

Auckland City Centre Resident's Group

Annual Plan Presentation to Waitemātā Local Board 21 March 2017.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

On behalf of the CCRG, I would like to congratulate the Board on a range of great projects in the central city that have been underway recently -

Central Library
Ellen Melville Hall
Freyberg Place
Griffiths Garden

We look forward to working with you, and the ACCAB, on the Emily Place work planned for the 2019/20 year.

Our primary focus is on three broad fronts that connect into the various projects funded through the city centre residential targeted rate and the Board's Annual Plan programme.

1. Public Transport
2. Public Spaces
3. Public Safety

Public Transport

Public transport must have priority over private transport for all transport related projects in, and around, the city centre.

Apart from supporting the completion of the Central Rail Loop our request is that the Board prioritise cycling and pedestrian projects over other forms of transport in the city centre as per the supporting proposals contained in the Local Board Plan and the City Centre Masterplan.

We also want to see improved bike storage/racks around the city centre and this is where we would recommend a big part of the \$500,000 budget for local transport projects be spent. Trains and buses could also be encouraged to provide these as they do in many other countries.

The CCRG believes that Auckland Council family could take a much broader perspective on transport planning and funding across the region. Auckland ratepayers have paid billions on transport infrastructure for the purpose of facilitating traffic movement. Much of that infrastructure is then used for private parking which has the perverse outcome of preventing traffic movement. That arrangement defies logic and fails to maximise the benefit of public space for public use.

Private use of public space should always come at a cost to the user and on that basis, ALL on road parking across the Auckland region, should have both a cost and a time limit.

Removing parking from major roads/streets will provide 24/7 clear bus lanes AT NO PUBLIC COST thus providing more certainty around bus timetables.

Currently thousands of cars fill our motorways every morning and afternoon and park in minor streets for free, with many of these being in the Waitemata Local Board area. The answer has to be limiting parking to one or two hours in those streets and make the cost more expensive than the public transport option. The funding stream from parking permits would pay for most of the cycling and pedestrian needs across the entire region while also achieving a large reduction in motorway traffic and environmental pollution.

Public Spaces

Great public spaces are the identifier of cities – these are the places we all enjoy, remember, photograph, play and relax in irrespective of which city we find them.

In the central city, these major open spaces are Albert Park, Victoria Park, Myers Park, Aotea Square and various areas around the Waterfront. However, there are many smaller, special public spaces that are just as important as these large ones e.g. the Observation deck at 56 Wakefield Street, that should be retained and developed for the purpose they were initially provided.

If any existing public space needs to be modified, for whatever reason, the CCRG position is that the outcome must be a better public space option for residents with the primary principle being a 'like with like' transaction.

Having great public spaces depends also on how those spaces are managed. Currently, there are issues with the commercial rubbish collection in the city centre where large areas of footpath are dumping grounds for cardboard, tin, plastic and the likes which, in narrow streets like High Street, often reducing the available space for pedestrians.

As an open space, Aotea square is increasingly compromised with private facilities during the summer months, and we think this is something the Board might like to give more thought to.

The City Centre is also not considered a safe place to walk around at night due primarily to alcohol and drug abuse.

Public Safety

Residents in the world's most liveable city are entitled to a clean, safe and healthy environment.

Improving air quality in the city centre depends largely on reducing traffic as this is the cause of the majority of pollution. An appropriate parking regime, resulting in less traffic coming into the city, and using electric buses, are great initiatives that the CCRG would support.

We will also work with the Board and others, to ensure that the waterways and beaches connected to the central city are safe for both swimming and aquatic life.

On the regulation front, we would like to see far better enforcement of Councils Public Places Bylaw as a means of stopping unsocial behaviour and making our public spaces safe. The central city is developing some really great public space but it is money wasted if people do not feel safe using them.

Many of these spaces have a 24/7 ban on consuming alcohol but most residents have rarely seen this enforced. If funding is an issue then a region wide targeted rate on premises selling alcohol would assist.

Similarly, the level of noise pollution in the city centre continues to grow with most of this coming from loud vehicles and amplified music. Of these loud music is the easiest to deal with via the Public Places Bylaw and the Noise Control Act but again it is only enforced if residents complain – there is no visible proactive enforcement.

The most important first step is to not normalise unsocial behaviour so regular monitoring/intervention/enforcement is the key.

Noelene Buckland
Chair City Centre Residents' Group