Notice of Meeting
A meeting of the 20/20 Inner City Development (City Centre/Urban Design) Subcommittee will be held in the Council Chamber, Forum North, Whangarei on:

Wednesday
17 October 2012
1.00 pm
1. CBD Upgrade Stage 1

Reporting officer  Nick Karlovsky (Senior Specialist Urban Design)
Date  28 September 2012

Vision, Mission and Values
This project will contribute to the vision of creating a vibrant, attractive and thriving District by enhancing the ‘sense of place’ through the upgrade of a key portion of the CBD streetscapes. The resulting living environment will mean different things to different sectors of our Community. This project will enhance the experience of the CBD for these various sectors.

Local Government Act 2002 – The four well-beings
Cultural  This project will provide opportunities for cultural events and live entertainment and will feature materials and themes that reflect local values
Economic  The project aims to enhance the appeal of the CBD to both locals and visitors, thereby adding to the local economy.
Environmental  The project sets out to enhance and embellish the inner city urban environment.
Social  The project sets out to create the setting for enhanced opportunities for social engagement.

Background
This project was presented to the 20/20 Inner City Development (City Centre/Urban Design) Subcommittee on 10 August 2011, together with the Carpark to Park proposal for the Town Basin, with a recommendation “That consultation is undertaken on the CBD Revitalisation and Town Basin Park area proposals”.

The above motion was carried and a further motion was moved
“1. That the manager be authorised to continue to undertake a design concept to take out for public consultation (based on today’s meeting).
2. That no further works be entered into until such time as they have been presented to full Council.”

Subsequently updated drawings for this project were presented to Council at the 23 November 2011 meeting and a public engagement programme seeking public and stakeholder feedback was conducted during February 2012.

Public Engagement
Public Engagement consisted of a stall in the Mall near the corner of Cameron and James streets attended by two staff members on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 11am and 3pm throughout February, display panels forms in the Forum North and Library foyers, and both stakeholder and public meetings.

Two distinct concepts were presented to the public. One being the full extension of the Mall for pedestrians only, and the other being the retention of a narrow, one way vehicular laneway, with widening of pedestrian amenities on either side.

Approximately 800 people were engaged with. 167 feedback forms were received from a combination of individuals, businesses, groups and institutions. 133 clearly supported the project while 34 were opposed. Of those in support 52 expressed a preference for the Mall concept and 34 expressed a preference for the Laneway. It should be noted however that the text presented to the public indicated a strategy of starting with the Laneway and then reviewing its success after several years with conversion to full Mall then an option.

Thus those who were in favour of the project proceeding but hadn’t expressed a clear preference for Mall or Laneway can be generally regarded as supportive of this approach.

In addition, local businesses who provided feedback showed a very firm preference for the laneway, indicating that the complete removal of vehicular traffic would be disadvantageous for their businesses.
Strong support for the Laneway concept has also been expressed by the Vitalise Whangarei group in their submission to the LTP.

Little additional work would be required to make the transition from Laneway to Mall and the Laneway configuration enables easy closure to traffic for special events with the insertion of 2 removable bollards at the corner of James and John streets.

*The main themes revealed by the feedback were:*

**Carparking**
Feedback indicated widespread concern about availability of parking in the CBD from both those in support and those against the project. The opinion was also expressed that the upgrade should be considered in conjunction with implementing the parking strategy. Wide concern was also expressed about the state of John Street carpark, with concerns ranging from it being hard to find, that it felt unsafe especially in the stair wells (35 respondents raised this issue). A major upgrade to the Central City Carpark (ex John Street) has already commenced following approval by Council.

**Canopies**
There was good support for providing canopies within the expanded Mall area, thereby making the area more conducive to wet weather shopping. In an approach separate from the public engagement process, owners of buildings on all sides of the Cameron James corner have indicated strong support for a Canopy covering the Cameron James corner (21 respondents).

**Car / Pedestrian separation**
Among those supporting the Mall option, a large number expressed the view that pedestrians and cars should be kept apart (36 respondents).

**Slippery Tiles**
The existing Cameron Mall tiles are slippery and hazardous when wet. This had been addressed independently (16 respondents).

*Other issues raised included:*

**Support for a Stage**
For both busking and event performances (12 respondents).

**Disabled Parking**
Several respondents including ‘positively aging advisory group’ lobbied for retention of the existing four disabled car-parks in the subject area (9 respondents).

**Service Vehicles**
Local food and beverage businesses emphasised the need to maintain delivery vehicle access and requested that attention be paid to space dedicated for delivery vehicle parking (6 respondents plus Vitalise LTP submission).

**Alfresco Dining**
Support for retention and/or enhancement of al-fresco dining provision (7 respondents).

**Trees**
Retaining and adding to existing trees for natural shade and a healthy environment (7 respondents).

**Play area**
The location of the play equipment in the Laneway concept would place small children at play next to moving vehicles (2 respondents).

**Security**
A number of people would like to see security increased and unsavoury characters banished (12 respondents).

**Youth friendly features**
Ideas included a ‘youth centre’ and a ‘place to skate’ (11 respondents).

**Water Feature**
Some supported having a water feature (7 respondents).

Among those against the project the predominant concern was that the project entails extravagant and non-essential expenditure at a time of economic downturn.
Shared Space

Shared Space is the name given to a spreading global trend in inner city street design that favours pedestrians over vehicles. The defining characteristic is an uninterrupted level surface across the street. The usual features that separate pedestrians and vehicles (kerbs, bollards and barriers) are absent, as are most road markings and signage. The ambience is essentially that of a pedestrian mall, however a clear passageway for vehicles is discernable between amenity features such as light stands, trees, and seating.

Although counter-intuitive, safety audits reveal such streets to be generally safer for pedestrians than they were in their previous conventional configurations.

Recent Auckland examples of street conversions to shared space formats include Elliot and Darby Street and Fort Lane. Auckland City has recorded a 50% plus increase in pedestrian counts on these streets subsequent to their upgrades.

The Laneway concept developed by Reset Urban Design, embodies all the characteristics of a shared space.

Design Development

Since the public engagement phase, Council’s Urban Design Specialist has developed the design of the Laneway Concept. This has departed from the Reset design in the following respects:

Paving
The paving has been adapted to better integrate with the existing Mall paving with its underlying tuku-tuku pattern reference. The current footpath paving has been retained along the street edges. This establishes continuity with the adjoining streets as well as considerably lessening trade disruption during the construction phase and saving expenditure. Between the existing footpaths a ‘shadow version of the same pattern at a double scale is introduced. Material options for this currently include civic grade clay or concrete interlocking pavers that meet acceptable skid resistance standards in alternating colour bands.

Trees
The Reset concept included significantly reduced numbers of existing street trees and included movable ‘sculptural’ planter boxes. An existing feature of the affected streets is the presence of tall established Queen and Bungalow Palms which add a vertical dimension and a sub-tropical ambience. These are all located in raised stone planters. The planters are not easily compatible with the laneway/shared space layout. Some impinge of the intended vehicular path and virtually all would act as obstacles in the path of the free flow of pedestrian movement, a key attribute in shared spaces. The developed scheme removes most of the stone planters and reinstates the palms at ground level.

The raised planters adjacent to the cinema entrance on James Street would be retained signifying the end to the shared space environment, however the three Melia Trees growing in them have reached a size where they now block the view of Parihaka from the southern end of the street along with the visual axis that links the Mall to the Town Basin. It is proposed that these are replaced by three of the large palms removed from other planters.

Four new Nikau Palms are proposed in the James Cameron corner vicinity, chosen for their iconic form, human scale and local connection.

The Green Wall proposed by Reset between James Street and the Post Office carpark area is retained. It is proposed that this be a bougainvillea over the structural frame in order to attract the eye along James Street with its intense colour. Its thorns would act as a deterrent to people attempting to climb it.

Canopies
The Reset scheme featured only small canopies associated with al-fresco dining. The developed scheme includes al-fresco canopies and proposes covering the entire James Cameron corner with a large free-standing canopy.

The canopy membrane would be ‘ETFE’, a new lightweight and transparent material with a 50 year life span. This has recently been used on the Cloud and the Eden Park modifications in Auckland, as well as the new covered stadium in Dunedin. The canopy would enable movement under cover in all weather, and act as a focal point for the town centre. By locating it at the James / Cameron corner it would act as a beacon when viewed from the Town Basin, in particular when lit up at night. In addition it is proposed to erect an ETFE canopy extension to Quality Street enabling under-cover access across Cameron from Quality Street.
Stage
As with the Reset concept, the developed scheme features a stage under a tree on the James Cameron corner. The stage and tree would anchor the corner and, together with the palms around it, embellish the lush subtropical ambience. The tree may be the existing Melia, however in the medium to long term it would be replaced with a more locally relevant species such as a Pohutukawa. The stage would be constructed so as to enable it to be partially demountable, leaving a seating surround to the raised planter bed around the tree.

Fixed Seating
New fixed seating is introduced (Attachment 1) featuring recycled stone wall bases constructed from the existing dismantled stone planters.

Lighting
It is proposed to upgrade the street lighting to attain an evening/night-time ambience befitting a key CBD alfresco and retail hub. Good street lighting is an important component in shared space design to enable suitable visibility between vehicles and pedestrians. It also plays an important role in creating a safer environment after dark.

Parking
The 30 carparks that currently exist between the Cameron John corner and the cinema entrance are replaced by space for up to 10 parallel parked vehicles. The allocation of these spaces is not as yet determined. It is important that a number of them be allocated to delivery vehicles.

Cost Estimate
Council’s Urban Designer has worked with Griffiths & Associates on the cost estimate. Based on information available to date the total project cost is estimated to be $2,312,540.

This includes $780,000 for the Cameron James corner canopy (including feature lighting) and $168,000 for the smaller canopy near Quality Street.

Recommendation
That the project proceeds to detailed design stage subject to stakeholder consultation and further assessment of project costs meeting LTP budget.

Recommendation
1. That the report be received.
2. That the project proceeds to further stakeholder engagement and detailed design.
3. That the final design be presented to Council for approval.

Attachment
Developed Design Drawing Set
CBD STAGE 1 Developed Design Layout Plan

1. Specimen Tree above Stage
2. New Nikau Palms
3. Existing Queen palms relocated
4. Existing Queen Palm remaining in stone planter
5. Existing Titoki street trees
6. Relocated Titoki street tree
7. Hardwood seating on stone bench
8. Stage (partially demountable) below canopy
9. Proposed ‘ETFE’ transparent fabric canopies at Cameron James corner & across Cameron Street extending from Quality Street
10. Potential retractable Alfresco Canopy Locations
11. New street lights
12. ‘Green Wall’ 4.5m high visually permeable screen covered by sub tropical climber
13. Direction Board/ Plinth
14. Bike Stand

Scale 1:500 @ A3

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