

28 March 2024

His Worship Mayor Brown and Councillors
Budget Committee
Auckland Council
135 Albert Street
AUCKLAND

Your Worship and Councillors

Auckland Council Long-term Plan 2024-2034 – City Centre Advisory Panel feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our advice and feedback on the Long-term Plan 2024-2034.

The City Centre Advisory Panel represents the business, retail, residents, universities, design, climate and sustainability, arts and culture, tourism (domestic and international), social sectors and tangata whenua of central Tāmaki Makaurau. We have interests throughout the Auckland region and New Zealand, we bring business and industry sector expertise as well as lived city centre experience.

We are committed to the success of Auckland. We are very clear that a successful Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, and indeed New Zealand as a nation, needs a strong, beating heart. Because of this, it is our view that the city centre must be a key investment priority across all seven service areas for the council group. We support council leadership and advocacy to create a fundamentally different relationship with central government, to align on transformational priorities, particularly those impacting the city centre.

The city centre is directly included in the “city and local development” service area, we support the following elements of the central proposal:

- **Continue** – we support continuation of the City Centre Targeted Rate (CCTR) funding mechanism and the associated programme. As part of our City Centre Advisory Panel role, we will be providing separate advice and feedback on the CCTR programme, cross-referenced here as appropriate. We will continue to provide advice on the programme with a view to review and extend the CCTR beyond its current end timeframe (2031).
- **Continue** – we support the renewal of critical assets on the waterfront. We would strongly encourage council to bring forward funding to replace the Wynyard Crossing Bridge.
- **Complete** – we support the completion of the Midtown regeneration programme and Karanga-a-Hape neighbourhood improvement programme to enhance the urban environment and support development and experience around the new CRL stations.
- **Complete** – we support masterplanning of the port land including options for the future use of Queens wharf. Within this work, we support the release of central wharves for public use, with an immediate focus on Queens wharf. Whilst the Panel as a whole is not taking a view on the ownership structure of port operations, individual members may provide their views through individual feedback on the LTP.
- **Commence** – we support the phased transformation and regeneration of Wynyard Point open space – Te Ara Tukutuku.
- **Continue** - to drive the implementation of the City Centre Masterplan as adopted by the Planning Committee in 2020.

Any proposal for new city-shaping infrastructure located in the city centre, such as a new stadium or harbour connection, must integrate best for city centre outcomes into its thinking and planning.

The Panel has communicated previously (10 November 2023) its six agreed priorities. Now is the time to capitalise on the investments and progress the council has made to date. This investment plays an enormous role in providing confidence for others to invest and focus their activities here. We would like to reinforce our six priorities as the council deliberates and makes important LTP funding decisions:

- **Safety** – this remains our top priority for everyone who lives, works, visits, studies and experiences the city centre and this includes our most vulnerable communities. The most impactful response is one that provides long-term solutions and this requires a commitment from central government that acknowledges the scale, complexity and particular characteristics of Auckland, and the city centre. These long-term solutions, supported by international evidence, include: a significant increase in the supply of affordable and appropriate housing, much better resourced mental health and drug & addiction services, increase in police presence and access, and assertive outreach services. Central government has a core role to provide and fund such services. We therefore support council taking a leadership and advocacy position with central government to champion these multi-faceted, complex issues. The panel supports increased funding for tangible safety initiatives and highlights the importance of outreach services increasing in parallel with any increased security or patrols. We support better coordinated action for safety and improved relationships with NZ Police, central government agencies and social services to ensure adequate funding for outreach and other services. This includes increasing police presence on the streets to service the approximately 40,000 residents and 15,000 businesses located here. Whilst not a long-term solution, we recommend an allocation of CCTR funding for the next two years to support improvements to community/visitor safety as a short-term fix.
- **Integrated transport** we support improving access into and around the city centre through integrated transport networks, realising the full benefits of the City Rail Link, while ensuring that operational needs of the city centre are addressed. We support a stronger focus on implementation of Access for Everyone as the integrated solution to balance both movement, place and operational requirements in the city centre. We support taking a “network readiness” approach, to ensure that operational needs of city centre businesses, communities and people are addressed in advance of making major network changes. The city centre represents the central hub and connector in the wider Auckland transport network. Given this, and with the loss of the regional fuel tax, we support city centre transport projects remaining priorities through the subsequent RLTP reprioritisation process.
- **Experience, Vibrancy and Events** – we support the ‘pay more, get more’ option with respect to economic and cultural development and events. In particular, we support more funding for destination marketing/tourism with a focus on marketing the city centre as a destination in its own right, and we recommend this is further supported through the CCTR. We support a stronger focus on growing more events, resuming active bidding for major events and concerts and reinstating visitor and overseas investment attraction initiatives. The lack of proactive, co-ordinated destination marketing and events results in many negative impacts on the economy – for example a potential 25% decrease in cruise visitation to Auckland next season. We consider there is a need for a lead agency for major events who can take a leadership role in developing a strong events pipeline and events calendar to avoid any duplication and ensure we are getting the best possible outcomes. We encourage council agencies to cut red tape and costs to help encourage events and people into the city. There is a need to enhance the visitor experience in the city centre through for example, better facilities for cruise passengers as well as improving public amenities and enlivening land banked and carpark areas. We suggest greater importance is placed on the city centre as the cultural and artistic hub, with greater focus on the regeneration of the Aotea Arts Quarter and of Te Tōangaroa as a unique inner-city precinct owned by tangata whenua.

- **Residential growth** we support a growing, thriving residential population in the city centre. Aligned with the Future Development Strategy, the city centre is a critical node to accommodate future growth and deliver across all the benefits of a quality compact city. It needs ongoing investment in hard and soft (community) infrastructure to unlock its potential as an attractive place to live. Implementing safe, low traffic neighbourhoods is essential to improving the quality of life in the city centre, acknowledging the need for a network readiness approach to ensure operational requirements are sustained. We support council advocacy with central government to prioritise a city centre school. We support strengthening the voice of residents as the city grows. We suggest that some council services need to be designed better so they can meet the needs of high-density apartment living e.g. recycling/food scrap services.
- **Learning Quarter** we reinforce the value of the Learning Quarter and support working in partnership with the universities/tertiary sector to realise the potential of the city centre as one of the world's premier learning and innovation hubs. This includes enhancing universities' campus connectivity with the rest of the city centre with safe and easy access, improving student experience of campus life, and attracting students to live (e.g. increasing student accommodation) in the city centre. There is an opportunity for council and the universities to work together in partnership to leverage planned investment and enhance the value proposition for the Learning Quarter helping Auckland to compete for domestic and international students.
- **Climate resilience** – we support prioritisation of action and funding to deliver on Te Tāruke-ā-Tawhiri/Auckland Climate Plan and build Auckland's climate resilience. The next ten years will be critical in shaping future outcomes. The city centre has the potential to lead the way in sustainable living, development, and transport. It can play a key role in protecting and regenerating the natural environment and enhancing its mauri e.g. Te Ara Tukutuku project. We therefore encourage council to develop and fund a plan to enhance the urban ngahere within the city centre.

We all want the city centre to compete successfully on the global stage, and be a safe, resilient, attractive and welcoming place for everyone. We encourage the council to commit through this LTP 2024-2034 to the continued success of the city centre to ensure it is a thriving city centre for the benefit of all Aucklanders, and New Zealand, now and into the future.

Yours sincerely

Scott Pritchard
Chair
CITY CENTRE ADVISORY PANEL