



**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 1327  
NEW CITY HOTEL AND SETTING – 527 COLOMBO STREET,  
CHRISTCHURCH**



**PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 16.12.2014**

**HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.*

The New City Hotel has high historical and social significance as a hospitality business with roots in Christchurch's earliest days, and which has operated continuously on its present site since 1931. It is the last traditional hotel operating within the central city. It is also of significance for its connections with prominent Christchurch-based brewing and soft drink concern, Ballin Brothers, and their Jewish co-religionists and fellow prominent business family the Friedlanders, who between them owned the hotel for more than fifty years. Jewish families were well-represented in the brewing and hotel industries in New Zealand.

The City Hotel, a Christchurch landmark, was established on the 'triangle' at the intersection of High and Colombo Streets in 1864 by J. C. Ruddenklau. In 1929 the City Hotel licence was purchased by Ballin Brothers, a prominent Christchurch-based brewing and soft drink business. Ballins closed the City in 1930 and transferred the license to a new, much larger, building on a new site at the corner of Colombo and Bath Streets – the New City Hotel. The

new location was close to the railway station and the industrial area around Moorhouse Avenue. This gave the New City Hotel the opportunity to cater for both the travelling public and workers from the nearby wool stores and railway yards.

At the time the New City Hotel opened in late 1931 there were a large number of hotels within the four avenues, and a particular concentration in the vicinity of the railway station. From the mid twentieth century however, changes in modes and patterns of travel, work and leisure saw many of these establishments close. Some hotel buildings were adapted for new uses but a number were demolished. The Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 completed this process, with most of remaining hotel buildings damaged and subsequently demolished. Today just two historic hotel buildings remain within in the central city – the former Grosvenor and the New City - and only the New City continues to function as a traditional hotel. The New City Hotel sustained light damage in the earthquakes and was closed for a brief period for repairs.

The Ballin family retained majority ownership of the hotel until 1958, when by arrangement with New Zealand Breweries they divested their brewing and hotel interests to focus on their core business of soft drink and cordial production. A new company was formed to hold the New City Hotel, with members of the Friedlander family continuing as directors until it was wound up in 1985.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.*

The New City Hotel has high cultural significance as the sole surviving traditional hotel operating in the city centre. In this capacity it commemorates all the traditional hotels that formerly existed within the four avenues and the people who lived, worked, stayed and relaxed in them. It has the capacity to demonstrate cultural historical patterns of such things as recreation and conviviality, alcohol consumption and temperance, social attitudes to drink and drunkenness, liquor licensing, and travel and tourism. In particular it reflects the (primarily) male recreational pub culture that was a prominent feature of New Zealand life until the late twentieth century.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.*

The New City Hotel has architectural and aesthetic significance as a large Moderne building by important early twentieth century Christchurch architect John Steele Guthrie.

Moderne was a variant of the Art Deco style distinguished by its stream-lined forms. Associated with technology and travel, Moderne was a particularly popular style in the 1930s and 1940s for new building types such as cinemas and airports. The New City Hotel's unadorned planar facades, horizontal orientation, large steel casement windows and rounded corner are all typical of the style. Post the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-2011, other surviving examples of the Moderne by other architects in greater Christchurch include Santa Barbara (1935) in Victoria Street, West Avon apartment building (1936) in Montreal Street, the Instructional Building (1939) at the former RNZAF Station Wigram, and the British Hotel (1944) in Lyttelton. The Law Courts Hotel in Dunedin also has a very similar form and

appearance to the New City Hotel. The northern ground floor façade of the New City Hotel underwent modification in the early 1990s as part of a refit of the bar.

J. S. Guthrie began practising on his own account after he became a member of the NZIA in 1908, and was particularly active in the period between 1919 and 1929 when in partnership with his brother Maurice. Heavily influenced by trends in American architecture, Guthrie introduced Christchurch to the Californian Bungalow with *Los Angeles* (1909) and Colonial Georgian Revival with *Long Cottage* (1917). His Edmonds Factory (1920, demolished) showed the influence of American industrial design, and the Christchurch Boys High buildings (1926), American Collegiate Gothic. The New City Hotel appears to be the only significant example of Guthrie's work in the Moderne, and may also have introduced the style to Christchurch.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

*Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.*

The New City Hotel has technological significance for the extensive use of reinforced concrete, which has ensured that the building is a notable survivor of the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-2011.

### **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.*

The New City Hotel has high contextual significance on its site and within its wider context. The site and setting comprise the immediate land parcel. The building has landmark significance on its prominent street corner. The wider context of the hotel is the Moorhouse Avenue area, particularly the railway yards, the former Dalgety's woolstore (now Harvey Norman) and the former Grosvenor Hotel. The area had a particular mid twentieth century character, depleted since the Canterbury Earthquakes and the demolition of the former Railway Station and the former Technical College Memorial Hall, but still evident in buildings such as the New City, former Dalgety's Woolstore, former Williams Construction office, and the South City Christian Centre.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.*

The New City Hotel and its setting are of archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

### **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The New City Hotel has overall heritage significance to the Christchurch District including Banks Peninsula. The hotel has high historical and social significance as the last traditional hotel operating within the central city, with links back to the earliest days of settlement of Christchurch. In that capacity it is able to represent aspects of the common history and experience of the many hotels which once operated within the four Avenues. It is also significant for its connections with prominent Canterbury Jewish business families the Ballins' and the Friedlanders. The hotel has high cultural significance for the capacity it has to commemorate all the hotels that formerly existed within the four avenues, and the place they and the particular male pub sub-culture associated with them played in New Zealand society. The hotel has architectural and aesthetic significance as a large Moderne building by important early twentieth century Christchurch architect John Steele Guthrie. The hotel has technological significance for the extensive use of reinforced concrete, which has ensured that the building is a notable survivor of the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-2011. The hotel has high contextual significance on its site and within its wider context. It is a landmark on its prominent street corner, and has contextual relationship with the surviving buildings of the former Moorhouse Avenue industrial area, a number of which give the area a mid-twentieth century architectural character. The New City Hotel and its setting are of archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

#### **REFERENCES:**

CCC Heritage File: New City Hotel, 527 Colombo Street

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PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

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