

City Centre Advisory Panel Workshop

High Street Improvements project – workshop on long list design ideas

Wednesday 5 March 2025, 1:00 – 2:30pm

Present: Scott Pritchard, Dr Natalie Allen, Patrick Reynolds, Antony Phillips, Noelene Buckland, Genevive Sage, Debbie Summers, Grant Kemble, Cr Mike Lee, Conor Roberts (Auckland University of Technology alternate)

Apologies: Viv Beck, Neville Findlay, Adam Parkinson, Alec Tang, Amy Malcolm, Bernie Haldane, Haehaetu Barrett, Helen Robinson, Kiri Coughlan, Mayor Wayne Brown, George Crawford

Overview

The High Street Improvements project is part of a suite of projects in the midtown area that aim to support local businesses, create a more attractive and accessible district, promote sustainable travel options, and foster a safer and more vibrant community.

The High Street Improvements project is funded by the city centre targeted rate. The level of investment required will be determined through the design ideation process and engagement with the High Street community.

A comprehensive engagement process was undertaken between July and October 2024, where the High Street community shared their current challenges, and future aspirations, for High Street. The results of the community engagement are available [here](#).

An ideation process, to identify and develop ideas for High Street, is underway. The community aspirations, mana whenua values and project objectives are informing the ideation approach.

The ideation process has identified a long list of design ideas. These ideas include operational changes, street improvements and upgrades, and opportunities outside of the street environment.

Feedback on long list design ideas from the City Centre Advisory Panel will inform the refinement of the ideas and support the identification of a short list of design ideas for public consultation.

Workshop format

The workshop began with the project team presenting on the project outcomes, sharing technical insights, detailing the approach to design ideation, and outlining the long list design ideas.

Workshop members were invited to discuss the long-list ideas in small groups, each group shared with the broader group a summary of the key themes and discussion points with respect to the design ideas.

Panel discussion

The key themes of the Panel discussion are outlined below:

Alignment with the City Centre Masterplan

The Panel considered the role of High Street, both now and in the future, and reinforced that the City Centre Masterplan remains the guiding vision for the city centre. The City Centre Masterplan identifies High Street as a key part of a network of pedestrian priority laneways.

Some members of the Panel requested stronger recognition of City Centre Masterplan outcomes, including Access for Everyone (A4E), and that the High Street design should reflect these.

“Do-nothing” is not a viable option

The City Centre Advisory Panel reaffirmed their previous position that a ‘do-nothing’ option – reverting the street to its pre-2019 state - removal of the existing boardwalk and the re-instatement of parking/loading zones on both sides of High Street, is not a viable option and does not warrant further consideration as part of the ideation process.

The future of High Street

Some Panel members noted that a high-quality finish on High Street, that prioritised pedestrian movements – such as shared space or pedestrian mall, had the strongest alignment with the City Centre Masterplan. Highlighting the value of encouraging more people to be on High Street, and the economic benefits that this could present for High Street businesses.

Other Panel members raised concerns associated with the operation and the perceived success of shared space streets elsewhere in the city centre, highlighting issues with compliance and safety. These members noted that additional data, including for economic activity, would assist in their consideration of these ideas.

Concerns with disruption

The Panel reiterated their concerns with disruption on High Street in the short-medium term, and noted that a staged approach to achieve the agreed vision could be considered.

Some members expressed support for smaller steps to be taken in the immediate period/short-term, such as time-controlled access and a higher-quality footpath extension, highlighting the benefit of less disruption on High Street.

Others questioned whether this was significant enough progress for High Street and supported more comprehensive interventions.

Exploring Street operations and time-controlled access

The Panel expressed their support for considering street operations at a district-level, including opportunities within O’Connell Street, Shortland Street and Chancery Street.

Some Panel members expressed support for exploring time-controlled access on High Street, noting the strong alignment between this idea, the City Centre Masterplan, and the community’s aspirations for a better walking experience and a desire for street vibrancy.

Others expressed reservations with the potential impact that time-controlled access may have on High Street businesses, residents, and property owners, and suggested further consideration was required as to who would have access to High Street, and at what times.

Connectivity and place

The Panel members highlighted High Street's proximity to the harbour, Aotea and the arts precinct, the Learning Quarter and the future Te Waihorotiu station, with importance placed on strong connections, and clear wayfinding, to these places.

The Panel supported the opportunity to enhance key gateways to, and within, High Street, including at Shortland Street and Vulcan Lane. The opportunity to consider existing arcade connections to Queen Street, e.g. through Canterbury Arcade, was also identified.

Members of the Panel reaffirmed the importance of High Street's place-character, and that the design ideas, and any material palette, needed to be considerate of this. Some members thought this would be best achieved through a high-quality flush-surface.

Community, events and activations

The Panel continued to support the consideration of opportunities outside of the street environment, with public art, events, and activations all well supported. The Ellen Melville Centre was recognised as an important and high functioning community asset, with the existing operations and management plan for Freyberg Place working well.

Next steps

The feedback provided by the City Centre Advisory Panel will inform the refinement of the long list design ideas, as part of a process to identify a short list of design ideas for public consultation.

Staff will provide an update on the short list design ideas and public consultation approach at the City Centre Advisory Panel's workshop on 5 May 2025, prior to public consultation.