

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

