

# DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN

HEART OF THE CITY 2024/2025



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Heart of the City's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan has a vision for the city centre to be a vibrant, 24/7 international city by the time the City Rail Link opens in 2026. Four outcomes are sought over that timeframe – A Place that is Loved; Safe, Clean and Accessible; with More People; and Vibrant Places.

After seven years of major construction impacts, covid and the residual impacts of covid, the years 2023 to 2026 are important steps towards achieving the vision. The negative perceptions about poor access and safety that have become ingrained must be addressed, in order to support our immediate drive to bring more people here and build positive feelings towards the city centre.

All four strategic pillars underpin our work programme but we must deliver on the most significant priorities first. People will only start to love our city centre when it is safe, clean and accessible, and our businesses will only recover from the effects of the last few years when there are more people here.

In 2023/24, our work programme focuses on two key goals:

**Restore the reputation and experience of Queen Street; and**

**Bring more people to the city centre.**

**Our 2023/24 goals will continue into 2024/25, when we will also see the launch of our city centre repositioning campaign.**

### **Vision**

**A vibrant 24/7 international city**

### **Our Purpose**

**To champion a successful city centre**

### **Our Mission**

**Heart of the City works for the economic benefit of city centre business**

### **Strategic Plan outcomes 2023-2026**

**A Place that is Loved; More People; Vibrant Places; and Safe, Clean and Accessible.**

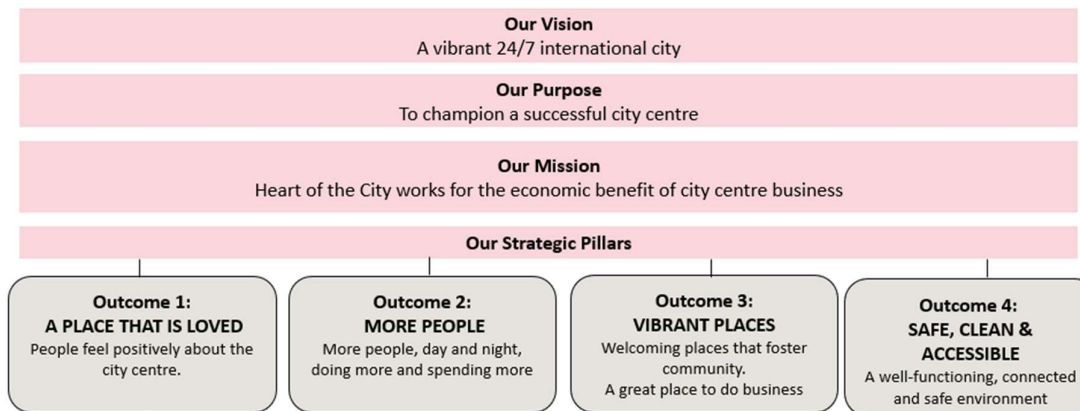
## STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH

To inform our draft for 2024/25, we utilised findings from our annual perceptions data. We will utilise the latest available data when our Annual Plan is finalised in early 2024.

- Core appeal of city centre continues to be: Dining out and cafes, Waterfront, Events, entertainment and activities, Specific attractions (e.g., Art Gallery, Sky City etc.), Visiting specific areas (e.g., Commercial Bay)
- Main dislikes: Construction and roadworks, Congestion, Parking, Anti-social behaviour, Safety concerns.
- Events and entertainment are increasingly important drivers of HOTC visitation but still well behind eating out/cafes in absolute terms.
- Perceptions of the city as being congested, more difficult for parking, dirty and still too many roadworks and construction projects are entrenched perceptions making growth difficult, despite the increased role of events, arts and culture and specific attractions.
- Private vehicle ease of access has dropped, as has affordability for our workers. Public transport is still comparatively easy, as is accessing the city on foot.
- Similarly, perceptions of the ease of getting around the city centre show that improvements recorded in 2022 have not been sustained in the last year, especially for workers and visitors.
- Perceptions of daytime safety continue to be well below 2019 levels for most segments. No significant change in perceptions of night-time safety since 2022, but still well behind results for 2020 and 2019.
- People in uniforms give the strongest sense of safety, notably police. Students were noticeably less supportive of a stronger police presence but were supportive of more guards and wardens.
- Once key developments are complete, there is agreement that the city centre will be a better place to spend time.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan has four outcomes we are looking to achieve, and the work that we do as an organisation is spread across these outcomes.



## DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2024/25

Our Annual Plan for 2024/25 will be finalised in early 2024, based on assessing the latest data and progress with our two key goals for 2023/24. Goals and measures for 2024/25 will be set at that time.

Our 2023/24 work programme is geared towards achieving the four outcomes of our Strategic Plan. Within this, we have two key goals for 2023/24.

### Goals 2023/24:

- Restore the reputation and experience of Queen Street, our “Golden Mile”
- Bring more people to the city centre, with the goal to reach at least pre-covid numbers in the city centre over the course of the three-year strategic plan.

The following programmes work collectively to achieve these goals.

GOAL	Safe, clean & accessible	A place that is loved	More people	Vibrant places
<u>Queen Street</u> Restore the reputation and experience of the Queen Street area	Security programme  Advocacy to improve access	PR Champion our City Centre	Tactical event campaigns, e.g., Art Week.  City Centre offer (encouraging investment e.g. St James).	Event activations & placemaking: e.g., Changing Lanes & Late Night Art.  Third Party Event support – e.g., Arts Fest., Writers Fest., NZIFF, Santa Parade.
<u>More People</u>	Safety co-ordination Monitoring Metrics Access	PR Member Comms Business engagement	Restaurant Month Event & Campaign  Targeted Marketing, Always On digital programme	City Centre Planning  Night-time activation & lighting
<u>A Place that is Loved</u>		Develop (23/24) & Launch (24/25) Repositioning Campaign		

### Goals 2024/25:

For this draft 2024/25 Plan, we assume Goals 1 & 2 will still be priorities and in addition, we will launch our city centre repositioning campaign.

### GOAL 1

#### Restore the reputation & experience of Queen Street, our “Golden Mile”

Queen Street is one of New Zealand's most famous streets. It is a key connector from the waterfront to Karangahape Road, and home to our region's civic facilities, significant heritage and commercial buildings, as well as the arts precinct. Its relevance will be retained and enhanced as the City Rail Link comes online.

However, our city centre - and especially Queen Street - faces strong barriers to visitation. Concerns about safety and cleanliness, coupled with accessibility issues, are not new barriers, but they have become more entrenched in people's minds in recent years.

It's important that negative perceptions and experiences are overcome so it is regarded as safe, clean and appealing. This is one of our primary goals for 2023/2024 and we anticipate it will continue into 2024/25.

Our definition of Queen Street includes the laneways and surrounding streets through to the end of our boundary at Mayoral Drive. This is because the arts precinct around Aotea Square and the Town Hall is a significant location for events and we want people to view this as a safe and appealing area; there are major issues in the mid-town area due to construction which all add to the negative perceptions of the Queen Street area; and also because the laneways provide opportunities to bring additional vibrancy.

Queen's Wharf and Aotea Square are important "book-ends" within our boundary for Queen Street, providing places for activation and public gathering. We will continue to advocate for ongoing development of these spaces.

#### **Measures: Perceptions Research**

##### **Safety programme**

First and foremost, we need people to see the city centre and Queen Street as safe. There are ongoing issues with theft and anti-social behaviour, and in the past two plus years there have been increasing issues with drugs, alcohol and aggression.

For the last two plus years, we have been advocating for a cross-agency approach with a much stronger police presence and a downtown police station, better management of emergency and transitional housing, as well as mental health and addiction services. We want to see people who need help get it and for there to be higher standards maintained on our streets so everyone can feel comfortable and safe.

We will continue to work on local safety initiatives. This includes maintaining a security presence across the Queen Street area to Mayoral Drive and we will keep focus on CityWatch achieving results in this area. Rapid and effective outreach support is also needed and we will continue to advocate for this.

In the absence of a downtown police station, we took the opportunity of the FIFA tournament in 2023 to initiate and trial a downtown safety hub. This has been picked up as an initiative to expand, and three more safety hubs will be in place and reviewed for continuation during this plan period.

#### **Measures: Crime Statistics, Speed of Issue Resolution, Business Feedback, Perceptions Research**

##### **Cleaning programme**

How a city looks in terms of cleanliness, waste management and graffiti has a strong bearing on how people perceive it as a place to be. This is primarily Auckland Council's responsibility and our place

management work is largely oriented around monitoring the city and raising issues with relevant partners.

**Measures: Council Data, Complaints Resolution, Perceptions Research**

**Our PR** strategy is to build a positive narrative for Queen Street through both proactive and reactive PR. This will likely focus on both the proof points such as ongoing private and public sector investment, as well as our programmes of activity including safety and activation.

**Activation, Events & Placemaking**

Vibrant, activated spaces and events attract people, encourage community involvement, and deliver economic benefit. We will continue to deliver and promote key tactical events of our own that support the goal of restoring Queen Street, such as Art Week and Christmas. We will continue to amplify storytelling of Auckland's diverse cultures and ethnicities – particularly around festivals such as Lunar New Year, Matariki and Diwali and will continue to partner with, amplify and support events delivered by Auckland Council and the private sector.

We will lead and/or collaborate on targeted activations and/or placemaking projects to raise the public experience of Queen Street and its immediate environs, with both a day and night-time focus.

Partnerships will be key to successful delivery, including with Auckland Council and the private sector (including property owners and involvement from businesses).

Specific initiatives that we will focus on include:

- Lighting laneways and buildings
- Activating vacant spaces, which are reducing over time
- Supporting street and outdoor trading.

**Measures: Pedestrian Counts, Participant & Business Feedback, Perceptions Research**

**GOAL 2**

**Bring more people to the city centre**

Over the next three years, we want the city centre to be a place that people want to be, by rebuilding value, reputation and demand for the place and offer through a destination marketing and events programme and content that is inspiring, aspirational, and distinct to the heart of the city.

Our goal is to bring more people here. This includes leveraging the range of experiences available here, especially events, dining, arts and culture, night life and entertainment to increase visitation.

**Restaurant Month Event Campaign**

Our perceptions research tells us every year that dining is the strongest driver of visitation for the city centre, and that events like Restaurant Month (and Christmas) contribute to making the city centre an appealing, vibrant and exciting place to be.

Restaurant Month is one of our most successful initiatives on the events calendar. It has successfully provided a competitive advantage and platform to showcase the breadth and depth of Auckland's diverse dining scene for 13 years. Critically it also provides a valued mechanism to engage with our

dining and hospitality businesses, delivering measurable return on investment for those who participate.

**Measures: Ad Impact, Spend, Pedestrian Counts**

**Always On Digital Programme**

Our Always On digital marketing programme with internal resource, supports and delivers the day-to-day ever-changing offering of the city centre, keeping visibility on new news and the offer as it evolves. These channels of our website, social media, and edm deliver significant visibility of the city centre to Aucklanders and domestic markets, enabling us to promote our own and others’ activity across the year. These platforms provide an opportunity to regularly engage with businesses, both private partners (SkyCity, Commercial Bay, Viaduct, Britomart and others) council stakeholders (Council, Eke Panuku, Auckland Live) and event providers – through to owner operators, to deliver their content. This engagement and content plays a vital role in maintaining strong interest and engagement to inspire our audiences and ensure the city centre remains top of mind.

**Measures: Spend, Pedestrian Counts**

**Our consumer website** continues to perform very well, going from strength to strength with 3.4m sessions +32% year on year, and 6.4m pageviews +31%, on an already significant base.

**1 Jul 2022 – 31 May 2023:**

	<b>2022/23</b>
<b>Heartofthecity.co.nz</b>	
- Users	<b>2.4m</b>
- Sessions	<b>3.4m</b>
- Page views	<b>6.4m</b>
<b>Email (edm)</b>	
- wkly subscribers	<b>34.5k</b>
<b>Facebook</b>	
- reach	<b>6.7m</b>
- clicks to site	444k
<b>Instagram</b>	<b>39.8K</b>
- views/interactions	
<b>TikTok</b>	
- video views	<b>317k</b>

**Other initiatives include:**

**Performance tracking:** Monitoring the city involves both visual audits and investigating issues raised, as well as having up to date data and research to inform our decision-making and underpin opportunities for PR and member communications.

**Improved Access Outcomes:** Through advocacy and/or participation in relevant working groups at both a strategic and operational level.

**Safety co-ordination:** a safe city centre is vital and we will continue to play a role highlighting problem areas and getting the right people together to resolve problems.

**Night-time Economy:** a collaborative approach is needed in order to find common ground and practical solutions that work for the different night-time stakeholders.

**City Centre planning and investment:** we will champion the benefit of ongoing investment in the city centre and work to ensure that there are positive outcomes resulting from this, including support for businesses impacted by large-scale, long-term construction.

**Champion the city centre as great place to do business:** from planning through to implementation, we will seek action to ensure that business needs are factored into public projects and planning (such as city operations and support through construction) and identify opportunities for businesses to leverage public sector investment.

**Members communications, PR, Business & Stakeholder Engagement:** demonstrating confidence in the future of the city centre, whilst being realistic and proactive in addressing the challenges, will form the backbone of our members' communications strategy. Engagement with our stakeholders will be achieved through relationships, formal surveying as well as face to face engagement, seeking participation in HOTC activities, as well as identifying opportunities for partnering to deliver elements of our annual plan.

### **GOAL 3**

#### **Reposition the city centre to *A Place That is Loved***

2024/25 will see the roll out of a new repositioning campaign for the city centre. Planning for this is taking place during 2023/24.

After the toughest period on record with seven years of major public and private construction development and a global pandemic, and corollary issues such as increased crime and antisocial behaviour, repositioning will take time and it's essential we do this well. A communications campaign cannot possibly address the current barriers to visitation, hence this campaign will not launch until 2024/25 and the repositioning is likely to take a few years, bearing in mind the negative perceptions have been building over recent years as a result of both construction and covid.



## **INDICATIVE BUDGET 2024/25**

Heart of the City's budget for 2024/25 will be finalised early in 2024 once the final Annual Plan 2024/25 objectives and measures have been set.

**No increase in targeted rate funding is being sought at the AGM in October 2023.**

<b>INDICATIVE INCOME 2024/25</b>	<b>Draft (\$) 2024/25</b>
Core Funding (paid via Auckland Council) No change from 2023/24	5,021,745
Destination Marketing (City Centre Targeted Rate) TBC	400,000
Pedestrian Count Contribution (CCTR) TBC	63,362
Interest & Dividend	35,000
Reserves	400,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>5,920,107</b>
<b>INDICATIVE EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN 2024/25</b>	
<b>GOAL 1 Queen Street area</b> Safety Programmes 900,000 Christmas, Art, Fashion event/campaigns 790,000 Placemaking & Activation 120,000	1,810,000
<b>GOAL 2 More People</b> Restaurant Month & Event Sponsorships 610,000 Always On, Social, Digital, Website 600,000 Research, Pedestrian Cameras 250,000 Advocacy, PR, Member Comms, Bus Support 150,000	1,610,000
<b>GOAL 3 Repositioning Campaign</b>	700,000
<b>Administration</b>	
Operating Costs and cross pillar resources, staff/rent/financial/legal/office/operations	1,800,107
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>5,920,107</b>