

Streetscape Strategy – Engagement Summary

September 2025

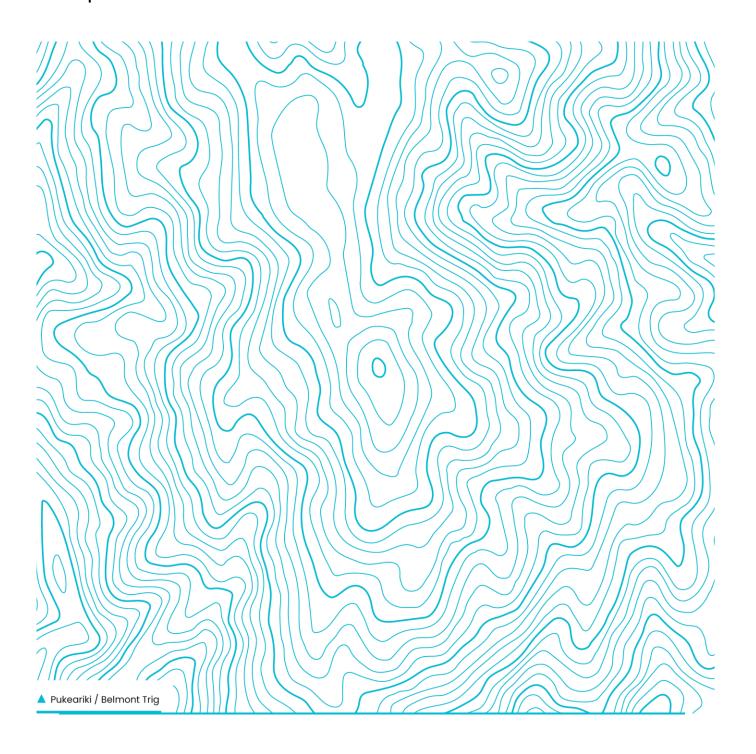


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Background

Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi

Te Wai Takamori o Te Awa Kairangi (RiverLink) is a once-in-a-generation programme to protect Lower Hutt from flooding, make it easier and safer to get around, and revitalise our city centre.

Greater Wellington Regional Council is leading the flood protection works and NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi is leading the State Highway interchange and Melling station relocation works.

Hutt City Council is leading the parts of the programme that shape our city centre and support the people who live, work, visit, or run a business here.

This includes:

- upgrading city centre streets
- delivering the City Link Bridge a direct pedestrian and cycle connection between the new Melling Station and the city centre.
- delivering a new riverside park between the stopbank and the river edge on the city side
- supporting businesses and residents through the construction period.

Streetscape Strategy and City Centre Framework

The Streetscape Strategy aims to identify priorities for street upgrades in the city centre.

This works follows the adoption of the City Centre Framework (July 2025) which sets the vision for future development and improvements in the city centre.

Earlier this year, our community and businesses helped inform the Framework - a vision for a city centre with a beautiful urban riverside, and where businesses and communities thrive.

Purpose

To help identify the priority street upgrades, a series of businesses and community engagement activities, both in-person and online, were held between August and September 2025.

Phase 1 of engagement focussed on people's experience of the city centre and ideas for improvements.

Phase 2 of engagement focussed on potential investment scenarios for street upgrades.

This document summarises the feedback received from these engagement activities.

Phase I engagement

Engagement Activities

The community was invited to share feedback on their experiences and ideas for our city centre streets through:

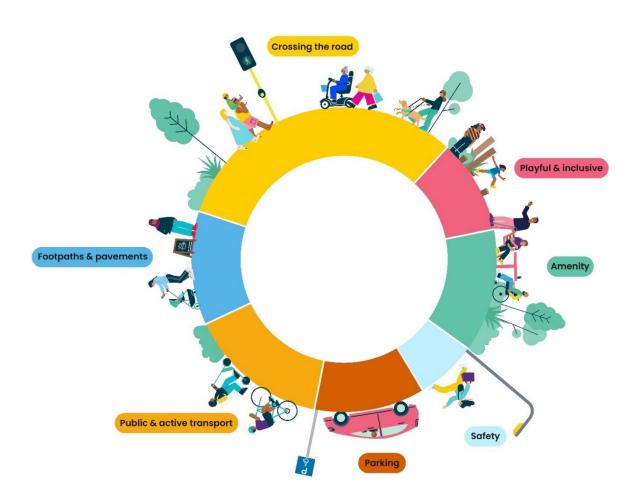
- An online mapping tool (4 August to 1 September 2025) through Council's 'Kōrero mai | Have your say' portal: **125 comments from around 35 people** and **138 reactions** were received.
- In-person workshops and meetings with community groups, disability
 Advocacy groups and disabled people e.g. FERNZ, Manaaki Ability,
 Community Connections, CCS Disability and MASH trust: 8
 workshops/meetings with around 50 people.
- One hīkoi around the city centre with a disability advocate in a mobility scooter.
- Three workshops with rangatahi (young people) and tamariki (children) from Hutt Valley High, Sacred Heart College and Hutt Central School: around 70 attendees.
- 2 stands/stalls at Riverbank Market (8 August and 30 August 2025).
- 3 visits to venues and events around the city centre to gather feedback and direct people to our online engagement (Food Truck Night Market 7 August 2025, War Memorial Library 12 August 2025 and Lower Hutt Park Run on 23 August 2025): **around 80 people talked to**.

Overall feedback themes

The key themes from phase I feedback are:

• **Crossing the road:** The most talked about topic. From sharing challenges of unsafe crossings, steep or missing kerb ramps, to ideas to improve accessibility and safety of our pedestrian network.

- **Footpaths and pavements:** There were calls for wider, smoother, more durable pavements that would meet the needs of wheelchairs, prams and small wheels.
- **Amenity:** Desire for more seating, more planting, trees, drinking fountains and public toilets.
- **Public & active transport:** Current cycling infrastructure is unsafe or not available. Suggestions included an integrated network, better seating and shelters at bus stops and more bike racks.
- Parking: Current mobility parking spaces are insufficient and poorly located. Ideas were shared for more resident parking and spaces near to key destinations.
- **Safety:** Issues were shared of feeling unsafe, and intimidating areas were mentioned. Ideas included better lighting.
- **Playful & Inclusive:** Our local tamariki (children) and rangatahi (young people) in particular expressed a desire for a playful, colourful, inclusive and welcoming city centre with art, youth spaces and fun activities.



The graphic above illustrates the proportion of feedback for each key theme.

Detailed feedback

Online Mapping Tool

For the first time, Council used the online Engagement HQ mapping tool to gather feedback.

They were asked:

- Share **what you love** about our city centre. What's working well that you don't want to lose?
- X Share **what you find challenging** when you move about our city centre. What isn't working well and needs to change?
- Share your ideas for our streets! Have you seen something cool in another city? Share a photo!

Community members were able to add pins onto our map to tell us about their experiences in the city centre.

35 people pinned 125 comments across locations around our city centre map.

Feedback from the online mapping tool is summarised under "Overall feedback themes" above, however the top three themes that came through online were:

- **Cycling & active transport:** Many called for safer cycleways, east-west cycling links, and better pedestrian/bike priority streets, especially linking to the new bridge and transport hubs. Provide more bike parking.
- **Events & activation**: Calls for more events, food truck markets, street art, music festivals, and outdoor spaces to bring vibrancy beyond the mall.
- Crossing the road & pedestrian safety: Frequent mentions of unsafe or inconvenient crossings. Suggestions included 'Barnes Dance' phases, more signals, upgraded crossings, and pedestrian-priority phases.

Disabled experience

Council held **7 workshops/meetings** and went for **1 hīkoi** around our city centre, with disability advocacy groups and disabled people.

The following is a summary of the feedback received:

• **Universal design**: More consistency in accessibility features is needed (for example, tactile surfaces, crossing-button locations, maximum steepness of kerb ramps) to ensure that users with sensory or mobility impairments

- can anticipate and rely on them. However, for aspects like seating, variety is essential to accommodate the diverse range of abilities and preferences among users.
- Crossings: A key concern was a lack of ability to safely cross the road in certain locations e.g. Knights Road/Bunny Street. For disabled people important aspects were having enough time to cross, clear visibility, appropriate kerb ramps, and button placement that works for wheelchair users.
- Footpaths: For those using wheels rough and bumpy surfaces are a concern e.g. small unit pavers on Bunny Street. Inconsistent obstacles on footpaths (sandwich boards, poles, café seating) cause problems for mobility / vision-impaired people. Slippery materials were also mentioned as a hazard.
- Seating and rest in public spaces: People want comfortable, varied, well-designed seating offset from busy walkways. Seating should be varied in height and consider mobility aids e.g. space for walkers. Armrests should be included, along with backrests designed for leaning against for those who may find it challenging to sit. These groups liked the recently installed table and seats on High Street, requesting more provision like this whilst making some simple modification suggestions to make them even more inclusive.
- Accessible parking: The availability, size, location, and design of
 accessible parking spaces was a key topic. Access for disabled people is
 limited or prevented when the space is too small, incorrectly positioned, or
 when the transition from car to pavement is unsafe.
- Accessible toilets: Requests were made for accessible public toilets in our city centre. Specific conflicts were mentioned around features like baby-change tables which, if left down, obstruct disabled use. There needs to be more 'real-user' input and consultation into public toilet designs.

Tamariki and rangatahi voices

Council held **3 workshops** with **around 70 tamariki and rangatahi** at Hutt Valley High School, Sacred Heart College and Hutt Central School.

The following is a summary of the feedback received:

Tamariki

Play & fun: Wanted more fun things to do in the city centre e.g.
playgrounds, swings, bike tracks, climbing, spaces to kick a ball and sports
facilities.

- **Green & colourful:** Requested more trees, flowers and a big park with fountains.
- Lighting & atmosphere: Loved fairy lights, colourful lights and decorations.
- **Events & markets:** Suggested craft markets for kids to run stalls, festivals, concerts and rainbow performers.
- **Accessibility & basics:** Asked for smooth and wide footpaths, mobility scooter access, clean toilets and more bins.
- Safety: Emphasised wanting safe, clean and welcoming spaces.
- **Inclusive identity:** Called for rainbow crossings and LGBTQ-friendly hangouts.

Rangatahi

- **Things to do:** Called for youth spaces, study hubs, markets, swings, skate/bike/sport areas, amusement ideas and picnic areas.
- **Greenery & art:** Wanted more trees, colour, murals and cultural/artistic representation.
- **Crossings & road safety:** Repeated concerns were raised about unsafe crossings (Knights Rd/Bunny St, Margaret/Dudley, Andrews Ave).
- **Transport & bus stops:** Complaints about irregular buses and unattractive/unsafe bus stops (Bunny St, Queensgate).
- **Seating & amenities:** Positive mentions of recently installed High Street seating and the Riddiford Garden swings; requests for picnic tables, water fountains, rubbish bins.
- **Lighting & ambience:** Liked decorative lighting in some areas but also described some laneways as poorly lit and unsafe.
- **Personal safety:** Concerns about unsafe public transport and parts of the city centre.

Phase 2 engagement

Purpose

During September 2025 engagement focussed on potential investment scenarios for street upgrades. These included essential works - like the closure of Daly Street and changes to connect the new City Link Bridge (walking and cycling bridge).

Alongside these must-do works, we asked city centre businesses and the wider community to help prioritise potential upgrades by looking at three possible scenarios. We wanted to know: which scenario is preferred, and why? And beyond the essentials, which works should be prioritised for investment?

Below are the three scenarios.

Cross City Connections

This scenario aims to make it safer, easier, and more appealing for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people to move through our city centre streets.

This scenario focuses on:

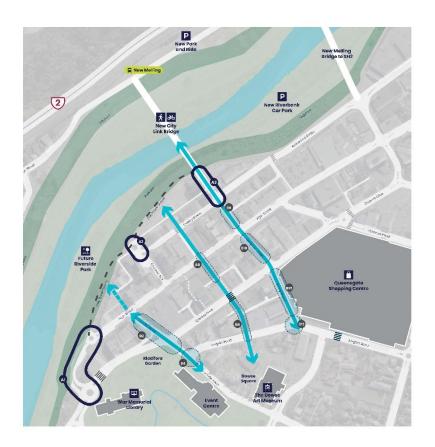
- connecting the new City Link Bridge users to Dudley Street, High Street, Queen's Drive, the shopping centre, and bus interchange, and providing opportunities for outdoor seating and cafes along the way
- improving the linkages between our laneways with safe street crossings from Dowse Square to the river, and tidying up the laneways
- Making it easier for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people to access the High Street from Laings Road

Cross-City Connections

Making it safer, easier, and more appealing for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people to move through our city centre streets.

This scenario focuses on:

- Connecting the new City Link Bridge users to Dudley Street, High Street, Queens Drive, the shopping centre, and bus interchange, and providing opportunities for outdoor seating and cafes along the
- Improving the linkages between our laneways with safe street crossings from Dowse Square to the river, and tidying up the laneways.
- Making it easier for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people to access the High Street from Laings Road and Riddiford Garden.



Civic Connections

This scenario aims to strengthen links between civic, cultural and retail attractions so city centre businesses benefit and visitors can enjoy multiple experiences in one trip.

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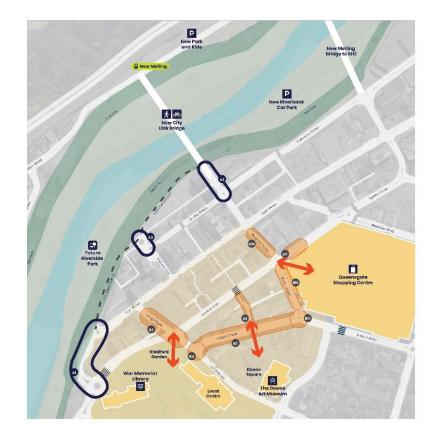
- building on Queensgate's regional attraction to benefit the wider city centre businesses
- better connecting the Dowse Art Museum, War Memorial Library and Riddiford Gardens with Queen's Drive and the High Street to encourage multiple visits in one trip
- Improving bus movements and efficiency around Bunny Street

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Riverside Precinct

This scenario aims to expand previous High Street upgrades into surrounding streets to support outdoor dining and events, and to enhance the area for residents and businesses.

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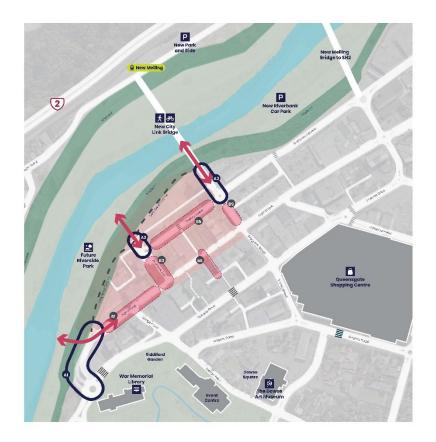
- Expanding the previous High Street improvements to adjoining streets to support more outdoor dining and cafes, and to refresh the look of the core retail area
- Creating a space for events, markets or food trucks in Andrews Avenue
- Creating a more attractive environment for residents, businesses and visitors on Dudley Street
- Improving access to the river from the city centre

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- Creating a more attractive environment for residents, businesses and visitors on Dudley Street.
- Improving access to the river from the city centre.



Engagement activities

Our city centre businesses and wider community were invited to share feedback on our city centre streets through:

- Drop-in sessions: around 50 attendees, held at 174 High Street on:
 - o Tuesday 9 September 2025 at 7:30am-10am and 3pm-6pm
 - o Wednesday 10 September 2025 at 3pm-6pm
 - o Thursday 11 September 2025 at 7:30am-10am
- In person visits to businesses from Council staff or First Retail Group: 105 city centre businesses visited, with 21 giving feedback.
- Email feedback: 3 people responded with feedback.

Drop-in feedback

"Cross-city Connections" was the most popular scenario, with feedback focussing on the projects connecting the new City Link Bridge, Queensgate and The Dowse. Reasons given were:

- It supports those without cars to move between the Melling station and the city centre.
- It connects the city centre to public transport (bus and train) most efficiently.
- It encourages people into the surrounding area.
- The roundabout at Knights Road and Bunny St is very dangerous to cross (this scenario includes an upgrade of this intersection).

"Riverside Precinct" was the second most popular scenario. The most important projects in this scenario included High Street, Andrews Ave and the Queens Arcade Laneway. Some businesses were in support of works outside their business, while others had concerns about the impact of the disruption. Reasons given for support of the "Riverside Precinct" scenario were:

- The area is very tired.
- It encourages investment in the new developments that will be coming to this area
- It creates more of an outdoor community space that focuses on our river.
- It would provide opportunities for events & outdoor dining to support retail and hospitality businesses in the area. This would help drawing more people in from outside Lower Hutt.

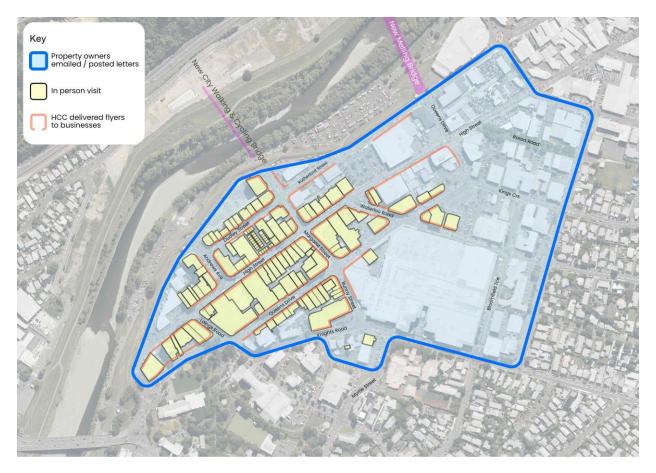
Those that selected "Civic Connections" as their preferred scenario gave reasons of improving pedestrian experience. In particular, they valued improvements to the connectivity between The Dowse and the rest of the city centre

In person visits

Prior to the drop-ins Council staff handed leaflets to businesses around the city centre. Emails and letters sharing information about the drop-ins were also sent to property owners.

On behalf of Council, First Retail Group visited businesses in person the day before or during the drop-ins. Businesses were encouraged to visit the drop-in but also offered the opportunity to feedback then and there if they had time. A number of businesses were also visited in person by Council staff.

The map below shows which properties were sent a letter or email, which received a flyer, and which were visited in person.



In person feedback themes

- Parking: Businesses want short-term parking spaces (10-15 minutes) for quick stops like picking up coffee or online orders. They also want to see clearly marked drop-off zones, particularly for businesses catering to customers with mobility challenges. The current time limits on paid parking are seen as a barrier by some.
- **Safety and environment**: There is a strong need for a safer and cleaner environment. Businesses reported instances of antisocial behaviour and assaults on staff and customers. The installation of security cameras and better management of these issues are seen as crucial.
- Activation of spaces: There is a desire for activating underused areas, such as the proposed demolition site next to Buzz Café or the gravel lot near Cycle Science. Businesses want to see temporary solutions that beautify these spaces and encourage foot traffic, rather than leaving them as vacant construction zones.
- **Wayfinding**: Businesses feel there is a lack of clear signage to guide people and encourage them to explore the various businesses within the

- city centre. They want to see collective efforts to highlight what the city has to offer.
- **Support for diverse needs**: The feedback highlights the need to support a wide range of businesses and customers, from those with bulky goods to those with longer appointment times. The needs of staff, including safe and affordable parking, are also a significant concern.

Conclusion

Key themes that came through all engagement activities are:

- Improve the route between the new Melling station, bridge, bus, and city centre making it safe for pedestrians, disabled people and cyclists.
- **Better crossing on Knights Road** is needed to make it safe for pedestrians and disabled people to access the bus interchange, shopping centre, civic precinct (including The Dowse Art Museum) and connect to the wider area.
- Refresh tired spaces rather than areas more recently invested in.
- **Parking is important** and more choice is needed e.g. accessible parking spaces, drop off/loading zones, a mix of short stay and longer stay.
- Amenities, events and outdoor activities particularly on Margaret Street, High Street and Andrews Avenue.
- Create strong connections to the river.

Council will proceed with investigating and combining elements of the top two scenarios (Cross-city Connections and Riverside Precinct), as well as incorporating the key themes and other feedback about project prioritisation. This work will inform the Streetscape Strategy before its adoption by Council.

Once the Streetscape Strategy is adopted we will move to the design of the upgrades and will continue to engage with the community and businesses throughout the design process.