhoods displaying adaptable spaces for a variety of use were proposed, specifically aimed at creating cost effective premises for the creation of new business opportunities.

Improving the connectivity across the valley was also explored. The primary design concept to deliver this was the inclusion of two new axial roads running approximately east-west. While obviously facilitating vehicular access their principal aim was to link the current disparate cycle and pedestrian systems at each side of the valley. This proposal then created ease of access to the new rail station via multiple forms of transportation. [05]

The uniting theme for consideration in the design was ecological, being underpinned by much of the now amalgamated Waitakere City Council's environmental aims. The built environment aspect proposed issues of water sustainability, collection and re-use along with alternative power generation as an integrated form of the architecture. Public open space was increased where possible, with multiple sites for community garden inclusion and planting strategies to reconcile the built environment as an 'island of heat' while creating identity through street tree hierarchies.

Jere Wilks
MURbDes, BLA (Hons)
Landscape Architect