

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

JULY 2024 – JUNE 2025





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This has been a very challenging year for many city centre businesses. Our work has focused on doing everything we can within our remit to attract more people here and create a thriving, safe and accessible place to do business. Our marketing, events, advocacy and safety initiatives have all delivered tangible results, which are outlined in this annual report.

This is the second year of our Strategic Plan, which has a vision for the city centre to be a vibrant, 24/7 international city by the time the New Zealand International Convention Centre and City Rail Link open in 2026.

The latest State of the City report highlights opportunities for the city centre, such as its agglomeration advantages, and it acknowledges that many of the attributes necessary to thrive are under development.

However, after a decade of major construction impacts, COVID and adverse residual impacts, the city centre is at a critical point and urgent action is needed to underpin growth. While some areas are vibrant and appealing, retail trading in the city centre remains sluggish and well behind the rest of the region and national figures. Crime has reduced since the peak in early 2023, but social issues remain prevalent, despite strong advocacy.

There is a burning platform to significantly increase the number of people here, ensure we have a great place to do business, and to attract more investment. Negative perceptions that have become ingrained must be addressed once and for all.

Along with well-targeted and effective marketing and events, Heart of the City has a clear advocacy focus to ensure business needs are met in city centre decisions and to create the right environment to drive growth as we head into a new era.

Viv Beck

Chief Executive





REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I'm pleased with Heart of the City's progress and impact over the reporting period. Every element of this year's work programme has focused on delivering value to the businesses we serve and there have been some strong results.

The Executive Committee has continued to provide oversight of Heart of the City's governance requirements, strategic direction and financial management this year, culminating once again in an unqualified audit.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to our Executive Committee, and our Chief Executive and staff for their strong commitment and passion. We acknowledge the support of our partners, and above all, the city centre businesses whose presence and resilience are essential for a vibrant city heart.

Martin Snedden

Chair, Heart of the City Executive Committee



2023-2026

SUMMARY OF OUR STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

In 2026, both the City Rail Link and NZ International Convention Centre will open here. Our vision for Auckland's city centre by then is to be a vibrant, 24/7 international city that is loved by locals and visitors alike. Four outcomes are sought over that timeframe:

▶ A PLACE THAT IS LOVED

PEOPLE FEEL POSITIVELY ABOUT THE CITY CENTRE

▶ MORE PEOPLE

MORE PEOPLE DAY AND NIGHT, DOING MORE AND SPENDING MORE

▶ VIBRANT PLACES

THAT ARE WELCOMING AND A GREAT PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

▶ SAFE, CLEAN AND ACCESSIBLE

A WELL-FUNCTIONING, CONNECTED AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT



2024-2025

OUR FOCUS

2024-2025 marked the halfway point of our three-year strategic plan and an important step towards achieving our vision. This past year, there was a weak economic climate, compounding the decade of major construction impacts, the worst COVID impacts in the country, and residual impacts, including shifts in ways of working.

Against this backdrop, we focused on promoting the things people love, like dining, events, and the waterfront, while reducing barriers to visitation, particularly around safety and accessibility.

All four strategic outcomes are important and interlinked; however, we focused on two key goals for 2024-2025:

GOAL ONE

IMPROVE PERCEPTIONS TO BRING MORE PEOPLE TO THE CITY CENTRE

Make the city centre a place where businesses, visitors, and locals want to be - by rebuilding its value, reputation, and demand.

GOAL TWO

REDUCE BARRIERS TO VISITATION

Our perceptions research clearly indicates the barriers to visitation that must be overcome to support the achievement of Goal 1 - primarily safety, cleaning and accessibility.

THESE ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS SHOWCASE SOME OF THE RESULTS WE'VE DELIVERED FOR EACH OF THESE GOALS OVER THE REPORTING PERIOD.

KEY CITY CENTRE PERFORMANCE METRICS

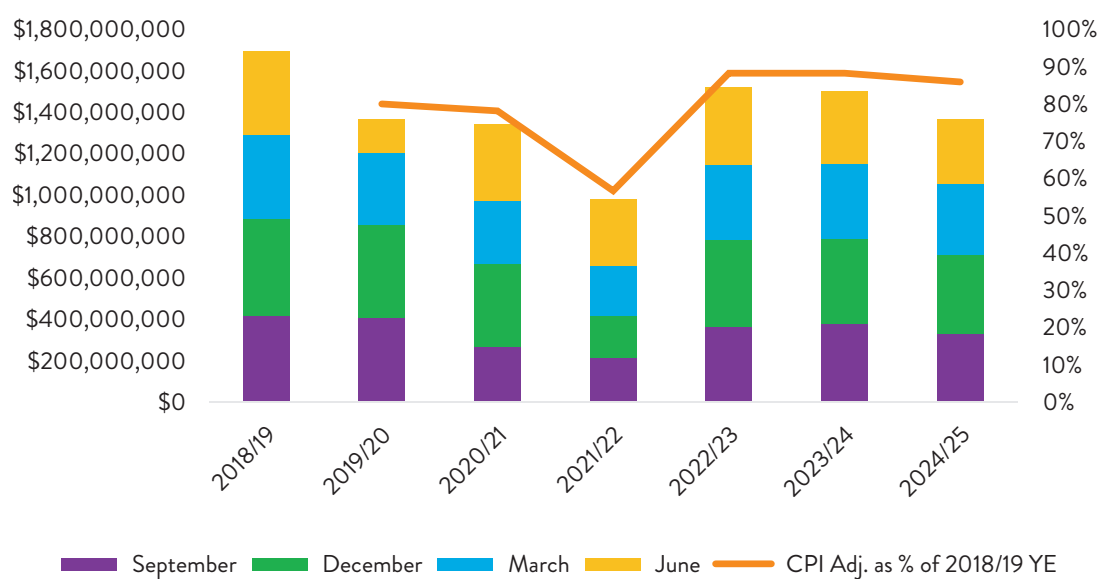
Keeping track of our key city centre metrics is a crucial aspect of our work - our own pedestrian counts as well as spend, leasing results and more. This data is regularly used by both our team and external stakeholders to assess progress and inform decision-making.

YEAR ENDING JUNE 2025 VS. 2024:

Foot traffic: -9% last 12 months vs. STLY¹

Spend: -9% last 12 months vs. STLY²

CITY CENTRE FINANCIAL YEAR SPEND BY QUARTER



Source: Marketview

Office and retail leasing trends reflected a city centre in transition. Corporate relocations, hybrid work, and the flight to quality are driving demand for premium city-centre offices, with prime vacancy at **8.4%**³ in H2 2025. Auckland CBD's strip retail sector increased to **11%**⁴ in H2 2025. Colliers reports that demand in luxury and international brand precincts remains "strong."⁵

Major regional events throughout the year had out-of-towners flocking to the city centre. Back-to-back Pearl Jam and Coldplay concerts in November 2024 boosted spend from New Zealand

visitors outside of Auckland **+52%**⁶ compared to the previous week. Over one weekend in January 2025, Luke Combs' Eden Park concerts and SailGP on the Waitematā Harbour saw domestic and visitor spend surge **+93%**⁷ compared to the previous weekend.

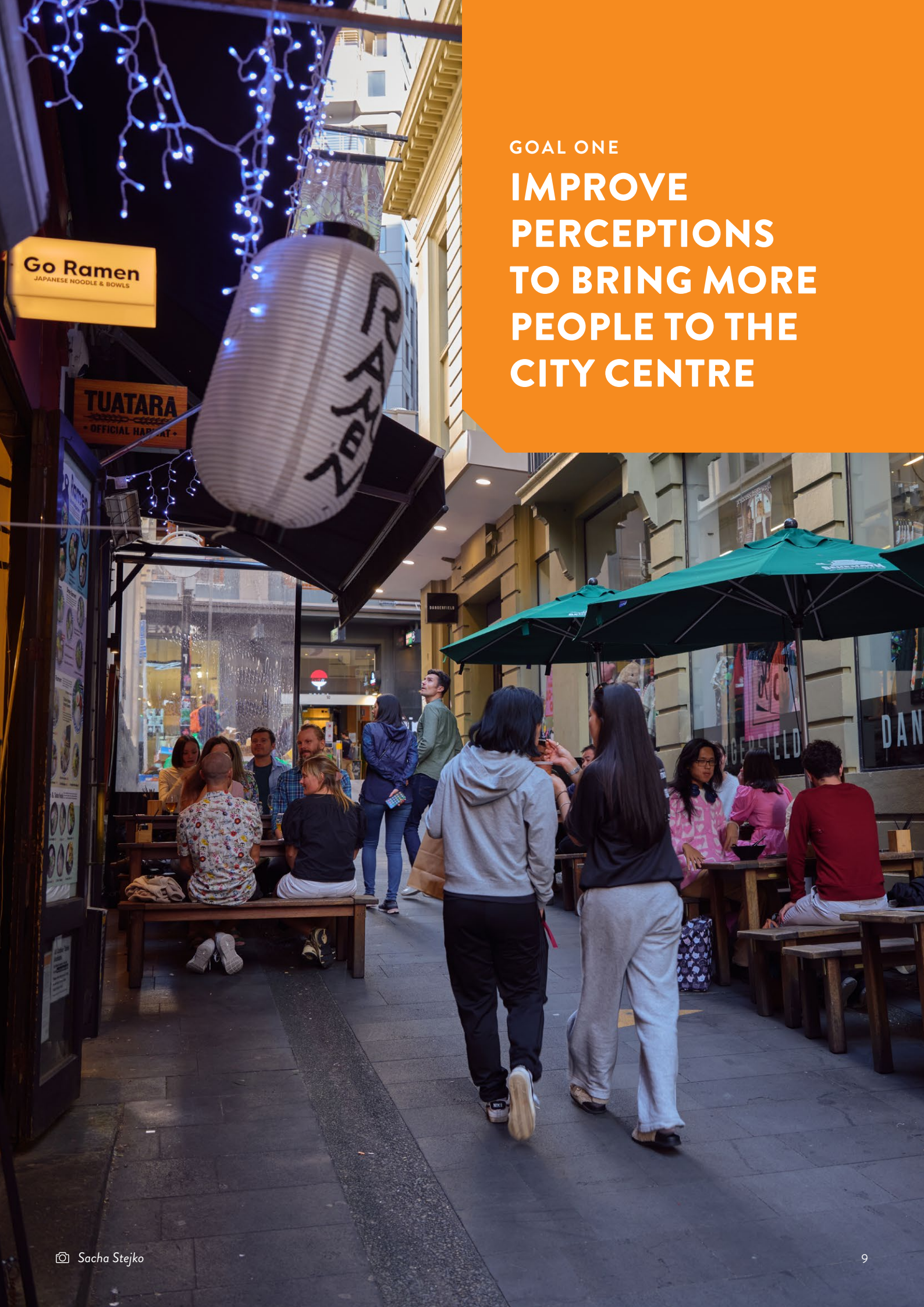
Confidence in the city centre's future is evident with more than 49 consumer-facing businesses opening throughout the year and a number of major developments having been completed, including 51 Albert Street.

¹ HOTC Pedestrian Count Data. ² Marketview. ³ Auckland CBD Office Report, Colliers H2 2025.

⁴ Auckland Retail Colliers Essentials, H2 2025. ⁵ Auckland Retail Colliers Essentials, H2 2025. ⁶ Marketview. ⁷ Marketview.

GOAL ONE

IMPROVE PERCEPTIONS TO BRING MORE PEOPLE TO THE CITY CENTRE



GOAL ONE

IMPROVE PERCEPTIONS TO BRING MORE PEOPLE TO THE CITY CENTRE

We wanted to change the way people feel about the city centre and bring more people here by rebuilding value, reputation and demand. Our high-performing communications channels were used to promote unique experiences and offers throughout the year. Signature Heart of the City events and campaigns such as Restaurant Month 2024, Art Week/Late Night Art and our annual Christmas activity - which included a new initiative - attracted visitors and spotlighted local businesses.

Highlights from this year's work include:

MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND PR

Our channels performed strongly throughout the year, with consistently high engagement rates, indicating that our content is valued amongst our audiences.

'Always On' digital marketing was effective, promoting a range of experiences and city centre businesses, focusing on events, retail, hospitality, attractions, arts and culture.

This included major events such as the World Choir Games, International Comedy Festival, Auckland Writers Festival and localised programming, including Matariki ki te Manawa and New Zealand Music Month.

Beginning in June 2024, we celebrated 20 city centre businesses and personalities through our Faces of the City series on Instagram and LinkedIn. It enabled us to provide support to some of our businesses particularly affected by various works programmes happening in their immediate vicinity. The posts delivered great engagement, with many commenting on why they love a certain person or business.

Key results included:

14.8 million Instagram views

7.8 million Facebook views

4.3 million TikTok views

As of June 2025, our weekly consumer EDM had **41,000 subscribers**, with an average open rate of **26%**, an increase of **4%** compared to the previous year, and well above the platform benchmark of 21%⁸.



⁸ HubSpot

Our business communications were also highly engaged with, and our content rates were well above platform averages or benchmarks. These included:

39.46% average open rate for members' business EDM

(vs. the average platform open rate of 21.10%)⁹

8.02% average engagement rate for organic LinkedIn posts

(6% if only posting organically is considered exceptional)¹⁰

Through both earned and reactive PR, we amplified both city centre stories and our ongoing advocacy work. This included sharing the good news of funding for the St James Theatre being confirmed, Te Manaaki - the new giant Christmas tree - and the confirmation of a permanent police station in the city centre. We also publicly advocated for business support in the wake of ongoing construction and planning challenges.



DELIVER AND PROMOTE SIGNATURE HEART OF THE CITY EVENTS

The return of our signature events, supported with extensive campaigns, aimed to bring people into the city centre, with results indicating they were of benefit to business.

RESTAURANT MONTH 2024

Over 100 restaurants presented special menus to enjoy for Restaurant Month 2024. It included 25+ one-off dining events from walking food tours to taco masterclasses and more. **90%**¹¹ of tickets to HOTC events were sold.

It was supported by Auckland Council and the city centre targeted rate.

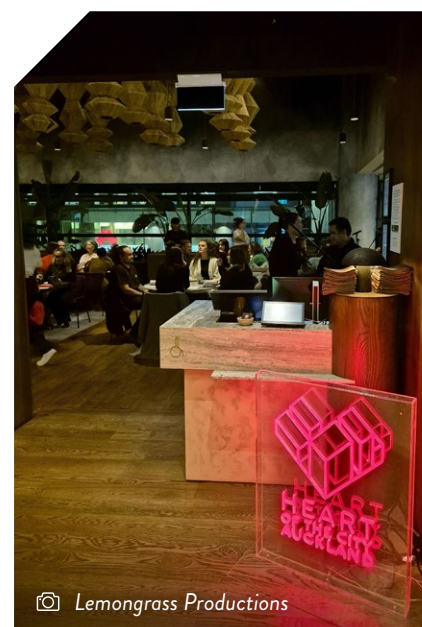
In its 14th year, the Restaurant Month campaign garnered some fantastic results, including:

20+ million PR reach

1.7 million completed video views (+75% vs. 2023)

723,000 webpage views (+3% vs. 2023)

These results supported a welcome boost in spend for participating business. **84%** of respondents from participating venues said Restaurant Month was 'good for participating businesses.'¹² **97%** said they would participate in Restaurant Month 2025.¹³



“It went very well for us, and the sale[s] reflect the positive impact. Also, we had a lot of happy customers.” – Participating business

⁹ Campaign Monitor

¹⁰ Socialstatus.io

¹¹ iTicket

¹² Restaurant Month post-event survey

¹³ Restaurant Month post-event survey

ART WEEK 2024

Across the ten-day programme there were over 70 events, exhibitions, installations and activations, ranging from Changing Lanes to guided walking tours. An additional 40 events were hosted as part of Late Night Art, the highlight event of the programme, which brought a boost to foot traffic and spend.

+117.7% in foot traffic vs. the previous Thursday¹⁴ **+27.7%** in foot traffic vs. Late Night Art 2023¹⁵

+11% in spend in activated areas vs. Late Night Art 2023¹⁶

There was great feedback from businesses and attendees:

“There’s been a lot more energy and buzz around the lane...things like Late Night [sic] are exactly what the [city centre] needs on a regular basis.” – Participating business

“It’s bustling, it’s the first event I’ve been to in a while that’s really felt alive.” – Late Night Art attendee

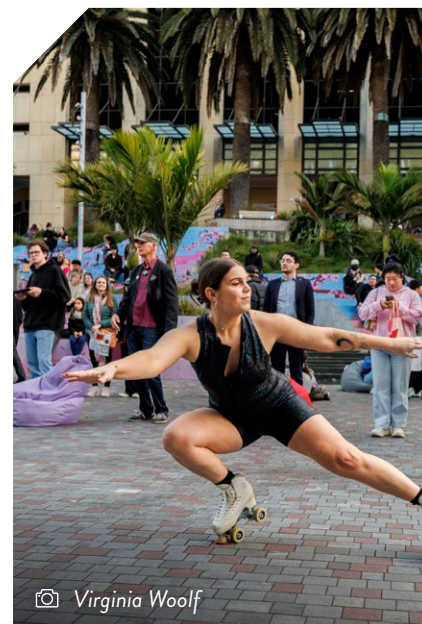
There were some impressive results for Art Week 2024’s marketing and PR campaign, including:

12.3 million digital campaign impressions served about Art Week
(vs. 9 million in 2023)

988,000 completed video views (+66% vs. 2023)

Over 152,000 website pageviews

25+ pieces of media coverage



CHRISTMAS 2024

Aucklanders got into the seasonal spirit with 20+ festive music, art, decorations and lighting that filled the city centre’s public spaces throughout December.

Our Christmas marketing campaign, along with the introduction of Te Manaaki, our new giant Christmas Tree, delivered some great results. The tree was a gift to the city through a partnership between Heart of the City and Precinct Properties, with support from Auckland Council via the city centre targeted rate.

Approximately **3,000** people attended the inaugural tree-lighting event in Te Komititanga.



¹⁴ HOTC Pedestrian Count Data

¹⁵ HOTC Pedestrian Count Data

¹⁶ Marketview

Te Manaaki was promoted across various digital platforms. Results included:

5.3 million digital campaign impressions served about Te Manaaki

1.43 million completed Te Manaaki video views

It also received extensive media coverage, with more than **107** pieces of coverage and **53 million** potential total cumulative PR Reach.

Surveyed Aucklanders had positive feedback about Te Manaaki, including:

71% rated their experience of Te Manaaki ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ (i.e. 4 or 5 out of 5)¹⁷

73% said events like Te Manaaki attract them to visit the city¹⁸

More than two-thirds planned to do other activities during their visit, including shopping (20%) and dining out (20%)¹⁹

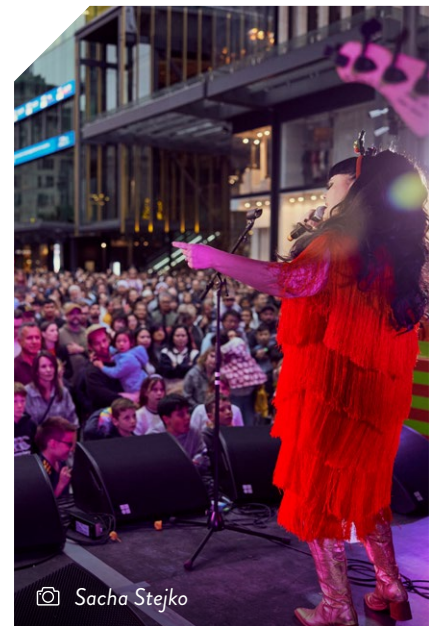
We also spread the Christmas cheer through our marketing campaign, seen across our own channels, along with other offerings such as out-of-home and street posters, delivering some impressive results, achieving:

19.6 million digital campaign impressions served about Christmas

2.77 million completed video views (+152% vs. 2023)

233,000 clicks to our website pages (+59% vs. 2023)

Christmas 2024 was proudly supported by Auckland Council and the city centre targeted rate.



AMPLIFYING THIRD-PARTY EVENTS

Throughout the year, we continued to amplify third-party events and collaborate on activations to drive vibrancy and visitation in the city centre. We proudly supported the Auckland Writers Festival, Auckland Arts Festival, Farmers Santa Parade, and New Zealand International Film Festival.

In July 2024, we worked with the World Choir Games to welcome delegates and support local businesses. Over 50 restaurants offered early Restaurant Month deals, promoted via 11,000 printed guides and targeted social content. A dedicated webpage inspired visitors to explore the city centre.



¹⁷ Christmas post-event survey

¹⁸ Christmas post-event survey

¹⁹ Christmas post-event survey

In May 2025, we supported the Auckland Writers Festival's *A New Light* activation. Designer Marcus McShane projected writers' words across city architecture at dawn and dusk, creating a magical experience. It attracted about 2,300 people over the course of four days.²⁰

We collaborated with Auckland Council for a range of initiatives throughout the year, including the Midtown Street Festival, Matariki ki Te Manawa and Lunar New Year.

February 2025's Lunar New Year programme featured our sold-out walking tours with Chow Luck Club, showcasing some of our Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese eateries.

One participant shared:

"It reminds me how rich the city is... there's still heaps more for me to explore."

It offered a great opportunity for participating businesses too, with one reporting:

"By being involved in this tour, we can showcase who we are and what we are selling to people...and they can experience something [sic] than what they are used to...it works both ways."

ACTIVATION AND PLACEMAKING

We've continued to collaborate with council on activation and placemaking opportunities across the city centre throughout the year. We supported the Vacant Tenancies programme by connecting property owners to council and artists. Additionally, we provided input into the Queen Street Place Enhancement Plan (QSPEP), which is anticipated to roll out in late 2025.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Night-Time Economy (NTE) continues to be a vital contributor to city centre vibrancy, accounting for **31.5% of overall spend**²¹. The spend at night time dropped 10.7% from 2023 - 2024. We supported Tātaki Auckland Unlimited's NTE research, which led to the development of a NTE revitalisation plan set for implementation in 2025- 2026 (funded through the City Centre Targeted Rate).

Our signature events, such as Restaurant Month and Late Night Art were key drivers for evening activity, complemented by our ongoing safety programme. These initiatives attract visitors, support local businesses and enhance the city's appeal after dark.



²⁰ Auckland Writers Festival

²¹ Marketview

To support private sector investment, we continue to identify opportunities to influence the city centre offer and collaborate with Tātaki Auckland Unlimited on their investment programme.

Our City Centre Quarterly Insights newsletter has become a trusted source of data and analysis, with over 1,700 LinkedIn subscribers and an average of 1,120 article views per edition. The insights are regularly cited in media and used by industry stakeholders.

OPERATIONS

Our research and insights continue to be of value to members and stakeholders in the city centre: with Police, leasing agents and council group organisations utilising our intelligence in reports and assessments. Data has also assisted our advocacy work with local and central government, highlighting shifts in city centre footfall, spend and sentiment.

Engagement with members is undertaken through relationships, surveys and face-to-face, seeking participation in our activities and identifying opportunities to deliver elements of our annual plan.

The Street Guardians programme, delivered by Te Tāpui Atawhai - Auckland City Mission, with funding support from Heart of the City, Auckland Council (through the City Centre Targeted Rate) and the Ministry of Social Development continued to be well-received. 900 whānau participated in the programme in the past year, with 125 of them being new participants. This was a **50% increase**²² in participant numbers compared to the previous year. For the 2024-2025 year, **100%** of participants attended work experience, and **85%** completed an individualised pathway plan²³.

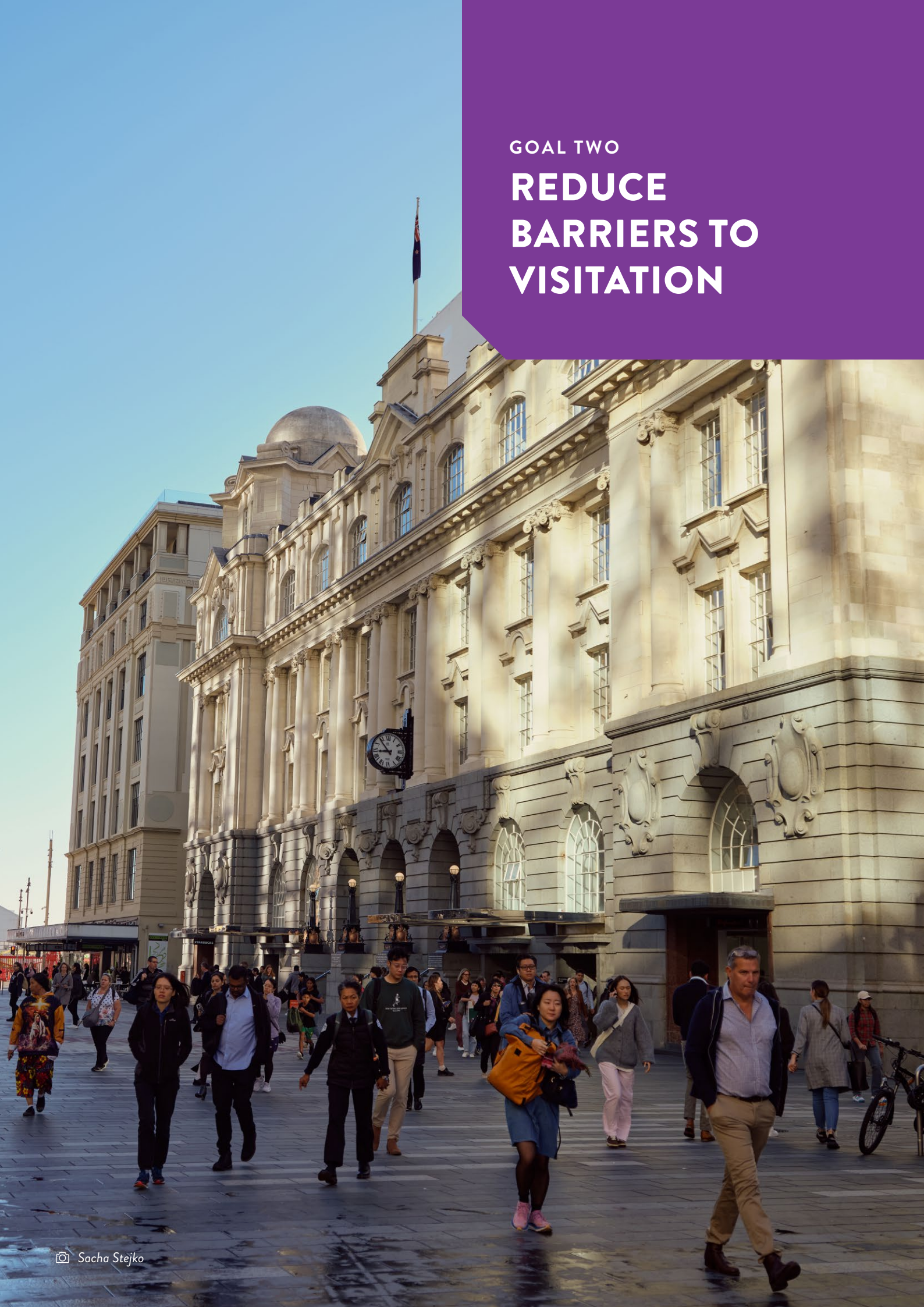


²² Auckland City Mission Annual Report

²³ Auckland City Mission Annual Report

GOAL TWO

REDUCE BARRIERS TO VISITATION



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Our perceptions research clearly indicates the barriers to visitation that must be overcome to support the achievement of Goal One - primarily safety, cleaning and accessibility.

Highlights from this year's work include:

SAFETY

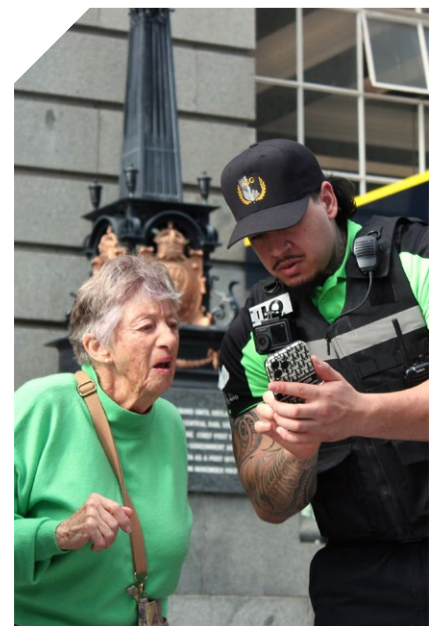
The year started with an increased Police beat presence (an additional 21 officers from July 2024) and was capped off with the confirmation that a permanent public-facing police station would be opening in July 2025. We advocated strongly for this for years, so were delighted with this result. Collectively, this is a positive result for the city centre, as our perception research shows that Police presence is the number one contributor to making people feel safe here.

Eight CCTV cameras were added to the extensive coverage within the HOTC area, in blind spots which were identified by Police. As the cameras are now monitored by Auckland Council compliance as well as Police and Auckland Transport, this is a significant improvement to the monitoring of issues in the city centre.

“It will be a tremendous boost for us to get these locations up-and-running and an invaluable tool in assisting us to make a difference across the CBD.” – *NZ Police spokesperson*

Additionally, we've invested in technology to improve the volume and quality of incident reporting to the Police for city centre businesses, using the Auror system. We load all Storewatch reports and support highly impacted businesses to report directly. This investment has led to successful offender identifications and built stronger evidence bases for Police investigations. The reporting has supported convictions of recidivist offenders while improving efficiency for both businesses and Police. Our collaboration ensures that incidents are not only documented but also used strategically to support case development and long-term crime prevention.

Our HOTC Safety Team continued to operate 24/7 in and around the Queen Street area, and worked closely with both Auckland Council compliance officers and Police. Community Patrols NZ has also expanded from the Safety Hub we set up in partnership with them for the FIFA (CPNZ) tournament in 2023.



This cross-agency work includes active communication channels between council and the HOTC Safety Team. **90%** of businesses feel well-supported by the HOTC Safety Team²⁴, with one reporting:

“Great to have them so visible, we all feel safer as a result of their presence.”

This combination of cross agency collaboration and advocacy contributed to crime statistics continuing to trend down from the peak in early 2023. Police data for the year 2024 - 2025 showed that reported incidents in the city centre **decreased by 16%** compared to the 2023 - 2024 year²⁵.

CITY OPERATIONS

A well-functioning, clean city is vital to attracting more people and providing a positive environment for businesses. We continued to play a role in advocating for improved public maintenance and cleaning, including regular waste information letter drops, which assisted with a reduction in issues. We continue to advocate and raise issues with council teams.

We're notified of most events and public works and actively communicate to businesses who are likely to be impacted, working with works companies and suppliers to ensure they give accurate information in a timely manner.

ACCESS

To help people get in and around the city centre more easily, we promoted all transport options alongside our event pages and on our consumer website throughout the year.

We joined with other groups to lobby against Auckland Transport's plan to introduce overnight parking charges. Our advocacy was instrumental in getting this delayed until 2026.

We advocated for improved access outcomes across council group projects, including servicing and loading in Midtown, access to the Aotea Arts Quarter in Queen Street and Downtown West. The lack of progress is concerning, and we will persevere as sensible, multi-modal access is important to underpin recovery.

We continue to raise the risks associated with a City Centre Cordon in the Time of Use charging work that AT has been undertaking.

²⁴ HOTC Safety Team survey

²⁵ NZ Police

CITY CENTRE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

We were delighted that our longstanding advocacy to restore the St James theatre in Queen Street came to fruition this year with Auckland Council honouring its longstanding commitment of funding. This will assist with the regeneration of the arts and cultural quarter.

We advocated for business needs to be understood both directly and incorporated into advice to council through our participation in the City Centre Advisory Panel (CCAP) and for the city centre targeted rate to be appropriately allocated.



