

Te whakatutuki i te reiti mō te pokapū tāone i Tāmaki Makaurau 2024/2025

City Centre Targeted Rate Annual Report 2024/2025



Overview

Auckland's city centre is the heart of Tāmaki Makaurau, a place where business, culture and community from across the region come together. It is New Zealand's financial and commercial hub, home to 38,000 residents, and buzzing with the daily activity of thousands more.

As an economic, cultural, and transport hub, the city centre drives growth for the entire Auckland region. It attracts investment, talent and visitors, while its transport networks, including trains, buses, ferries, and walking and cycling routes, make it the heart of Auckland's mobility, linking people and places across the entire region.

Like city centres worldwide, Auckland has faced challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased working from home, greater competition from online shopping, inflation pressures and higher costs of living. Still, the city centre remains prosperous, outperforming the rest of New Zealand in terms of GDP growth – with a 25 per cent increase in GDP between 2019 and 2024, compared to 11 per cent growth in the New Zealand economy over the same period.

Billions of dollars of private investment are already shaping its future, with many new projects recently completed, underway or planned. With the City Rail Link (CRL) opening in 2026, alongside a suite of supporting developments, the city centre is poised to enter an exciting new chapter.

The city centre targeted rate

The city centre targeted rate (targeted rate) is a key driver of transformation, funding projects that make Auckland's city centre an even better place to work, live, visit and do business. Each year, around \$27 million is collected through the targeted rate from commercial and residential property owners in the city centre.

This investment continues to support the creation of a high-quality urban environment, strengthens the city centre's competitive edge as a hub for business and innovation, and supports its role as a destination for top quality education, research and development.

This is a significant commitment to the vitality and development of the heart of Tāmaki Makaurau.

Over the last 20 years, the targeted rate has been instrumental in enhancing the city centre alongside other public and private investment. From the creation of vibrant new public spaces, like Te Wānanga and Quay Street, to the ongoing improvement of our laneways and celebration of art and culture.

The targeted rate investment directly supports the delivery of City Centre Masterplan outcomes, guided by the direction and priorities of the City Centre Action Plan 2024.

The city centre targeted rate portfolio is refreshed every three years through the council's long-term plan process, ensuring that funding remains flexible and responsive to the city centre's evolving needs and opportunities.



The city centre targeted rate investment priorities

The City Centre Advisory Panel (the panel) plays a vital role in shaping where the targeted rate investment goes.

Guided by the panel's priorities in council's Long-term Plan 2024-2034, investment was directed towards preparing the city for the opening of the City Rail Link, and creating a city centre that is safe, exciting and an enjoyable place for all.

Nearly two-thirds of targeted rate spend went into streetscape upgrades to make the city centre street environment more inviting, attractive, safe and pedestrian friendly. At the same time, the panel championed greater investment in activation and placemaking, with a focus on events, safety, community wellbeing, and visitor attraction. These initiatives are helping to bring energy to public spaces, ensure people feel safe and welcome, and make the city centre a place where more people want to spend more time.



City Rail Link

City centre targeted rate expenditure in 2024/2025

Streetscape/place improvements
\$18.1m

Safety and community wellbeing
\$1.9m

**Visitor attraction and promoting
the city centre**
\$2.7m

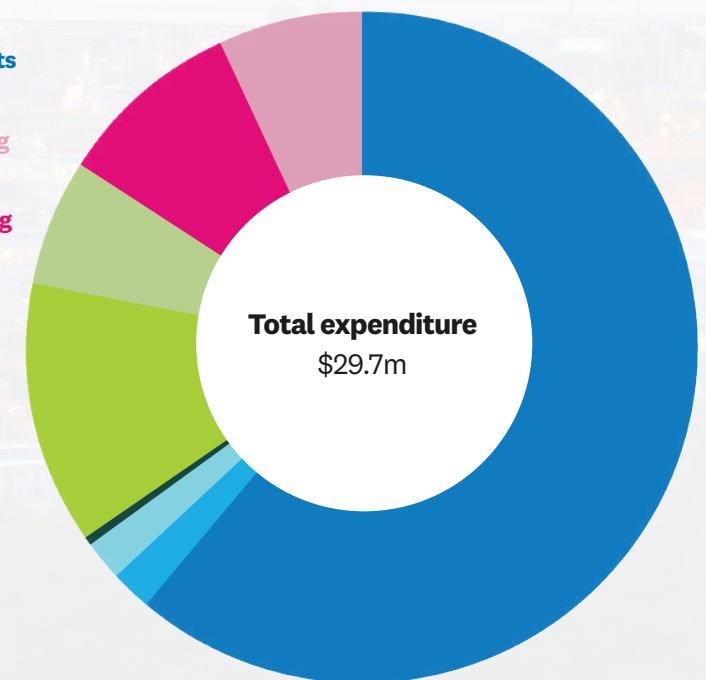
Planning and investigation
\$1.9m

Activation and placemaking
\$3.8m

Research/data
\$61k

Public art
\$0.6m

Development response
\$0.7m





Highlights in 2024/2025

Enhance people experience

Investment attraction

Auckland's city centre is the economic engine room of the region – a dynamic, highly productive hub that generates 21 per cent of Auckland's GDP and supports 16 per cent of the region's jobs. With a thriving residential population of 38,000 people, and home to two universities educating 70,000 students on their central campuses, the city centre is alive with opportunity and innovation.

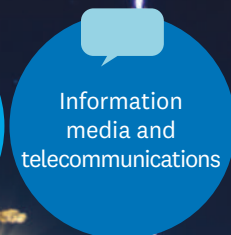
The city centre is where many of the country's leading companies are headquartered, alongside a diverse mix of service-based businesses, and arts and entertainment destinations, which benefit from being close to each other and connected to the wider city, the rest of New Zealand and the world.

In April 2025 the council group, with funding support from the targeted rate, proudly launched the first ever Invest in Auckland's city centre - [Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Investment Prospectus](#). This landmark document, supported by an advertising campaign, is designed to showcase the city's incredible potential to prospective investors around the world.

Why invest in the city centre

More than 60% of GDP

generated by three key industries:



\$30.4 billion

GDP (2023)

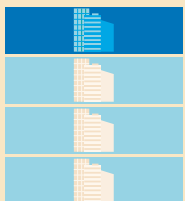
Auckland is the joint



9th

MOST LIVEABLE CITY IN THE WORLD

Headquarters for nearly **25 %** of country's **top 100 firms**



RESIDENTIAL POPULATION



44%

Forecast growth over the next 25 years



CRL will double the number of Aucklanders within 30 minutes of the city centre from 2026

OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS



\$6 billion

PRIVATE INVESTMENT



\$1 billion

PUBLIC INVESTMENT (excl CRL)



Visitor attraction and promotion

Recognising the increased need to bring more people into the heart of the city centre, the panel endorsed a significant boost in funding for attraction-focused activity.

This expanded investment is coordinated through a collaborative working group comprising Auckland Council, Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, Heart of the City and the Karangahape Road Business Association, ensuring strong alignment, maximum impact, and targeted promotional reach across key audiences.

2024-2025 highlights enabled by targeted rate investment include:

- Dua Lipa, the Live Nation winter series and The Others Way festival brought crowds and energy into the city.
- hit productions like Six the Musical, The Lord of the Rings musical and Auckland Live Cabaret lit up the city centre venues.
- flagship events like attraction of major conventions and business events including Auckland Startup Week position the city centre as hub for innovation.
- enhanced welcome experiences and tailored promotions for cruise ship arrivals helped maximise visitor spend and engagement.

- a bigger-than-ever Christmas in the City Centre campaign by Heart of the City.
- a major spring 2025 visitor campaign from Heart of the City.
- a targeted winter 2025 promotion from the Karangahape Road Business Association.
- 'It's on in Auckland' destination marketing campaign by Tātaki Auckland Unlimited.
- amplified promotion of Auckland Live winter programming.
- development of the Auckland by Night Action Plan, supporting a thriving night time economy.
- development of the Student Experience Partnership action plan, helping make the city centre more welcoming and engaging for students.



SIX THE MUSICAL AT THE CIVIC

35,810 total attendance

15,700 visitor nights

\$1.2m GDP return

BUSINESS EVENT ATTRACTION

4,760 visitor nights

\$2.5m forecast GDP return

\$18:\$1 Return on Investment



LORD OF THE RINGS AT THE CIVIC

20,150 total attendance

7,690 visitor nights

\$1.5m GDP return

IT'S ON IN AUCKLAND

19.5m views of a 7-week destination marketing campaign in autumn 2025

900,494 video views



Safety and wellbeing

Creating a city centre where everyone feels safe, supported and welcome is a top priority. In June 2024, the panel endorsed the City Centre Community Safety Plan alongside a \$2 million per year investment (for two years) to drive safety and wellbeing initiatives.

Key investments in 2024-2025 included:

- a dedicated council staff member to lead implementation of the Safety Plan, monitor progress, and provide data-driven insights.
- expanded homelessness outreach by Auckland City Mission, improving health and housing outcomes for street whanau and rough sleepers.
- improved integration of CCTV, enabling faster, more effective responses to incidents.
- Additionally, advocacy from the City Centre Advisory Panel and council has resulted in greater police presence within the city centre and a new police station on Federal Street.

More safety wardens

Thanks to support from the targeted rate, the council-led safety wardens programme (formerly City Watch) was significantly expanded in 2024.

With 17 additional wardens now on patrol, there is greater coverage across the city centre. The wardens play a vital role in proactive patrols, providing reassurance, and early intervention to address antisocial behaviour.

Expanded Street Guardians Programme

Te Tāpui Atawhai - Auckland City Mission's Street Guardians programme offers members of the street community opportunities to spend a day working with community organisations, from activities like fixing bikes and building planter boxes to planting trees and cleaning beaches.

Street Guardians receive a cooked breakfast, packed lunch, and an \$80 koha each per day. Thanks to targeted rate support, this popular programme was able to expand from two to three days a week, offering more opportunities for participation and impact.

87%

decrease in general anti-social behaviour and nuisance incidents reported to the council call centre (September 2024 - July 2025)

916

days of community work completed August 2024 - June 2025.

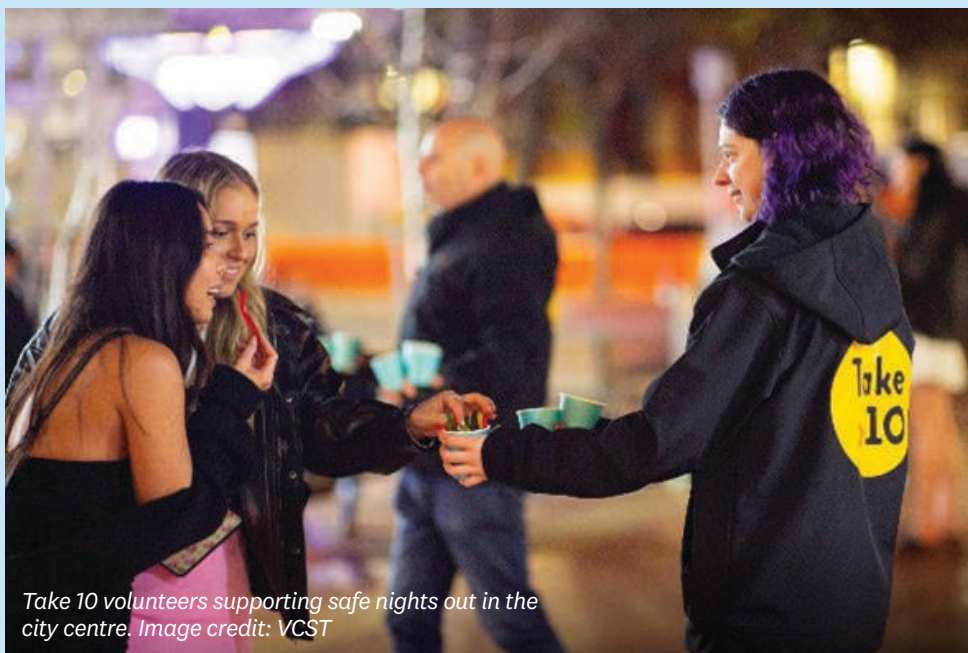
17

additional safety wardens on patrol.

Take 10 Safe Zone pilot

To support a safe night-time environment, especially for students and young people, the targeted rate supported a 10-week pilot of a late-night Safe Zone, launched during University O week in semester two.

Delivered by the Vulnerable Support Community Trust, Take 10 is a welcoming late-night, drop-in space offering water, phone chargers and friendly volunteers trained to provide support. Whether someone has lost their friends, needs a safe space to wait for a ride, or just a quiet moment, Take 10 is there to help.



Take 10 volunteers supporting safe nights out in the city centre. Image credit: VCST



Safety wardens

Activation and placemaking

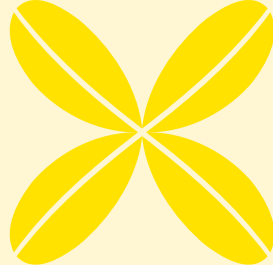
Creating a vibrant, welcoming city centre isn't just about buildings and infrastructure, it's about experiences. The City Centre Activation and Placemaking Programme, supported by the targeted rate, plays a key role in bringing energy, creativity, and community wellbeing into central Auckland's shared spaces.

Delivered in collaboration with local communities, businesses, creatives and the wider council whānau, the programme helps drive foot traffic, support spending in nearby businesses, and improve perceptions of safety and vibrancy.

The targeted rate also contributes to expanded programming in two of the city's most important civic spaces - Aotea Square and Te Komititanga, ensuring they remain lively, inclusive and engaging throughout the year.



Te Komititanga Market



Christmas 2024, 18 November - 24 December 2024

In the crucial pre-Christmas trading period, the targeted rate supported a spectacular line-up of festive experiences in the Queen Street Valley.

The centrepiece of the season was the magical new Christmas tree Te Manaaki taking centre stage in Te Komititanga. Standing at a majestic 18.4 metres tall, it was adorned with over 10,000 LED lights, 4,000 vibrant pōhutukawa flowers and more than 200 giant baubles. Te Manaaki is a stunning gift to the city from Heart of the City and Precinct Properties with support from Auckland Council.

The wider festive programme also featured the Christmas Pavilion and performances in Aotea Square, and the much-loved Farmers Santa Parade, bringing the spirit of the season to life in the heart of Tāmaki Makaurau.

400+

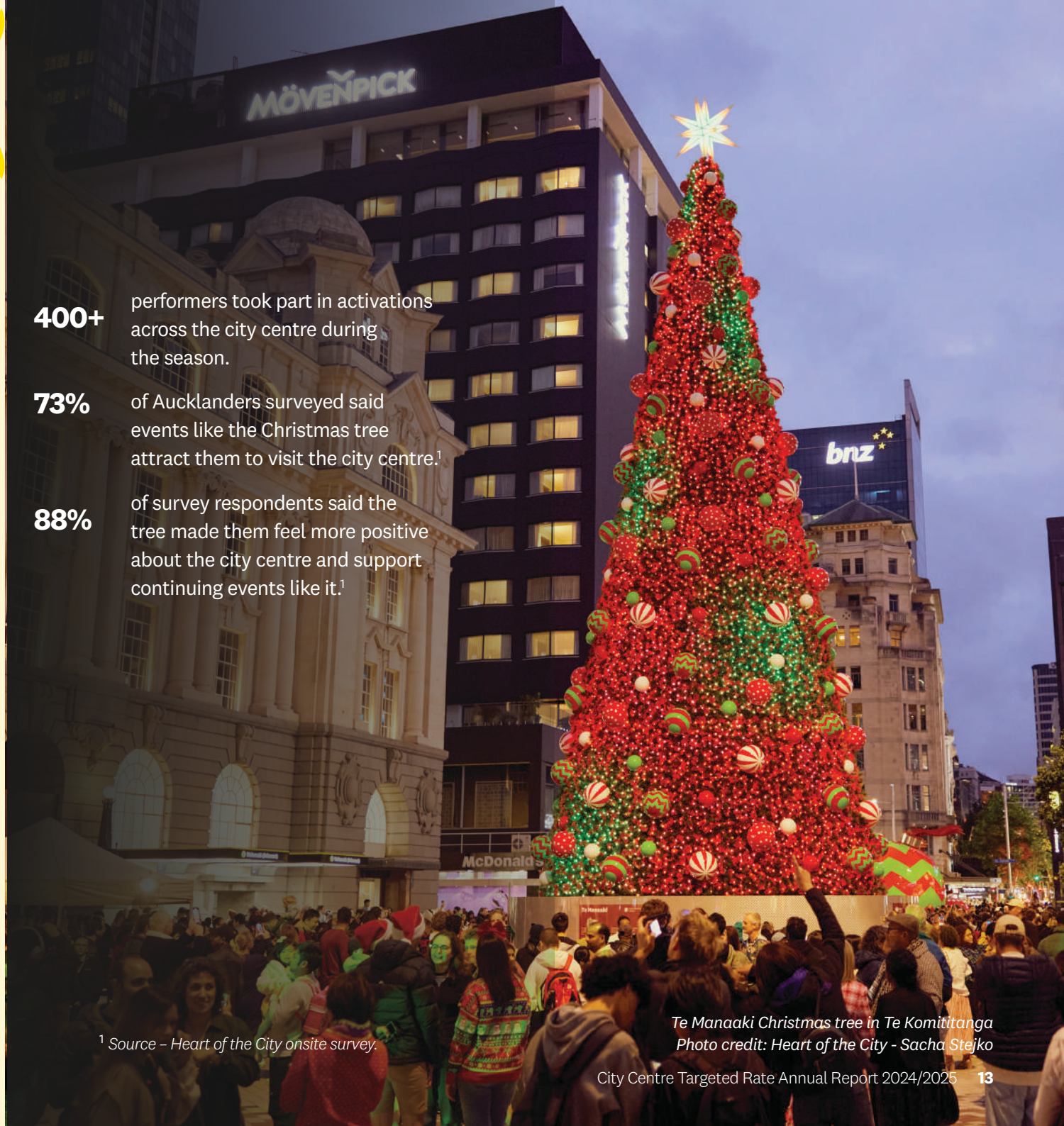
performers took part in activations across the city centre during the season.

73%

of Aucklanders surveyed said events like the Christmas tree attract them to visit the city centre.¹

88%

of survey respondents said the tree made them feel more positive about the city centre and support continuing events like it.¹



¹ Source – Heart of the City onsite survey.

*Te Manaaki Christmas tree in Te Komititanga
Photo credit: Heart of the City - Sacha Stejko*

Lunar New Year, 26 January - 22 February 2025

Building on the success of the inaugural Lunar New Year festival, the 2025 programme focused on celebrating the richness of contemporary pan-Asian culture while supporting the visibility and success of Asian-owned businesses in the city centre.

A standout moment was the Lorne Street street party, a high-energy celebration filled with live music, performances, craft, and games, set against the backdrop of midtown's diverse and high-quality Asian dining scene.

A fresh addition in 2025 was the Bao & Boba promotion, a special collaboration between Auckland Council and Heart of the City, featuring 28 Asian eateries across midtown. The promotion encouraged people to explore, taste and celebrate the flavours of Lunar New Year, while supporting local business. In Aotea Square, visitors were treated to a mix of experiences, including the giant Lucky Cat, the Chubby Women exhibition and a popular Lunar New Year family day.

95%

of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “Events like this attract me to the city centre.”

80%

participating businesses reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the promotion.

81%

of businesses agreed the events attracted new customers.



Music Month, May 2025

In celebration of NZ Music Month and Auckland's proud designation as a UNESCO City of Music, the targeted rate supported a lively and diverse programme of music-led events across the city centre.

The 2025 NZ Music Month programme brought the beats, voices and stories of Tāmaki Makaurau to life, through a packed schedule of live performances, workshops, panel discussions, and more.

Whether it was catching an emerging act in an intimate laneway gig or hearing from industry experts in creative talks, the programme made it easier than ever for Aucklanders and visitor to connect with the city's vibrant music scene.

30+

30+ media stories reached a potential audience of almost 4 million people.

6,000+

6,000+ attendees participated in events and activities throughout the month.

90+

90+ musicians, artists and photographers featured across the programme.



*Opera in The Strand during NZ Music Month.
Image credit: Samuel Richards.*



Getting ready for City Rail Link

Te Hā Noa Victoria Street

Victoria Street is one of three east-west streets in the Te Waihorotiu Station area getting a bold new makeover, to create a new gateway into the heart of the city centre, in time for the City Rail Link's opening in 2026.

At the centre of the transformation is Te Hā Noa, midtown's emerging green link. The vision, as set out in the City Centre Masterplan, is to seamlessly connect two of the city's much-loved city parks – Rangipuke / Albert Park and Waikōkota / Victoria Park – offering an inviting path through the city. The name Te Hā Noa, gifted by mana whenua, captures the spirit of the space:

Te Hā speaks to the essence of life – the breath – while Noa conveys freedom in the journey of experiencing one's surroundings. The design itself has been shaped by mana whenua, including the terraced stone tree pits, inspired by the volcanic forms of Tāmaki Makaurau.

The stretch between Elliott Street and Queen Street opened to the public in October 2024, and the section between High Street and Kitchener Street opened in May 2025, welcoming visitors with lush native planting, mature trees, generous footpaths and new seating. Heritage kerb stones remain proudly in place, complemented by new paving. On the southern side, basalt pavers feature a flowing water pattern, designed by artists Chris Bailey and Sally Smith, hinting at a magnificent new artwork set to be unveiled at the Queen Street corner.

Looking ahead, the section of Te Hā Noa, between Queen Street and High Street is scheduled to begin in 2026, following the conclusion of Watercare's midtown wastewater upgrades.



Tyler Street

Tyler Street, between Te Komititanga and Commerce Street, has undergone a major upgrade by Auckland Council on behalf of City Rail Link Ltd, as part of the Waitematā Station plaza transformation. Now open to the public, as of April 2025, this once ordinary street has been upgraded to become a high-quality, pedestrian-focused laneway, providing a seamless link between Te Komititanga, Britomart and Takutai Square.

Construction on the adjacent Waitematā Station plaza continues and is on track to open in 2026, providing even more welcoming public space at one of the city's busiest transport hubs.

Karanga-a-Hape Station neighbourhood improvements

As we prepare for the arrival of the City Rail Link, the Karanga-a-Hape Station neighbourhood is also getting a boost. Targeted rate funding has supported Auckland Transport to deliver improved public realm outcomes for Mercury Lane and Pitt Street, making the area greener, safer and more attractive, particularly for people walking, cycling or using public transport.

In 2024/2025, the targeted rate supported the installation of new public toilets on Mercury Lane. Alongside these physical improvements, the targeted rate also supported additional events, activations, and marketing initiatives delivered by the Karangahape Road Business Association, helping to keep the neighbourhood lively and welcoming.



Tyler Street

Supporting people through construction

The targeted rate also enabled comprehensive development response approaches to be wrapped around construction projects, with a particular focus on midtown and Karanga-a-Hape.

The tailored support has included:

- **clear customer experience standards** and consistent disruption mitigation expectations for construction contractors.
- **joined-up communications and engagement**, including on-street relationship management and proactive customer advocacy.
- **increased focus on street health**, cleaning and maintenance, safety, security and discouraging antisocial behaviour.
- **place-based activations** and promotional campaigns to attract people to the area during construction.

A key feature of the development response approach is the Small Business Support Programme to support ground floor retail, hospitality and services businesses to be more resilient to construction disruption and to adapt to the changing environment.

In the updated programme for 2025-2026, the available supports have been strengthened, based on feedback and lessons learned.

- Microgrants have increased to \$4,000 per eligible business.
- A new benefit for 2025-2026: participating businesses will now receive free 12-month memberships to one of three industry associations, giving them access to expert advice, tools, and tailored support.

154 impacted businesses supported through an independent business connector service.

150 businesses received \$3,000 microgrants.

5 businesses supported to expand outdoor dining in newly upgraded streetscapes.



Open for Business signage promotes businesses obscured by construction hoardings. The Open for Business campaign also included poster advertising and paid social media campaigns.

Regeneration of precincts

High Street improvements

High Street plays an important role in the expanding laneway network envisaged in the City Centre Masterplan. The upcoming improvements aim to make this historic street more welcoming, accessible, and easy to navigate, while carefully preserving its unique character.

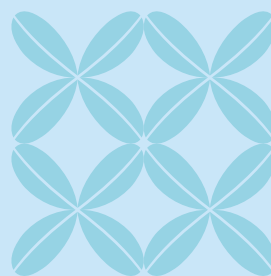
Between July and October 2024, staff engaged with High Street residents, businesses, property owners and visitors to gather valuable feedback about their aspirations for the street. These insights, combined with technical assessments helped shape three exciting design ideas. The community's vision is clear - people want High Street to evolve into a more vibrant, people-friendly environment that better supports daily life, celebrates local character and evolves alongside the city.

Building on this feedback, a preferred design direction, will be recommended to elected members in early-2026, guiding the next steps in transforming High Street.

Emily Place improvements

Emily Place is next in line for a major transformation, evolving into a pedestrian- focused space designed to enhance placemaking, improve pedestrian flow, support servicing needs, and strengthen community access. This project will create a vital link between Customs Street in the north and Shortland Street and Eden Crescent in the south and enhance the amenity of this urban residential neighbourhood.

Thanks to close collaboration with mana whenua partners, the preliminary design is now complete, and the resource consent has been lodged. With detailed design well underway, construction is expected to commence in 2026, bringing a fresh, vibrant energy to Emily Place and its surrounding neighbourhood.



Victoria Quarter



Victoria Quarter programme

Victoria Quarter is one of New Zealand's most densely populated neighbourhoods and home to 7,000 residents. In line with the City Centre Masterplan and the City Centre Advisory Panel's objective of supporting residential communities, the Victoria Quarter Programme is focused on enhancing the quality of life for city centre residents and supporting local businesses by creating a more attractive, accessible, and liveable part of the city. The programme aims to enhance everyday life by improving connectivity, public spaces and local amenities, helping to create a safer, more welcoming and vibrant community.

The following two projects are well underway, and in 2026, planning for the Wai Kokota Basin / Victoria Park place enhancement project will continue.

- **Victoria Quarter South - Enhancing Neighbourhood Liveability**

Planning is underway to deliver small but impactful improvements to make local streets more walkable and public spaces more inviting. Work continues to refine the design, with a focus on the Victoria Quarter area south of Wellesley Street.

- **Nelson Street Laneway**

The Nelson Street laneway project is a focused upgrade to a key pedestrian route located beside the northbound traffic lanes at Nelson Street's southern end. The goal is to turn this space into a safer, more attractive and pedestrian-friendly connection.

The project will address safety concerns in the laneway and upgrade the surrounding public space to support a more accessible environment for those who live, work and move through the area. Construction is currently planned to start in 2026.

Looking ahead

At its August 2025 meeting, the City Centre Advisory Panel endorsed the updated city centre targeted rate investment portfolio. It is focussed on supporting the following investment priorities in addition to the extension of the existing targeted rate programme of investment.

Attract – deliver initiatives that create a sense of always-on excitement, enabled by a vibrant arts, culture, tourism, events and entertainment sector. This will be supported by marketing and promotion that will enhance the city centre’s reputation as an exciting place that is easy to get to and the place to be.

Enable – enhance partnerships with the private sector to develop unique and interconnected experience precincts. The precincts will offer a range of complementary activities, experiences and services, supported by the ongoing programme of targeted public realm upgrades. This encourages people to stay longer and/or to choose to live here.

Sustain – enhance the quality of experience and address negative perceptions of the city centre by improving cleaning, maintenance, safety and public amenity. This will ensure that people experience the city centre as a positive and welcoming place.



Te Wānanga



*Opera in the Strand during NZ Music Month.
Image credit: Samuel Richards.*



Delivered by City Centre Programmes, Auckland Council,
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Contact: info@audio.co.nz

Image on front cover: Te Ha Noa/Victoria Street

AUCKLAND'S FUTURE IN PROGRESS

