

Purpose: To represent and advocate for all Auckland city centre residents to Auckland Council and other relevant agencies/organisation. The purpose of such representation is to make known the concerns of residents, to work for the best possible living environment and to support community building in the City Centre.



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Auckland City Centre Residents' Group (CCRG)

Deputation to the Waitematā Local Board : 19 May 2019.

Kia Ora Mr Chair, members of the Board and those present.

The issues of concern to the CCRG relate to a range of regulatory functions/dysfunction that resident's experience living in the city centre.

For ease of reference I have grouped our comments under five headings –

1. Resource Consents
2. LED screens
3. Operating hours for road/street works
4. Events and the use of public spaces
5. Urban trees

Resource Consents

We thank the Board for including CCRG in the regular notifications of Resource Consent applications that impact the city centre. This gives us the opportunity to provide a quick response, where needed, that we hope is helpful to the Board.

Our concerns around the Resource Consent process is the ability for applicants to gain consent for an initial activity or development, often without notification, and follow that with frequent changes/amendments over time that, in their own right, do not constitute a major change, but cumulatively can, result in a final development programme that would have initially required public notification i.e. gaming the RMA process.

We are not clear as to how much control the WLB has over these types of RMA processes, but we do think that, in instances where a RC application/amendment is for a non-compliant development, Council should consider including the need for automatic public consultation in their Significance and Engagement policy and possibly prior to accepting the application.

LED Screens/Billboards

These activities can have a huge impact on residential living and the consenting process appears to be oblivious to this. Ignoring the 24/7 glaring, and often flashing lighting, into the interior of people's homes completely prioritises the momentary effects of advertising to passing traffic over people's need for sleep.

CCRG would be keen to know what evidence has been provided that the effects of LED billboards on residents are no more than minor?

We would like to see this aspect addressed as a requirement of any LED application, be specific to the location of each application, and include evidence to support the need for 24/7 illumination.

Rather than every corner or blank wall of the city being picked off one by one by larger and larger LED screens – cumulative effects must be addressed on the city centre as a whole – both for residents and our more general environment.

Operating Hours for Road/Street Works

Covid19 recovery notwithstanding, the most complaints we receive from residents are loud road works during night hours. In fact the more disruptive and louder they are, the more likely they are prioritised at night which is a vicious lose-lose cycle for residents.

There certainly appears to be an accepted view in the Council family that the needs of residents for sleep is less important than the needs of business during working hours.

While we are keen to support all businesses in the city centre, we also believe that resident needs have to be a part of the decision making when the timing of road works are being considered.

We have a sense that the planning regime is permissive, or at least interpreted permissively by planners, in favour of applicants, and at the cost to those who live in the city centre. Changes granted to developers to extend noisy hours of work, from 6am through to late evening, comes at a cost to residents. It needs to be noted that the current permissive levels in the AUP have been agreed following extensive consultation in order to maintain a liveable, family-friendly city centre. CCRG believe that the agreed and expected norms should be adhered to, not as an exception, but as the general rule.

Events and the use of Public Spaces

CCRG accept and support the need for quality events in the city centre. That is a large part of the vibrancy of a busy city and one of the reasons people like living, working and visiting the area. Increasingly though we see public space being removed from public use in order for a private event to take place and often for long periods of time that also require the use of loud noise days.

This occurs primarily around the Waterfront, Aotea Square and Albert Park. As the Board will know, there is a serious shortage of public open space in the city centre where residents and visitors can find a ‘quiet’ place to sit and relax. Many apartments in the city centre do not have balconies/decks so the need for quiet green space is even more important to resident health and wellbeing.

Myers Park is generally used by younger children, and Victoria Park for sporting activities. This leaves just two green areas for quiet relaxation – Aotea Square and Albert Park. In addition, events approved by council often provide their own food and beverage outlets thus competing directly with existing providers who pay the rates to maintain the facilities mentioned.

An example of this is the recent RC approval for an ugly shipping container to be plonked into the middle of Aotea Square for nothing more necessary than to sell alcohol. This is a 100% non-compliant activity in that space, and competes directly with the numerous private food and beverage outlets nearby who are also trying to make a living supporting city centre events.

CCRG would ask that the Board require a robust economic analysis for any events that involving the closing off of public space. This analysis needs to take account of the value of the lost recreational use of the facility during the period of private use. We would also ask that all council family costs be charged against the event so that ratepayers have a clear understanding of the real added value of these events.

Management plans for sensitive green space such as Albert Park/Aotea Square should also have limits placed on the number of events that the park can be effectively closed or restricted to the public, and for how long – the periods would include pack in and pack down where the park becomes, to all intents and purposes, an un-enjoyable place.

Urban Trees

We are increasingly concerned at the number of trees that are removed/destroyed in the city centre each year. CCRG accept that the CRLL works are a separate issue and are not included in our comments today.

The classic example of this are the three Pohutukawa trees removed from Aotea Square a year ago and still not replaced. There are also numerous trees removed or missing from Lorne Street that have not been replaced together with a considerable number in Albert Park and Mayoral Drive.

CCRG would like more public engagement in the management of our public space trees and again, we think this is so important that any permanent removal should be included in councils Significance and Engagement Policy. Unless for safety reasons, we would like all trees removed to be replanted immediately.

CCRG are keen to engage proactively on matters such as these, but for a volunteer group, it is time-consuming, and often bewildering having to deal with many CCOs, and their respective silos, that end up frustrating the legitimate and quite reasonable concerns of the people that call the city centre home.

Noelene Buckland, Chair

Adam Parkinson, Deputy Chair.