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Dear Sir / Madam

## **Proposed Structure – Auckland Council**

The Urban Design Forum of New Zealand has a number of comments on the draft organisational structure for the Auckland Council, as set out in the Transition Agency's discussion documents of the 2nd and 20th November, 2009.

The Urban Design Forum of New Zealand has taken a keen interest in the future governance and organisational structures for the Auckland Region. This has included input in to the work of the Royal Commission and the Select Committee dealing with the enabling legislation.

The Royal Commission placed a significant weight on the importance of urban design to the future prosperity and liveability of the Auckland Region. This core theme needs to be carried forward into the new Council – its mandate and organisation.

Great cities come about from the interaction of a range of factors, including political leadership, skilled professionals (public and private) working together, and well resourced and integrated projects. Thus the success of the Auckland Council is as much dependent upon factors such as having the right skill sets and capabilities within the council, and integrating planning and funding, as it is with structure. Nevertheless, structure can get in the way of integrated outcomes.

At a higher level, the Forum remains concerned about the extent of integration between the three main groupings of the Council: that is the two standalone transport and infrastructure bodies, and the main council grouping. While policy for the standalone infrastructure groups is supposed to be co-ordinated at the council-level, operational and funding issues always drive infrastructure planning, often in a way that is dislocated from other city development projects. It is hard to see how this gap is to be closed by the new Council. A high-level of integration of transport investments with urban form is needed for Auckland to achieve good urban development. Urban design should be driving infrastructure decisions at the regional level as well as the local boards' "streetscape" level.

At the level of the main Council, from an urban design perspective, the structure needs to accommodate and support:

1. Urban design thinking and approaches that operate at the strategic, policy and implementation levels, rather than being associated with one particular silo or grouping. The new structure must facilitate both multi-disciplinary planning and design processes, but also multi-layered processes in that well founded projects need to have strategic as well as operational components to them, and design-based processes need the ability to range across, question, and develop both

strategic and operational / detailed layers in an iterative (not sequential) process.

2. Enhanced GIS / spatial analysis / 3D capability to support a step change in the ability to envision city futures and to monitor trends and consequences. This must include a stronger emphasis on urban economics and urban systems analysis.
3. The role of internal urban design champion needs to be provided for within the structure. Such a champion was a key part of the 2006 Auckland City Mayoral Taskforce on Urban Design and represents standard international practice. The champion is a person or group of professionals who can “float” across the different silos / sub groups, but with the status or clout within the organisation to ensure that good urban design processes and outcomes eventuate. One option would be for the champion role to be part of the Mayor’s executive office.
4. The on-going work of the Urban Design Panel as an external peer review body. There is a need for the work of the Panel to be supported with the appropriate resources.

The Forum would be willing to expand upon these themes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Scott', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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