

6.1 Central Area

Introduction and Issues

The Central Area of Hamilton City is the principal centre for employment, retailing, entertainment, and business activity in the Waikato Region. This has been reflected over the years by considerable investment in public infrastructure, parking, pedestrian areas, open space and community facilities, to accommodate the density of people and activities that regularly congregate in the Central Area. More recently, the City's success in attracting and hosting major sporting and recreational events, and the further development of its major stadia and Claudelands Events Centre has added to the diversity of activities available within and around the City Centre

The Central Area comprises an intensively developed, pedestrian oriented City Centre (being the area generally bounded by Hood, Anglesea and London Streets and the Waikato River). An ~~supported by an~~ extensive lower intensity service oriented ~~peripheral central~~ area wraps around the City Centre and accommodates a wide variety of retail, office, education and entertainment activities that have a distinct focus on the City Centre, as well as specific key facilities such as hotels, car parking buildings and the Transport Centre. Whilst the City Centre has a distinct pedestrian focussed core, the fringe areas of the core are an inseparable element of the diversity and vitality of the CBD. These fringe areas add strength and vitality to the CBD by providing the continuity of business activities between the City Centre core and other key drivers of the City's economy such as the Waikato Hospital, Frankton and the Stadia. Whilst the northern fringe of the central area has a distinct office and business character, the western fringes have a strong motor industry character and the southern fringes have a distinct focus on the health sector given their proximity to the Waikato Hospital. Public transport services reinforce connectivity between these areas and public investment in a high density Urban Fibre Network throughout this area provides seamless and secure digital infrastructure integration between the City Centre core, the central area fringes and the Waikato Hospital.

Thus the central city can be described in the following terms: a City Centre, being the core retail area with a distinct pedestrian focus, and a Central City or Central Business District (CBD) which includes the core and extends further afield to embrace the fringe but wholly related areas of business activity. City Heart is a term used in the City's growth strategies and in Future Proof that describes the relationship between key projects targeted at the revitalisation of the Central City and reinforcement as the focal point for the wider sub-regional community. These terms are used as appropriate to generally describe the spatial extent of areas of activity within the central city.

The City Centre will continue to be the most significant centre place of activity and employment within the city. As such it needs to remain highly accessible and continue to provide the diversity of activity and a high level of physical amenity to shoppers and businesses to continue to contribute to the "sense of place" that has developed over the years. This, together with the area's heritage values and the development of a specific focus around sporting, recreational and cultural events around the City Centre, serves as a drawcard for visitors which contributes to the city's vitality.

The ~~Hamilton City Council's 2006-16 Long-Term Plan, identifies a new~~ strategic framework ~~that will~~ guide the City's future shape and direction ~~in terms of public investment is the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). The LTCCP is anchored by strategy statements that recognise the City Centre as the "heart" of the City and wider sub-region and seek to develop its sense of place and civic identity as the cornerstone of a wide range of policies, actions and investment.~~

~~The City Heart initiative comprises a package of projects and major investment through the LTCCP aimed at revitalising the CBD and creating a vibrant setting for continued private investment through improvements to transportation networks and open spaces. The initiative recognises the significant role that major facilities such as the Stadia and the Claudelands Events Centre have in attracting and hosting major events but also recognises that optimising the benefits of such events and underpinning their long term success is the need for an extensive and diverse range of other activities that meet the needs of visitors without them having to travel further afield. Retailing, hospitality and cultural facilities are all part of this mix but such activities cannot be sustained by the occasional influx of visitors; they require year round patronage. City Centre employment, particularly in the office sector, provides a critical concentration of people.~~

A key factor in developing a new blueprint for the City is the need to advance quality urban design in the built environment. To this end, the Council has approved and adopted an Urban Design Strategy for the City entitled — CityScope. ~~Design guidance has been prepared — Vista- which is used to shape capital investment projects in streets and spaces to ensure that they contribute towards the development of a vibrant and distinctive city heart.~~

Access Hamilton is ~~Council's transportation strategy and another significant initiative being implemented by the Council in conjunction with Environment Waikato and Transit New Zealand. The Access Hamilton Strategy~~ seeks to develop and support an integrated, safe, efficient and sustainable transport system, ~~providing that provides~~ ease of access in and around Hamilton and promot~~ing~~es community awareness around travel choices and alternative modes to motor vehicles e.g. public transport, walking and cycling. To enhance the role and function of the Central Area ~~and accessibility to the Transport Centre~~, the Council has developed an arterial Ring Road network and Cross-City Connector to ensure good access and movement around the City for all modes of transport, as well as improvements to public transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities throughout the city.

~~The Hamilton Urban Growth Strategy — HUGS- places heavy reliance on a shift in the pattern of development away from continuous greenfield expansion towards the intensification of development around key nodes. The Central Area is the principle focus of this strategy with the aim of ensuring that the accessibility and convenience of the City Centre's employment, services and amenities provides the optimal environment for residential growth and benefits from increased patronage. Residential densities are expected to be significantly higher around the Central Area than anywhere else in the City. (var.21)~~

The principal issues regarding the central area in Hamilton are:

- **Provision for a wide range of commercial opportunities may conflict with amenity and community values.** Historically the City Centre has been the principal administrative, retail and civic amenity focus of the city and region and this has been reflected in the scale and high standard of amenity of the buildings in the City Centre. Increasing market diversification and changing

lifestyles have altered the role and character of the area, and this will continue. Accordingly, there is a need to enable the physical resources in the City Centre to be fully utilised while continuing to recognise the City Centre's wider role and contribute positively to the maintenance and enhancement of its amenity and community values.

- **The increased demand for inner city living can have impacts on the operation of commercial and related activities throughout the Central Area.** Residential accommodation contributes to the Central Area as an employment and entertainment centre. It also increases housing choice. The predominant amenity in the Central Area is however, not always conducive to residential activity and potential conflicts, including noise, need to be recognised.
- **Inappropriate development can adversely affect amenities within the City Centre.** Pedestrian amenity and safety are key elements in the effective functioning of the City Centre. The development of pedestrian friendly spaces with strong parking support and linkages allows the City Centre to accommodate large numbers of people in a safe environment, and offers convenient access between different parts of the City Centre. The provision of large open window frontages and building verandahs also contribute to the overall amenity of the area. Inappropriate building design, particularly at the street level, can create 'holes' in the pedestrian amenity areas.
- **Inappropriate development can compromise open space amenity values in the City Centre.** Pedestrian amenity is also achieved by the provision of public open space, and other public facilities. The City Centre has a number of open spaces that encourage community interaction and relaxation and provide pedestrian links. The amenity values and pleasantness of these areas can be compromised and destroyed by inappropriate development (eg. Garden Place in terms of layout and overshadowing).
- **Development pressures can adversely impact on the heritage values within the Central Area.** There is a strong mix of heritage buildings throughout the Central Area, particularly in the southern end. Many of the existing buildings are visual reminders of the past which add to the sense of diversity and attractiveness of the city. Redevelopment to meet a demand for more modern premises and safety concerns with older buildings may threaten heritage features.
- **Provision of easy access into and throughout the Central Area (including parking) is desirable to support the amenity and life of the City Centre.** Large numbers of people commute to and from the Central Area on a regular basis and people visiting the City Centre for shopping, entertainment and business largely travel by car. Therefore, access to and within the area needs to be safe, efficient, and convenient for a wide range of uses, and transport modes, while the distribution of carparking needs to be managed to ensure the effective accommodation of both customer, commuter and business demands.
- **Integration of the City Centre with the river environment can conflict with ecological and cultural values and impact on bank stability.** The Waikato River frontage is recognised as an attractive and important but under-utilised natural asset to the City Centre. Providing access to and along the River and developing the riverfront in a comprehensive manner is considered important to facilitate the river as a feature of the City Centre. However, there are topographical limitations and any development works could threaten the natural values associated with the river and its banks. Such works also have implications for the relationship of Maori with the river.

- The vibrancy and vitality of the City Centre is reliant on the extent and diversity of activity within the fringe areas. As the focal point for the City and wider sub-region, the City Centre is complemented by a range of activities and facilities that extend much further than the recognisable core area bounded by London Street, Anglesea Street and Bridge Street. The extensive fringe area provides the diversity of activity and employment that adds significantly to the area of influence of the City Centre and integrates the economic and social drivers represented by the City Centre core, the twin stadia, Claudelands Events Centre and the Waikato Hospital. The combination of these elements is a key component of the City's long term residential growth strategy. (var.21)

Objective 6.1.1 A Vibrant Central Area

~~To encourage the effective development and operation of~~ To recognise and provide for the Central Area and the City Centre in particular as ~~thea principal commercial and community~~ focus for commercial and community activity serving Hamilton and the wider sub-region. (var.21)

Policies

- a) Enable a wide range of commercial, recreational, cultural and social activities to be established throughout the Central Area recognising its role in meeting the needs of a sub-regional catchment.
- b) Ensure that continued development is supported by or will provide amenity enhancements and effective infrastructure and service provision. where these are compatible with established amenity values and with the capacity of the transport network to accommodate activities safely and efficiently.
- ~~b)c)~~ Control the establishment of vehicle intensive commercial activities where traffic generation is likely to have adverse effects on the safety and efficiency of the transport network in the Central Area and on the amenity values of the City Centre.
- ~~e)d)~~ Encourage the development of residential activities and visitor accommodation throughout the Central Area, provided they are consistent with the accepted amenity values for the different parts of the area.
- ~~d)e)~~ Ensure that building development in the City Centre maintains and enhances a safe, pleasant, and efficient pedestrian environment.
- ~~e)f)~~ Encourage the public and private provision of facilities, spaces and features that contribute to the civic amenity of the City Centre.
- g) Control the distribution, scale and intensity of activities outside of the Central Area to ensure that they will not undermine the vitality and vibrancy of the City Centre, its amenity values and its role in meeting the needs of a sub-regional community.

- h) Control the distribution of activities to ensure that efficient and appropriate use is made of infrastructure, public transport facilities, service provision and the industrial land supply.
(var.21)

Reasons

Hamilton CBD, comprising both the core retail area and adjoining business activities, is the economic, social and cultural focal point of the City and wider sub-region. Significant public investment in infrastructure, public transport facilities and the amenity values of the CBD has been and continues to be made. This provides context for private investment in buildings, services, activities and events. Maintaining and enhancing the diversity and economic strength of the CBD is critical to ensuring that efficient use is made of this investment for the benefit of the sub-regional community. Increasing the diversity and intensity of activity within the CBD will create conditions that are conducive to increased residential intensification, ensure that activities, services and amenities are accessible to the widest possible catchment and reduce the pressure for non-industrial activities on scarce industrial land. Overall, such a pattern of development can be expected to reduce the need for travel, the distances travelled and improve the performance of the transport network. (var.21)

Changing markets and consumer demand means that the Central Area must be allowed to respond to changing trends. The facilitation of a wide range of activities, including residential, is a key element in enabling the area to contribute to the economic and social needs of the community.

The City Centre is also a strong civic and community space. Activities and development need to recognise established amenity values and ensure that they contribute to, or remain consistent with, these values. The community will continue to develop and maintain high levels of public amenity in the City Centre, and this needs to complement and be integrated with private initiatives. The City Heart project, consisting of a programme of significant investment in public spaces, buildings and movement networks provides a stimulus to this private investment with the expectation that the combined effect will bring a significant revitalisation of the CBD. (var.21)

Activities requiring high levels of on-site carparking need to be conveniently connected to the arterial roading network in order to maximise access and reduce adverse impacts of high traffic volumes on City Centre streets.

Objective 6.1.2 Integration with the Waikato River

To enable the significant amenity and natural values of the Waikato River to be integrated with the commercial and civic activities of the Central Area.

Policies

- a) Encourage the development of commercial activities along the river frontage in conjunction with coordinated pedestrian access to enhance the visual and access linkages between the river and the City Centre.
- b) Facilitate improved public access between the river and the remainder of the Central Area, and along the riverbank between London Street and Victoria Bridge to incorporate the river's intrinsic amenity values into the City Centre.

- c) Ensure that new development along the riverbank does not adversely affect the stability of the riverbank, limit public access to the river or impact on the cultural, heritage, amenity or natural environmental values of the area.

Reasons

The Waikato River is a key element of Hamilton's environment and the riverbank is seen as an important resource. It has also been recognised that promotion of a greater linkage between commercial development in the City Centre and access to the river would enhance the attractiveness and vitality of the City Centre and is consistent with the wider civic importance of the area. The development of an integrated riverbank promenade with continued improvements to the existing pedestrian network along the Waikato River will improve public access to and along the river and facilitate the integration of the river's amenity values with the remainder of the City Centre.

Protection of the riverbank is also necessary, to address problems relating to stability and geotechnical conditions as well as effects on natural values. Regard also needs to be given to cultural values particularly in relation to the importance of the river to Maori. All these factors are to be assessed when development proposals adjacent to the river are considered.

Objective 6.1.3 Central Area Amenity

To maintain and enhance amenity and heritage values of the Central Area.

Policies

- a) Ensure that activities are undertaken in a manner which to avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects in the Central Area, including visual impact, noise, glare and odour.
- b) Encourage innovative building design and the provision of public spaces, facilities, and features in the City Centre.
- c) Ensure that high rise buildings in the City Centre are designed to avoid adverse effects, including wind and shadowing affecting pedestrian areas especially in Garden Place.
- d) Ensure that buildings are designed and located in a manner that enhances the safety, convenience, accessibility and amenity of pedestrian spaces and linkages within the City Centre.
- e) Recognise and protect buildings, sites or areas in the Central Area, particularly in the Southend, that have specific heritage or cultural value.

f) Support the revitalisation of the CBD through continued public and private investment.
(var.21)

Reasons

The function and attractiveness of the City Centre is contributed to by its physical form, and by the careful provision of elements and features that cater for the large numbers of people who work, shop and recreate in the area. The amenity of the City Centre is fundamental to its role in the city. Activities that choose to operate within the environment will be expected to contribute to those amenity values particularly with regard to pedestrian convenience and comfort. Significant public investment is being made through the City Heart project to revitalize the CBD through a focus on the treatment of open spaces and movement networks. This investment recognises the specific role that the central city has in meeting the needs of Hamilton and the wider sub-regional catchment. (var.21)

The enhancement of heritage values is important to maintaining the attractiveness of the Central Area. This involves not only the retention of historic buildings and protection of archaeological sites, but also recognition of cultural values and promoting a sense of place.

Objective 6.1.4 Access in the City Centre

To maintain and enhance convenient and safe access to and throughout the City Centre.

Policies

- a) Facilitate safe and convenient pedestrian access throughout the City Centre and to the Waikato River to cater for the large pedestrian flows which occur in the City Centre.
- b) Facilitate the development of the transport network and both on-street and off-street carparking to maximise the accessibility of the City Centre while accommodating safe and convenient pedestrian linkages throughout the area.
- c) Ensure that on-site carparking, servicing, manoeuvring and access for all sites within the City Centre, avoids adverse effects on both traffic safety and efficiency, and on pedestrian safety and convenience.
- d) Ensure that the road network is able to accommodate the traffic generation and access impacts of new activities establishing in the City Centre.

Reasons

Business activity within the City Centre requires good access provision both for pedestrians and vehicle-based users. The integration of the transport network with vehicle parking and the inner city pedestrian network is essential for the effective functioning of the City Centre. The provision of carparking needs to ensure that supply is both adequate and well located to provide the widest benefit to all users. The City Heart Project is targeting public investment on improving the convenience and attractiveness of movement networks around the CBD. This includes the development of strategically located car parking facilities and traffic management and streetscape improvement works that place a specific focus on the needs of pedestrians. More efficient use can be made of land within the CBD where the transport related demands of activities are able to be met by public transport. Consequently, traffic management measures need to ensure the convenience and efficiency of public transport as an alternative to other modes. (var.21)

The plan also recognises that large individual developments can have adverse effects on accessibility and pedestrian convenience and safety. Accordingly, where the effect of such activities is beyond the capacity of facilities in the City Centre to accommodate them, Council intervention including financial contributions may be needed.

Methods

The Central Area objectives and policies will be implemented through the following methods.

District Plan

- **City Centre Zone Rules** - will provide for a wide range of business, residential, and community activities.
- **Commercial Service Zone Rules** - will provide for a wide range of commercial service and related activities, recognising the key role that the Central Commercial Services Zone has in supporting the vitality and vibrancy of the CBD. ~~within the peripheral central area.~~ (var.21)
- **Other Zones and Rules** - will direct intensive and travel generating activities towards the CBD in recognition of its pre-eminent role as the focal point for the City and wider sub-region ~~and~~ (var.21) provide for the protection of inner city residential neighbourhood amenities, the riverbank environment and for the heritage and open space values of the south end.
- **Indicative Structure Plan — Central Area**- will identify shopping frontages and key pedestrian linkages to be developed to support the pedestrian network in the area.
- **Heritage Items Overlay** - will identify heritage buildings in the Central Area, and provide for the maintenance and retention of specific buildings where these contribute significantly to the civic amenity and identity of the city.
- **City-Wide Standards** - will be used to ensure impacts including vehicle provision, site layout, visual amenities, noise and pollution associated with the Central Area are adequately dealt with.
- **Financial and Reserves Contributions** - will be used to help provide facilities and features to enhance commercial amenity values.
- **Subdivision Design Guidance** — will be used to provide an interpretation of Assessment Criteria and Performance Outcomes in so far as they relate to the subdivision of land.

Other Methods

- **Council Guidelines and other Educational Material** - including design guidelines such as Vista will~~can~~ (var.21) be used to encourage appropriate forms of development.
- **Council Works Programmes** - including the Transport Centre, parking areas, pedestrian facilities and community buildings, will~~can~~ (var.21) help enhance accessibility and amenity values in the Central Area.
- **Proposed Riverbank Promenade** - will establish a new pedestrian linkage along the riverbank to encourage improved connection between the river and the remainder of the City Centre.

- **Other Plans and Programmes** - including central city traffic and parking management plans and Access Hamilton. Access Hamilton is a transport strategy and infrastructure works programmes which promotes a wide range of transport options. It will encourage people to use alternative modes of transport to manage traffic growth rates and to assist in achieving environmental sustainability. Collectively, these plans and programmes will help provide an effective balance between different transport modes, parking demand and pedestrian convenience.
- **CityScope** — the Council's Urban Design Strategy encapsulates a variety of mechanisms to improve design of the City's built environment based on sound urban design principles. The Strategy seeks to enhance the design contribution that the Central Area makes by recognising its distinctive character as a central place. It is important to note that scale and configuration of these buildings and open spaces make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the City and its overall urban identity. Vista — the city's design guide- has been prepared to give effect to CityScope. (var.21)

Anticipated Environmental Results

The following environmental results are anticipated:

- The CBD functions as the economic, social and cultural focal point of the City and wider sub-region.
- The vitality and vibrancy of the CBD is enhanced through increased diversification and intensification of activity.
- The focus of activity on the CBD enables more efficient use to be made of infrastructure and amenity facilities.
- The focus of activity on the CBD enables Industrial zoned land to be used for industrial purposes.
- ~~A Central Area that offers a wide and diverse range of commercial and business activity.~~ (var.21)
- A City Centre that is attractive to the community for the purposes of recreation, relaxation, entertainment, culture and business.
- Improved interconnection between the Waikato River and the remainder of the City Centre.
- Adequate levels of shopper parking that are well integrated with both the pedestrian and vehicle network in the City Centre.