

Survey names and shames best and worst buildings in Auckland

Auckland, 13 May 2008 – One of Auckland's top tourist attractions and a green hotel block are the public picks for the best and worst buildings in Auckland.

Over 2,500 people have voted in an online survey and the winners are:

The best building in Auckland: Auckland War Memorial Museum

The worst building in Auckland: Newton Comfort Inn and Suites

Discussing the winner of the best building, Jeremy Whelan, Managing Director Ignite Architects says, "People often respond to the familiar. Buildings that are truly authentic and memorable often stand out. People see historical buildings generally as permanent, durable, having a quality element and a strong sense of place."

Dr. Vanda Vitali, director of the Auckland Museum says, "Our Museum was built with donations from ordinary Aucklanders as a memorial to the thousands of fellow citizens who died at war, and as a new home to the city's 77-year-old Museum. That it continues to hold such a place in the heart of our public is a testament to the people who built this remarkable place of remembrance.

"I am sure these people would be delighted if they were told that in 2008, 80 years after the Museum was opened, over 30,000 Aucklanders came here to commemorate a full ANZAC programme. But I believe a key reason our building is so loved, is because inside it holds the beating heart of our city, our identity, our memories and our imagination."

However the same cannot be said about some of the city's apartments.

"The public have noticed the trend in the poor quality of hotel, residential and apartment buildings that have appeared within the city environment," says Jeremy Whelan.

"Some are issues of poor urban design and others such as the Hobson Street precinct are simply poor design, with repetitive monolithic buildings that offer little amenity to the user and do not contribute to the public realm."

Trish Miles, General Manager Newton Comfort Inn and Suites, the building voted as the worst in Auckland says, "As soon as I got the call about the survey I knew exactly what it was for and it wasn't to let me know we'd won! You think the people voting had it hard, what about me? I have to come to work to it every day."

However Trish is also upbeat about the survey results. "Every cloud has a silver lining. I've been hoping for a year now to have it painted. I've got a photo on my desktop showing everyone what the new paintjob could look like. This sort of publicity is just what I need to persuade the powers that be to get the building painted sooner rather than later.

"But to me the building is like a person. It's lovely on the inside, so you shouldn't judge a book by its cover".

She says she definitely won't be keeping the notorious colour scheme "No. The green goes!"

Jeremy Whelan has been impressed with the interest the survey has generated, "For its first year the website had over 2,500 votes and the survey has started a process of dialogue on radio and in newspapers about our city.

People need to get involved and debate about architecture in our city and how it contributes to everybody's well being and enjoyment".

Ignite Architects will publish the results and continue to analyse the trends that come from this survey, to better inform their own work. The results will be used to build up a database of best and worst buildings over time, start to record Auckland's history and how it changes over time.

"We are committed to the survey. We may also look to include other main cities in New Zealand. Ignite Architects wish the survey to be an annual event and a public forum to debate architecture in our city," says Jeremy Whelan.

Ends

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Notes to editors

- Images of the buildings as well as photos of the Auckland Museum and Newton Comfort Inn being presented with an award are available.
- bestandworst.co.nz was an online survey open to the public to vote for the best and worst buildings in Auckland.
- 30 buildings were selected based on their prominence and ease of recognition.
- The voters also had the opportunity to add comments about the buildings. Some of these comments will be show on www.bestandworst.co.nz from Tuesday 13 May.

Additional commentary from Jeremy Whelan, Managing Director Ignite Architects

- Another feature which people often acknowledge is those buildings which create a strong sense of place. Often many modern commercial buildings lack the visual elements that create a strong quality feel.
- Composite cladding materials do not give permanence when viewed against stonework in buildings.
- The Auckland Museum and the Auckland Ferry Building are buildings featuring permanent materials. It is interesting that West Plaza, although more modern, is well liked, also due to the permanence of the materials and the way they are used in the composition of the buildings. Due to their prominent locations within the city, a good building will reveal different things about itself when viewed from different distances.

- Strong, iconic and permanent feeling buildings are what the public value over modern, slick, curtain walled glazed buildings. This emphasised by Chancery, West Plaza, Metropolis, Sky Tower and Cumulus in Parnell, being the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th best buildings.

Buildings ranked by “Best” votes

1. Auckland War Memorial Museum
2. Auckland Ferry Building
3. Chancery
4. West Plaza
5. Metropolis
6. Sky Tower
7. Cumulus
8. Auckland University Business School
9. Fisherman’s Wharf
10. Dilworth
11. Vero Centre
12. Kate Edgar
13. Vodafone House
14. High Court
15. Princes’ Wharf
16. Lumley Centre
17. Victoria Park Market
18. Vector Arena
19. Air New Zealand Building
20. PWC Tower
21. TVNZ
22. D72
23. Auckland City Council
24. Tank Farm
25. Newton Comfort Inn and Suites
26. Scene Apartments
27. Auckland University Architecture Building
28. Aotea Centre
29. Copthorne
30. Downtown Shopping Centre

Buildings ranked by “Worst” votes

1. Newton Comfort Inn and Suites
2. Auckland City Council
3. Scene Apartments
4. Tank Farm
5. Downtown Shopping Centre
6. Copthorne
7. Aotea Centre
8. D72
9. Vector Arena
10. Sky Tower
11. Cumulus
12. PWC Tower
13. Auckland University Architecture Building
14. Princes’ Wharf
15. Vodafone House
16. Lumley Centre
17. Vero Centre
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