

HOBSON STREET RIDGELINE – FEDERAL STREET/MAYORAL DRIVE PLACE PROPOSITION

This area forms the north-western part of the Aotea Quarter between Mayoral Drive and Hobson Street. It is centred on the two blocks either side of the southern end of Federal Street, which in the late 1970s formed a cul-de-sac to accommodate the construction of Mayoral Drive.

The creation in the 1950s-1980s of Mayoral Drive and Aotea Square, along with the Aotea Centre, has had a major influence on the fortunes and feel of the Federal and Mayoral area. As with Queen Street East, standing on this southern block of Federal Street today, just a few hundred metres east of Aotea Square, feels like being in a strangely quiet and forgotten part of the city centre.

Mayoral Drive in many ways reinforces the quarter core's basin topography. But this traffic bypass has eroded the sense of how these hill slopes, such as on Federal Street/ Mayoral Drive, originally rose up from the lower-lying basin to the ridgeline along Hobson and Nelson streets.

This inner ring road also cuts off historical street connections and sightlines, producing a pattern of development that has turned its back on the Aotea Quarter. Cook Street, which once ran straight through to terminate at Queen Street in front of the Town Hall, now ends abruptly at a junction with Mayoral Drive and Vincent Street. This itself is a major obstacle for people on foot and bikes, moving between the quarter and areas further west.

Many holes still remain in the built form, with large expanses of surface car parking fronting Mayoral Drive and the corner of Cook and Federal streets. That said, a number of heritage buildings remain, including most notably St Matthew's-in-the-City, which retains a strong presence on the skyline from vantage points in the quarter and wider city. The church is also surrounded by an attractive treed churchyard that has significant potential as a small green oasis, similar to St Patrick's Square further north on Federal Street. Federal Street/Mayoral Drive has a strong potential

to transform into a vibrant and diverse inner-city neighbourhood. With a calmed and civilised Mayoral Drive, pedestrians could more strongly engage with the quarter core and the CCMP 2012 laneway circuit. Aotea Station will also unlock opportunities that will dramatically change the prospects for this area.

A number of issues and challenges must be addressed to realise this potential, including:

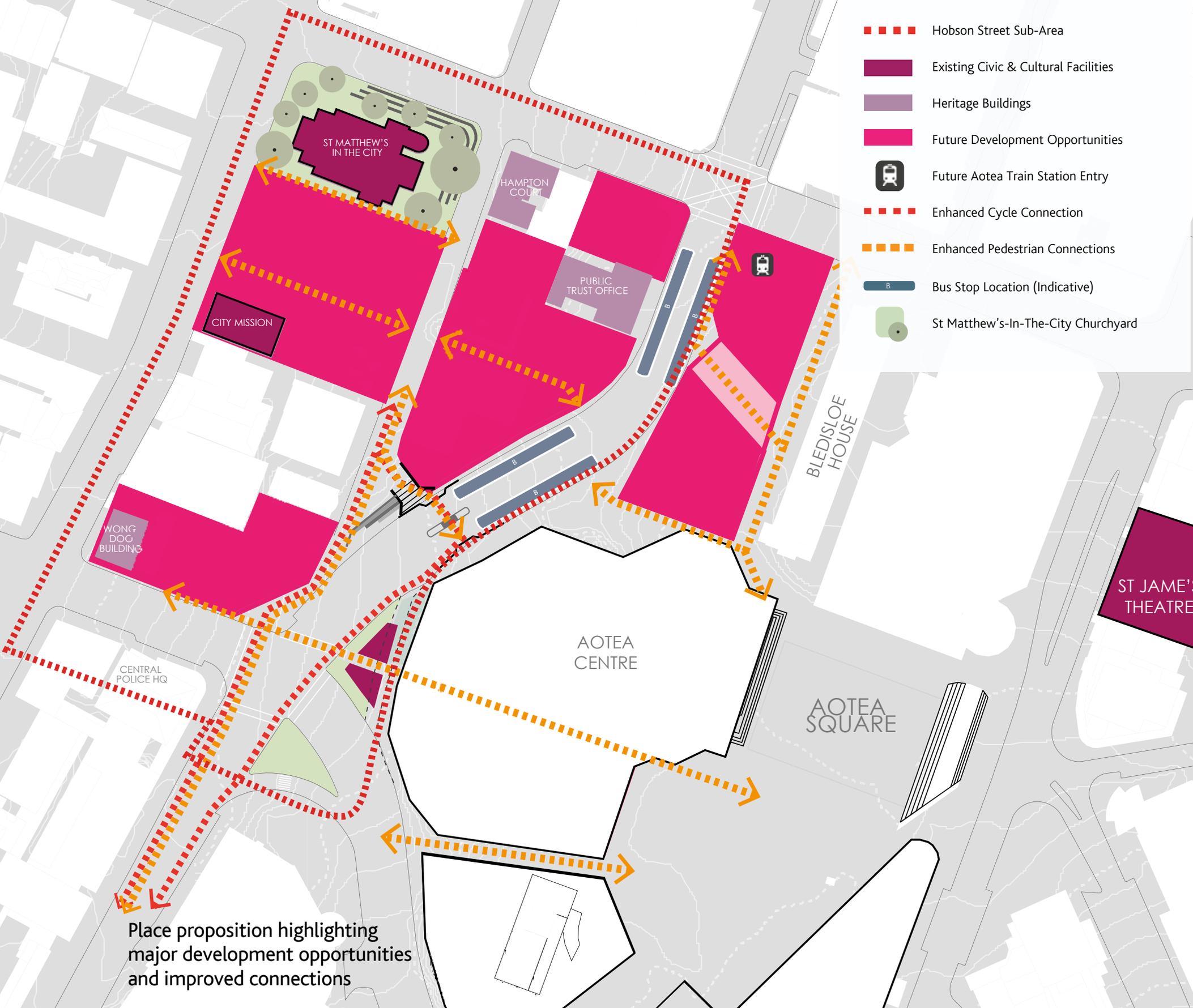
- Movement barrier of Mayoral Drive, the Aotea Centre and Civic Car Park entry/exit to people walking between Federal and Mayoral and the quarter's core.
- Lack of safe, convenient mid-block crossing opportunities across Mayoral Drive.
- Disconnected nature of the southern end of Federal Street, with a car-dominated cul-de-sac end, a high wall and overgrown vegetation hampering walking and cycling connections, and limiting its potential as an intuitive, integral part of the laneway circuit.
- Safety and wayfinding issues for pedestrians and cyclists navigating the major traffic junction of Mayoral Drive/ Cook/Vincent streets, which is over-scaled for its through-traffic function, with slip lanes putting pedestrians in conflict with buses and heavy traffic.
- Lack of activity on any of the blocks fronting the Mayoral/ Cook/Vincent intersection.
- Aotea Centre further isolates the area by turning its back to Mayoral Drive and, combined with a steep fall away from the street edge and dense vegetation, blocks former sightlines and connections to Aotea Square and the Town Hall Clock Tower.
- A lack of quality public space.
- Lack of street-level activity and public life in Federal Street and Mayoral Drive.
- Absence of emergency housing, which is at odds with the important presence of the City Mission on Hobson Street.
- Poor passive surveillance associated with the City Mission and St Matthew's-in-the-City sites.

The Federal and Mayoral area has a range of opportunities requiring public and private investment. Many will mean close partnering between the council, property owners and local stakeholders. Future work should focus on building a shared vision and making strategic early investments to kickstart and realise the significant potential.

HOBSON RIDGELINE PLACE PROPOSITION

LEGEND

-  Hobson Street Sub-Area
-  Existing Civic & Cultural Facilities
-  Heritage Buildings
-  Future Development Opportunities
-  Future Aotea Train Station Entry
-  Enhanced Cycle Connection
-  Enhanced Pedestrian Connections
-  Bus Stop Location (Indicative)
-  St Matthew's-In-The-City Churchyard



Place proposition highlighting major development opportunities and improved connections

FEDERAL AND MAYORAL INITIATIVES

BUILDINGS, SPACES AND ACTIVITY

St Matthew's-in-the-City churchyard

- Upgrade to churchyard to enhance its potential as a public green along the Federal Street laneway circuit, including north-facing terrace seating edge to Wellesley Street sensitively integrated among trees, similar to St Patrick's Square. Auckland City Mission comprehensive development
- Long-term redevelopment of Auckland City Mission properties, including new and strengthened public walkways between Hobson and Federal streets around south side of church.
- Short-term interventions to address sight lines, overgrown vegetation, public safety and other CPTED issues. New active frontages to Federal Street and Mayoral Drive
- Ensure new development achieves high-quality, pedestrian-oriented ground- floor frontages to Federal Street and Mayoral Drive that support increased local activity and the laneway circuit.
- Pavilions or kiosks to occupy current traffic island at the Mayoral Drive junction. Design to function as local landmark and activity generator to the rear of Aotea Centre, reinforcing reinstated sight lines and pedestrian connection along historical axis between Cook Street and Aotea Square/Town Hall. Public face to Auckland Central Police Station headquarters
- Work with Auckland Police to improve the legibility and wayfinding for access to Auckland Central Police Station from the Mayoral Drive intersection, recognising that this is the sole public face for the police in the city centre.

TRANSPORT, MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIONS

Mayoral Drive/Cook Street intersection improvements

- Remove left-turn slip lane into Mayoral Drive to address pedestrian safety and amenity. Square up and tighten signalised intersection while allowing for left-turn bus movements into Mayoral Drive. Realign northern pedestrian arm to align with reinstated Cook Street – Aotea Square pedestrian connection and sight line.

Open up the end of Federal Street

- Install broad, inviting set of steps (with cycle-friendly channel) and ramped/terraced edge to Federal Street, to open sight lines and improve a key north-south pedestrian route/laneway circuit on the western side of the city centre.
- As part of CRL/New Network bus infrastructure projects, investigate opening up the south end of Federal Street, as part of a change to a one-way circulation for local vehicle access on this block. Strengthen laneway circuit connections between Federal Street and Aotea Square
- Improve the alignment, width, quality and legibility of walking routes between Aotea Square and Mayoral Drive alongside future Bledisloe West development. Investigate new pedestrian crossings to Mayoral Drive that link clearly and safely between Aotea Square and Federal Street, and support bus stops on both sides of the street.

Rationalise bus stop infrastructure on Mayoral Drive

- Consolidate bus stops near Aotea Station and Wellesley Street for easier transfer and legibility, and to move them away from the Federal Street connection where they block sight lines.

New walkways and through-site links

- Cook Street to Aotea Square connection through Aotea Centre redevelopment.
- Hobson to Federal Street through Auckland City Mission redevelopment, to south of St Matthew's church.
- Federal Street to Mayoral Drive through redevelopment.
- Bledisloe West pedestrian arcade/through-site link on Bledisloe West site, for a more direct link between Wellesley and Albert intersection and Aotea Square.
- Wellesley and Albert Street intersection improvements - square up and tighten signalised intersection, add barn-dance crossing or shorter pedestrian wait times, to reduce the barrier between Aotea Quarter and blocks to the north-west, as part of Aotea Station development.



MAYORAL DRIVE TODAY



MAYORAL DRIVE FUTURE



OTHER SUB-AREAS

Learning Quarter Interface

This zone east of Aotea Square is strongly defined by its close ties with the adjacent Learning Quarter. Two of the city's universities, the University of Auckland and AUT, have a significant presence, with several large campus buildings. Along with a cluster of further-education providers they create a dynamic relationship with the arts-focused Aotea Quarter – particularly through collaboration with AUT's Colab and University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts.

Feedback from the universities during the framework's development included:

- The physical and psychological separation by Mayoral Drive, limiting natural discovery up to the Learning Quarter and engagement in its many arts and cultural amenities, such as the Sir Paul Reeves Building or St Paul St Gallery.
- A strong appetite for being part of a collective arts, culture and entertainment events calendar in the Aotea Quarter.
- The difficulty for arts, spatial design and technology classes in brokering use of Aotea Square for temporary installations or showcasing artistic work.
- Shared spaces offer better sightlines, improving perception of safety, especially when going home after late-night classes.

Myers Park

In this highly valued neighbourhood, residents live close to the city in buildings that overlook the green oasis of Myers Park or the leafy, well-proportioned, tree-lined Vincent Street and Greys Avenue. The quiet retreat of the park has seen a revival in activity since the late 2014 upgrade of the playground, which attracts many families and children,



AUT Emergent Ecologies Studio: Jewel Yan

particularly in the weekends and before or after kindergarten. Although it has good amenity and relatively good access to Myers Park, feedback from the public engagement and the shapeauckland.co.nz survey identified perceptions of poor safety in the evening as a key issue. In 2015, the lighting was upgraded to address some of these concerns.

Engine Room

Elliot and Darby streets, north of Wellesley Street, are among the city centre's first shared spaces, and are well used and enjoyed. Recently the edge of the Elliot surface car park has hosted pop-up food stalls, which contribute to fun, people-friendly outdoor dining. Tied into the Elliot Street offer is Smith & Caughey's, a retail anchor drawing shoppers from far and wide. Darby Street, along the quarter's northern boundary, is home to the popular Recycle Boutique, a large backpackers, a travel agent and the eateries that support tourism.

Elliot Street could continue to cultivate the food outlets and extend outdoor dining through food celebration events. For example, during restaurant month Auckland Live could work with businesses to promote the dining options.

Participants were keen to see more residential living encouraged in the quarter. There was a lot of support for encouraging good quality apartments and attracting more long-term residents.

The recent upgrade of the play area at Myers Park was mentioned by a number of people as a great success. They would like to more public spaces made family-friendly, safe, well-lit and well-designed.

There was support for other activities and facilities to encourage more families to live in the area, including inner city schools, local shops and markets.

It was recognised that larger businesses such as banks are moving to the waterfront, but it was felt that smaller businesses like start-ups, or those related to the universities or creative arts would work well in the quarter. There was also interest in seeing business hubs and premises to support the creative industries in the area, but like with smaller businesses, it was recognised that high rents prohibit this.

Rough sleeping – city centre-wide issue

Auckland's housing stock cannot house the city's growing population, as rising property and rental prices show. Numerous boarding house sites have also been redeveloped for other residential uses. This has reduced the city centre's affordable short-term accommodation, contributing to the growing levels of homelessness and rough sleeping that are particularly evident in the quarter. In the 2015-16 Lifewise annual street count, 145 people were sleeping rough within a 2-km radius of SkyCity.

The Ending Rough Sleeping Steering Group was formed in response to the growing number of homeless people in the city centre. It comprises senior representatives from

central, local and non-government agencies who provide leadership, advocacy and oversight of strategies, policies and practices, so that rough sleepers are helped into long-term accommodation.

The group is guided by the principle that long-term, appropriate and sustainable housing is critical to end rough sleeping. Also, that people sleeping rough deserve to be safe and healthy, and live with dignity.

In 2015 the group commissioned the Insight into Rough Sleeping study. The report revealed that there are many pathways to homelessness and rough sleeping, and that when public and private domains meet on the street, rough sleepers are under scrutiny because they live their private lives in public places. As a result, tensions can arise.

As part of the development of the framework, this tension was explored. In the public feedback a number of respondents thought rough sleeping was a valid part of urban life, but that housing options needed to be progressed as part of becoming a more equitable city.

The redevelopment of the Aotea Quarter presents the opportunity to explore increasing emergency housing and short-term accommodation in the city centre. There is also considerable scope to increase the safety and dignity of those living rough, which would also contribute to improved public amenity such as toilets and lockers.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Participants universally felt empathy for rough sleepers. Most people did not think they were a safety issue.

There was widespread interest in exploring ways to provide basic facilities for rough sleepers, ranging from lockers to keep their belongings to showers and 24 hour toilets. There was also discussion about providing places for rough sleepers to sleep that offered some shelter. A number of participants felt other agencies could be more involved. It was suggested by some submitters that Auckland could pick up on some international examples of better providing for rough sleepers, such as in Vancouver and Salt Lake City where housing, accommodation or shelter is provided.

FRAMEWORK RESPONSE

The Implementation Plan chapter contains a number of projects and initiatives that deliver on this outcome. Three key moves identified through the Framework that build on the previous Aotea Quarter Action Plan and support current investments plans are:

1. Delivery of a package of place improvement projects and initiatives within the Airedale Street sub-area as a way of unlocking latent development potential and its role as an important residential neighbourhood that supports the wider quarter.
2. Delivery of a package of place improvement projects and initiatives within the Federal Street/Mayoral Drive sub-area as a way of realising its full potential as a vibrant and active urban block lying adjacent to the proposed Aotea Station and being on the CCMP laneway circuit.
3. Quarter specific projects aimed at addressing matters relating to rough sleeping (e.g. improvements to public amenities such as 24-hour toilets, hot showers, storage lockers and additional emergency accommodation) as part of a city centre wide approach.