

#### New Plymouth Central Area Urban Design Survey Results Analysis $_{_{\#\#}}$



### You told us...

#### The Central Area Urban Design Survey

Almost 200 responses were received from people in the New Plymouth District with something to say about the future development of the Central Area.

A site survey document that provides a snap shot of the various elements of the Central Area was made available online and in the District Libraries, Puke Ariki and the Civic Centre. This outlined information on the history; and the commercial, environmental, social and cultural aspects of the area as it is today. This also provides a useful bench mark for future surveys to monitor progress of the Urban Design Framework.

People were invited to share their thoughts on the Central Area over 3 weeks begining in October 2012. A range of methods were used to reach people:

- Over 1000 letters with an enclosed survey were sent out to residents, property owners, business owners and tenants in the Central Area.
- The Daily News and Council media updates were sent out inviting everyone to fill in the survey.
- Emails were directly sent to a list of identified stakeholders who shared the survey with their networks and started discussions out in the public realm such as on the *Taranaki-Like no other* facebook page.
- The survey was made available on the Council website.
- Touch pads were taken down to the Central Area to allow people in the area the chance to fill out their survey while they went about their daily business.

#### The survey results

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The information from the survey results is a key element of this Urban Design Framework.

The open ended questions have been annotated so that analysis can be made e.g. if an answer included the words shop, shops or shopping then 'shopping' was used as a characteristic the Central Area is known for.

This summary of results are based on 190 responses received. This is considered a high response rate to a Council community consultation thereby a robust quality of data is established.



### Urban Design Framework

#### An Urban Design Framework

The Ministry for the Environment Urban Design Toolkit defines an Urban Design Framework as:

'A document that describes an overarching vision and the intended outcome for an entire urban area and gives direction to subsequent policies and site specific initiatives within that area.'

The Urban Design Framework will strategically sit beneath the Long Term Plan and District Plan and alongside other New Plymouth District Council strategies and policies though it may identify directions for further investigation within the scope of these other documents. It has a proactive encouraging approach for new development rather than being restrictive.

This document supports and adds detail to the New Plymouth District Council strategic intent:

New Plymouth District will offer an attractive living environment that compares favourably nationally and internationally.

It will do this to attract and retain the skilled labour force our community needs to grow and prosper.

The unifying purpose of all New Plymouth District Council services lies in creating an attractive living environment.

New Plymouth District Council will invest in, maintain, assist and encourage others to provide those diverse facilities, infrastructure and services that are needed to make New Plymouth District nationally and internationally a location of choice.

New Plymouth District Council, Long Term Plan

# What is the Central Area known for?

The responses indicate the Central Area is most commonly known for the shopping activities with 79 responses. Boutique shops and retail with around 10 responses each contribute to this same shopping theme. Business and commerce with over 5 responses each may indirectly link to the shopping quality. Though these responses could equally refer to office, service, finance or accommodation activities.

Other widely shared characteristics of the Central Area include entertainment, cafes, restaurants with around 30 responses each.

"The business, retail and commercial centre for the District. The centre for art, theatre and culture. The centre for entertainment and dining. The traditional centre for shopping." "It should be the heart of the city, a place to be proud of and to boast about. A place to eat, shop and stroll."

*"Shopping, eating, working, visiting, meeting, entertainment, living."* 



Annotated responses from 2012 Central Area Urban Design Survey: the size of type relates to the number of responses for each element. A New Plymouth Central Area Urban Design SURVEY ANALYSIS

# What shouldn't be located/catered for in the Central Area?



Industrial activity is the least sought after activity with 40 responses indicating it shouldn't be located in the Central Area.

Other high scoring elements with 16 responses each include big box retail and high rise buildings. Liquor stores received 11 responses. There were 11 corresponding responses that specify elements related to alcohol e.g. people drinking, too many bars.

10 responses focussed on parking e.g. too much parking, parking meters, surface level car parks.

8 responses considered that nothing should be restricted from locating in the Central Area.

Some issues although widely publicised received suprisingly low responses e.g. Trees on Devon Street were mentioned by 4 respondents. The Len Lye Centre was mentioned by 3 people. "Roads and areas of paved car parking. Large malls that focus their activity internally as opposed to opening to and interacting with the surrounding area. Roads that act as physical barriers preventing easy pedestrian flow eg St Aubyn St." "I believe that everything commercial and non-commercial and residential has it's place in the central area, however I think it is important to plan for the development of "quarters" or zones which group particular activities together."

*"Industrial activity with noise, odour and heavy traffic effects."* 

### What should be recognised and celebrated in the Central Area?

Open space was the most frequently mentioned feature worthy of recognition with 31 responses. Art and arts were also frequently mentioned; 27 responses. Art galleries including the Govett Brewster, Kina, Tart and Len Lye were mentioned 11 times in addition to art and arts. Cultural heritage and activities combined received 36 responses. Heritage buildings, features, sites and items collectively received 28 responses. Puke Ariki and the Landing received 23 responses. The Walkway was not far behind with 18 responses though the range of titles used to identify the walkway is noted e.g. foreshore, coastal walkway and perhaps most common the walkway. There were a number of responses regarding the coast: Tasman Sea (3); Coast (11); Access or link to the Coast (10); Views (15); and the Foreshore/Waterfront (9).

There were 11 responses that specified events. A further 13 responses were related with entertainment and activities identified. Shops, shopping and retail combined received 21 respoonses. An additional 6 responses provided more detail by specifying boutique retail and 5 other responses specified local business or shops.

Eating, restaurants and dining received 22 responses.

Although perhaps only loosely related 10 responses identified good quality design; elements such as open space, building facades, buildings and a vibrant atmosphere were identified. Good access was idenitifed by 7 respondents as worthy of recognition in the Central Area.

#### fores uniqueness onnections to coast afe environment after dar architecture access to sea provincial city free parking individualit safe environment fun living mount streams retail stores ural amenitie low rise city passion parks extended hours of activity on the flat grassed areas boutique retail puke ariki landing low rise developme culture business

Annotated responses from 2012 Central Area Urban Design Survey: the size of type relates to the number of responses for each element. 6



### **Respondents Profile Information**

Bar labels refer to the percentage of total responses for each question.

#### What is your main purpose for visiting the Central Area?

This question allowed multiple responses and the results are based on 513 responses. The results show respondents engage with a relatively even balance of different uses. Shopping and eating received the most responses with over 100 each. Notably, living received only half this amount of responses at 53 or 10%.



#### Are you any of the following in the Central Area?

This question also allowed multiple responses and the results are based on 257 responses. The results show that nearly a third of responses were from property owners in the Central Area. The 24.12% of responses from the none of these category may have had other interests in the Central Area e.g. workers, visitors, shoppers etc.



#### How often do you visit the Central Area?

This bar chart is based on 188 responses. The high percentage (63%) of respondents that visit the Central Area every day indicates a very well informed basis for responses.



#### How do you most often travel to the Central Area?

This question allowed multiple responses and the results are based on 225 responses. The results show that more than half of the respondents (55%) use motor vehicle transport to reach the Central Area.

Of note is the relatively high percentage of walkers (37%) in comparison with New Plymouth District Census data transport 'main means of travel to work'. This is not a direct comparison but does provide an idea of standard transport modes.



## Urban Design Matters

These questions are based on 190 responses. The headings are statements and respondents were asked to rate there degree of agreement with the statement. Participants in the survey rated most of the individual urban design matters. A summary for each matter is set out below. Bar labels refer to the percentage of total responses for each question.

# Current building height limits are the appropriate tools to manage future development.

In total 63% agree or strongly agree with the current building height limits. This is a relatively high level of support. However, 19% disagreed with this statement.

Other comments around this issue included requests for more guidance on where taller buildings might be permitted.



#### The number of large, hard surface, grey places are appropriate.

More people disagreed than agreed with this statement. There is slightly higher disagreement and the 13% strongly disagree responses is comparatively high.

This indicates that the existing level of hard grey surfaces is an issue that may need addressingin the urban design framework.



#### There are an appropriate number of street trees and open spaces.

45% of respondents agree there are an appropriate number of street trees and open spaces while 34% disagree.

There is a low % of people that didn't think this was a matter of concern or didn't respond.



# The quality of design and materials used for building are interesting and engaging.

Overall, 42% disagree and 37% agree the quality of building design and materials are interesting and engaging.



### Urban Design Matters

Bar labels refer to the percentage of total responses for each question.

#### The Central Area is a safe place to be.

A decisive number of people agree the Central Area is a safe place to be.



## There is no problem with the amount of graffiti in the Central Area.

The high % of people that agree there is no problem with graffiti in the Central Area indicates the current graffiti management technique is successful and graffiti is not a major issue in the Central Area.



# There number of dull ground floor frontages with too few windows or doors is about right.

More people disagree than agree that the number of dull ground floor frontages with too few windows or doors is about right.

A high proportion of people either didn't respond to this question or thought it was not a matter of concern.



# The level of investment in green buildings and sustainable technology in the built environment is appropriate.

More people disagreed than a agreed with this statement.

There is a relatively high % of people that strongly disagreed with this statement.

In addition, a relatively high % of people either didn't respond to this question or thought it was not a matter of concern.



### Urban Design Matters

Bar labels refer to the percentage of total responses for each question.

# New developments are distinctive and reflect the quality of the environment they are located in; there is no lack of identity.

The agree rankings were chosen by a larger percentage of the participants, the graph shows this issue to be of less importance than other more decisive issues. This is shown by a more even distribution of rankings



# The amount of signage or corporate colour on buildings is about right.

A high number of people agreed that signage and corporate colour on buildings is about right.

The results indicate this is not a significant issue to the majority of people.





A high number of people generally thought pedestrian access is easy and safe.

However, the variation in pedestrian access across the Central Area was noted.



#### Cyclist access is easy and safe.

The response for cyclist access and safety is less clear. More people agreed than disagreed with the statement. But it is a relatively evenly spread response indicating people do not have strong views on this issue.



# Urban Design Matters

Bar labels refer to the percentage of total responses for each question.

# More people living in the Central Areas would make it a safer and more vibrant place.

There is strong support for this statement. The graph shows there is a relatively high number of people who strongly agree along with a high percentage that agree.



#### Activities can too easily occur in places that have a negative effect on the existing environment

More people agree than disagree with this statement.

There are a high number of people that didn't respond or thought it was not a matter of concern. There were a few comments received around the phrasing of this statement which relies on background planning knowledge to answer. This may have contributed to the high rate of responses in this category.



#### Vacant lots are acceptable in prime retail areas



# What types of design guidance do you think are appropriate for development within the Central Area?

A low number of responses thought that no action is necessary in relation to design guidance for development in the Central Area.

The graph of responses

to this statement show it is a significant issue to

respondents.

The results for the various options are relatively evenly spread. A high percentage of people favoured District Plan regulations.



# What area or open space in the Central Area do you like the most? Why?

People were asked what their favourite open space in the Central Area is and the reasons for their response. The chart below summarises the response and the word cloud summarises the reasons for peoples favourite open space.



Bar labels refer to the number of responses for each open space.

This question allowed multiple open spaces to be identified in the response and open ended reasons to be given. The results are based on 187 responses. The word cloud has been produced as a result of annotating people responses.

Puke Ariki was decidedly the most preferred open space receiving more than twice the amount of responses than any other open space. The walkway followed with 52 people. The third most popular space was Huatoki Plaza with 16 people. This was closely followed with Brougham Street and Devon Street. Various parts of Devon Street were noted but all were within the area between Gover and Dawson Streets.

The area around the White Hart, TSB Showplace, Govett Brewster Art Gallery, Mayfair and Kina was identified by 9 people as the most preferred open space. This area was sometimes referred to as the Cultural Area. It is noted that this area also includes Devon Street but it has been rated separately. Pukekura Park is technically outside of the Central Area study area which explains the low response rate for it. The quality that was most valued was the 'open space' with 43 responses. Greenness and grass was also highly valued with 27 and 12 responses respectively. 10 people noted the coastal value of a space was important to them and supporting this value is being at the waters edge (7 responses), but those responses also referred to further inland and the Huatoki Stream.

The connection that the open spaces provided was identified by 20 people, the ability for pedestrians to move easily from the City to the sea was often referred to. Accessibility or easy access supports the concept of connection and was referred to by 11 people.

Gathering or meeting place was identified by 8 people as an important quality of their favourite open space. Mixed use received 7 responses.



# What area or open space in the Central Area do you like the least? Why?

People were asked what open space in the Central Area they liked least and the reasons for their response. The chart below summarises the response and the word cloud summarises the reasons for peoples least favourite open space. The raw data allows analysis of individual spaces and the qualities attributed to them.



Bar labels refer to the number of responses for each open space.

This question allowed multiple open spaces to be identified in the response and open ended reasons to be given. The results are based on 180 responses. The word cloud has been produced as a result of annotating people responses.

Huatoki Plaza was identified by 78 people as the least liked open space in the Central Area. 17 people identified Devon Street. This is closely followed by Car parks generally (14 responses) Gill Street -in particular behind Toptown (12 responses) and the area outside of Centre City (11 responses).

The main reason people gave for their least favourite open space in the Central Area was the dominance of concrete. This was referred to 23 times in the responses. This was followed by the yellow canopy, which received 19 responses. These characteristics were most often attributed to Huatoki Plaza.

Other characteristics frequently referred to in peoples responses were that the space needs more landscaping. Trees, plants, weather protection, lighting and seating were noted. People commented on their least favourite place as being uninviting (16 responses); ugly (11 responses) and underutilised (11 responses) or empty (8 responses).

There were a range of comments relating to cars including:

- too many cars- 7 responses
- too much car parking- 7 responses
- Car parks- 11 responses

The open space being only used as a thoroughfare had 8 responses. Poor design was mentioned by 7 people. The fact the mentioned space was boring and a lost opportunity was referred to 6 times each.



# What building do you like the most? Why?

People were asked what buildings in the Central Area they liked the most and the least along with reasons for their response. The chart below and on the next page summarises the responses and the word clouds summarises the reasons for peoples standout buildings. The raw data allows analysis of individual spaces and the qualities attributed to them.



Bar labels refer to the number of responses for each open space.

This question allowed multiple buildings to be identified in the response and open ended reasons to be given. The results are based on 180 responses. The word cloud has been produced as a result of annotating people responses.

Puke Ariki was remarkably peoples favourite Central Area building with 57 responses. The White Hart Hotel was also strongly favoured with 32 responses. TSB Showplace and the Clock Tower were popular with 8 responses each. St Mary's Cathedral received 6 responses.

There was a wide range of buildings identified as people most preferred. Many of the other buildings have strong heritage or icon values for the Central Area. Interestingly, Centre City was one of a cluster of buildings that received 4-5 responses in support. This group includes: the Womens Toilet; The Mill; Andre's Restaurant; NPDC Civic Offices; the Kings Building; the old TSB amdifferent shops such as the 2 storey timber buildings on Devon Street.

Heritage building was the most frequently used reason for peoples choice with 31 responses. Many responses supported this heritage theme by noting closely related attributes such as good character (12 responses) and restored (12 responses). In contrast modern with 12 responses was also a notable building quality.

Attributes such as attractive (6 responses), interesting (5 responses) and well designed (8 responses) indicate that people know what they like when they see it and appreciate good looking buildings.

Functional (5 responses) and well maintained (4 responses) were appreciated qualities. Landmark (5 responses) and iconic (4 responses) buildings were also of note.

There was a wide variety in peoples reasons for their favourite building in the Central Area.



## What building do you like the least? Why?



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This question allowed multiple buildings to be identified in the response and open ended reasons to be given. The results are based on 178 responses. The word cloud has been produced as a result of annotating people responses.

Centre City is undoubtably the least popular building in the Central Area with 49 responses. Common reasons were that the development was in an inappropriate location, that there was too much concrete, that the building blocks the views. turns its back on the sea and that it was a waste of prime coastal space.

Apart from this the rest of the responses were relatively widely spread with no strong contenders to the least liked building. The Transfield Worley building was identified by 9 people. Other tall buildings of note were Education House (5); Tasman Towers (2); Downtown Carpark (Metro Plaza, Downtown Arcade) (6); Genesis Building (1) and high rise office blocks in general (1).

Other buildings were also noted for their inappropriate overall size, and contrast with the surrounding scale such as: the Warehouse (2); the Atkinson building (6);

view shaft

empty,

underutilised dilapidated

eyesore poor quality design

too tall for the location too tall for its

style sore thumb

no attempt to reflect the city's identity

lost opportunity

It's an e

messy

built over the Huatoki Stream

PEI building (4); Top Town (8); Placemakers (3) and the Quarterdeck apartments (4).

Industrial scale and character buildings were identified by a number of respondents e.g. Gill St (1); Devon St East (2); Warehouses (1) and Placemakers (3).

Active ground floor frontages and streetscape treatments were the reasons mentioned for a number of individual building including the Reef Apartments (1); Waterfront Hotel (1); Chemist on the corner of Devon and Currie St (1) and Centre City which has already been mentioned.

These results indicate that location, height, bulk and scale and design quality of buildings, along with view protection are qualities the respondents perceive and recognise when development does not align with their expectations.

# concrete inappropriate lo OIC

boring

ur dullpoor

unattractive

uninvitina

COIO

oasta

awful

waste of prime space

renovations have ruined a lovely building too tall for that location

street

disused building blank wall facing the sea

polition too big for its location

activity inappropriate for site

too large

appeal

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