

A vibrant city park scene with people walking, a child on a bench, and a fountain. The background shows a modern building with a green roof and parked cars. The foreground is a well-maintained lawn with a fountain spraying water. A young child is sitting on a green bench on the left, and a woman is pushing a stroller on the right. Another woman is walking in the center. The scene is bright and sunny, with lush green trees and bushes.

City Centre Plan

Palmerston North

SMALL CITY BENEFITS, BIG CITY AMBITION

2018/21

Te Kaunihera o Papaioea
Palmerston North City Council



To fulfil the vision of small city benefits, big city ambition the Council has adopted five goals. The Creative and Liveable Strategy was developed to achieve **Goal 2: A creative and exciting city**, and this plan shows how the Council will contribute to achieving this goal.

The city needs a plan for making the city centre a vibrant place that locals are proud of and that leaves a lasting positive impression on visitors. Council has consistently considered a lack of vibrancy in the city centre as a major strategic risk, with the Regional Growth Study identifying the need for the city to act as the heart of the region. Challenges include fewer pedestrians, earthquake-prone buildings, and the impact of the Plaza mall, internet shopping, and large-format retailing, on traditional pedestrian-based retail areas.

Council wants to design public spaces that are pedestrian-friendly, intimate, and that support social interaction. Council and city centre stakeholders need to work together to increase visible public life in the city centre by providing more outdoor hospitality, shop fronts, and community-initiated events such as the Village Night Market and Food Truck events.

Greater numbers of people are commuting to Palmerston North from across the region for work and study, as well as for social, recreational and cultural activities, including shopping. The city centre needs to offer locals, visitors and commuters a better experience to encourage them to

stay longer and spend more money. Increasing the after-five economy in the city centre is an opportunity that is currently being missed.

Activities that bring people into the city centre benefit all stakeholders, including existing businesses. Cities that have embarked on this approach have found it is more effective to change the perception of the city by increasing visible public life than by telling stories, marketing, or branding what the city is or could be. In the age of social media, happy locals, and visitors who leave the city with a lasting positive impression based on real-life experiences, are much more powerful than a new city slogan or brand.

A successful city centre needs a series of places with a unique identity that people can connect to emotionally. In most cases, Council and the community need to curate successful places through hardware (infrastructure) and software (people and events), rather than waiting for them to emerge naturally. By understanding the reasons why places are successful, Council can provide or curate more of them. The Little Cuba and George Street precinct is a good

example of a city centre location with a strong local identity that has partly evolved through collaboration between like-minded retailers and landowners, and partly been curated through the design of public spaces, buildings and support for particular events.

Council needs to work with city centre stakeholders to establish a business association that will use marketing, events and management to promote and reinforce community attachment and place-identity in other locations within the city centre. In other cities, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are formed to drive this activity. This approach needs to be considered in Palmerston North.

For the city centre to respond to opportunities, there needs to be nimble management of public space. Council needs to review some regulations, or waive regulations where there are no long-term consequences, to enable a lighter, quicker, cheaper approach to low-risk activities or events.







The purpose of the Draft City Centre Plan is to create a city that has great places for all people, in particular for families (Priority 1, Creative and Liveable Strategy).



Where we are now

- Council understands that the city centre influences the perception of Palmerston North.
- A lack of vibrancy in the city centre is identified as a strategic risk.
- The regional growth study has laid down a challenge for the city centre to act as the heart of the region.
- The city centre faces a variety of challenges including declining pedestrian counts, earthquake prone buildings, and alternative forms of retailing.
- Previous public investment has been successful but further investment is overdue.
- Visible public life in the city centre is beginning to increase via placemaking, Palmy Unleashed and Events.
- A significant proportion of spending in the city centre is by people who do not live in the city.
- Traditional forms of media are used to market the city centre.
- Some parts of the city have a strong place identity, e.g. Little Cuba.
- Some parts of the city have a developing place identity, e.g. Broadway Eat Street.
- Council investment in public places is starting to incorporate urban design principles and recognize the value of place, e.g. Cuba-Taonui-George, Queen Street, and Cuba Street renewals.
- There is a lack of coordination and leadership by city centre stakeholders.
- There is no city centre business association.
- There is no business improvement district(s) (BID).
- Broadway is transitioning to a night time destination.
- A plan has been developed for investment in the city centre streetscapes.
- The inter-regional terminal has been confirmed in The Square.
- The existing urban bus terminal is at capacity and makes a poor contribution to the streetscape.
- The city centre streetscape plan includes a concept design for a new urban terminal.
- New retail and office activity is directed to the city centre.
- Urban design controls apply to new development in the city centre.
- There is uncertainty regarding the use of public space in the city centre by commercial activities and what costs should apply.
- Parking management decisions are made in isolation and are not driving strategic outcomes.
- There is a poor understanding of the relationship between the provision of public and private parking.
- The desire for private on-site parking is driving office activities away from the core city centre.
- There are few inner city living opportunities and those that are available are generally of low quality.
- Massey University and FoodHQ do not have a presence in the city centre.



Where we want to be

- The city centre contributes positively to the perception of Palmerston North.
- Visible public life and pedestrian counts increase.
- There is increased demand for floor space.

- Increased demand for floor space acts as an incentive to strengthen earthquake prone buildings.
- Placemaking, Palmy Unleashed, and events continue to contribute towards increased visible public life.
- There is an increase in the proportion of spending in the city centre by people from outside of Palmerston North i.e. increase in the after-5pm economy.
- Citizens and visitors market the city through real life experiences shared on social media.
- The city centre has a series of places with a strong place identity.
- Urban design principles are applied to all renewal and capital new programmes with budgets developed accordingly.
- There is a strong business association which supports the establishment of a self-funded business improvement district (BID).
- Broadway is the preeminent night time destination.
- The City Centre Streetscape Plan is delivered, with Square East the initial priority.
- Plans for a new urban bus terminal are progressed.
- Retail and office growth continues to be directed to the city centre.
- Urban design principles continue to be applied to all new development in the city centre.
- A range of short-term commercial activities, offering a unique experience and an increase in visible public life, make use of public space in the city centre at no cost, e.g. food truck events.
- Public and private parking decisions support the primary purpose of the Inner and Outer Business Zones of the District Plan. Development in the Inner Business Zone primarily makes use of public parking. Development in the Outer Business Zone primarily makes use of private on-site parking.
- Parking management decisions recognise Council's broader objectives for a pedestrian friendly city centre and increased use of public and active transport.
- Parking management decisions recognise the long term changes in private motor vehicle use, e.g. driverless vehicles.
- Parking management decisions support the occupation of office activities in the city centre high rise buildings.
- Land and buildings suitable for inner city living are identified, including Council owned land.
- There is a significant increase in the number and quality of city centre living opportunities.
- Massey University and FoodHQ have a presence in the city centre, possibly as part of the proposed business hub.



How we're going to get there

Day to day / ongoing actions to achieve the purpose

- Implement Placemaking, Palmy Unleashed, and events programme (see Placemaking Plan and Palmy Unleashed Plan).
- Administer the District Plan, as it applies to the city centre.
- Undertake design reviews of public and private developments in the city centre.

New ongoing actions to achieve the purpose

- Deliver the city centre streetscape plan, including the urban bus terminal.
- Facilitate the formation of a business association and supporting contacts register for the city centre business community.
- Formulate a self-funded business improvement district (BID).
- Develop guidelines regarding the use of public space by commercial activities.
- Investigate the viability of specific paid commuter car-parking in the city centre to support increased office activity in the Inner Business Zone.
- Review the minimum car-parking requirements outside of the Inner Business Zone and consider maximum car-parking requirements.
- Obtain information on the location and quality of existing inner city living.
- Identify land and buildings suitable for inner city living, including Council owned land.

Specific programmes to achieve the purpose (with timeframe)

- Complete city centre streetscape programmes (2018 – 2028), including the urban bus terminal

Actions contributing to Council's strategic themes

a) Smart city practices

- Place data/ digital placemaking.
- Sensors.
- Lighting and projection.
- Facilitate charging stations (devices and vehicles).

b) Sustainable practices

- Urban design.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).
- City centre living.
- Placemaking and Palmy Unleashed.



c) Iwi partnerships

- Collaboration on city centre development opportunities, e.g. former Police Station.
- Continue proactive engagement on major developments and public investment.
- Continue focus on underlying historic and cultural elements such as Te Marae o Hine, to ensure these are appropriately acknowledged and reflected in the future cityscape, and to maximise the opportunities that iwi narratives offer to strengthen the contemporary development of the City.



d) Strategic partnerships

- Development community, Rangitāne o Manawatū, landowners, retailers, business association, UCOL, Massey University, FoodHQ, CEDA, and the Chamber of Commerce

Measures of success



- Increase in pedestrian numbers
- Decrease in city centre building vacancy rates
- Increase in the number of people living in the city centre
- Establishment of an active city centre association or business improvement district
- Membership of city centre precinct groups
- Increase in people visiting the city centre during off-peak periods



Related policies

- District Plan
- City centre streetscape plan
- Street design manual
- City centre framework
- Vegetation framework
- Significance and Engagement Policy
- Smokefree Outdoor Area Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Local Area Traffic Management
- Dangerous and Insanitary Buildings Policy
- Traffic and Parking Bylaw
- Signs and Use of Public Places Bylaw
- Alcohol Control Bylaw



Long-term Plan levels of service

Council implements the City Centre Streetscape Plan to increase City Centre vibrancy and improve the perception of the City.

Long-term Plan KPIs

Projects from the City Centre Streetscape Plan are implemented on time and budget.





Palmerston North City Council

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