

Hastings CBD Hybrid Mall Submission | HDC LTP

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Submitter

Turley & Co www.turley.co.nz for 20 years is a Hawke's Bay-based property strategy and valuation company working for major public and private land clients NZ-wide. The company is a regular commercial and industrial property economy commentator: Turley & Co press www.turley.co.nz/press/latest/

Summary

The Hastings pedestrian mall alongside a railway line created in the 1980s was a mistake that needs to be reworked. We firmly believe the mall should be remodelled to lightly allow one-way cars like Emerson Street Napier that is successful people-centric but allowing cars for 20 years.

Hybrid Mall Proposed 2011

Turley & Co shares property market reports including to over 20 Hastings District Council people and Councillors. Hastings CBD retail observations July 2011 to February 2015, repeated in eight market reports:

"Turley & Co has [well before 2011] considered the westerly 100 and 200 blocks would be long-term stronger by partially reintroducing to the 100-Block vehicular traffic (currently pedestrians only) and reducing 200-Block traffic access by adopting the Emerson Street Napier model for these streets in CBD Hastings."

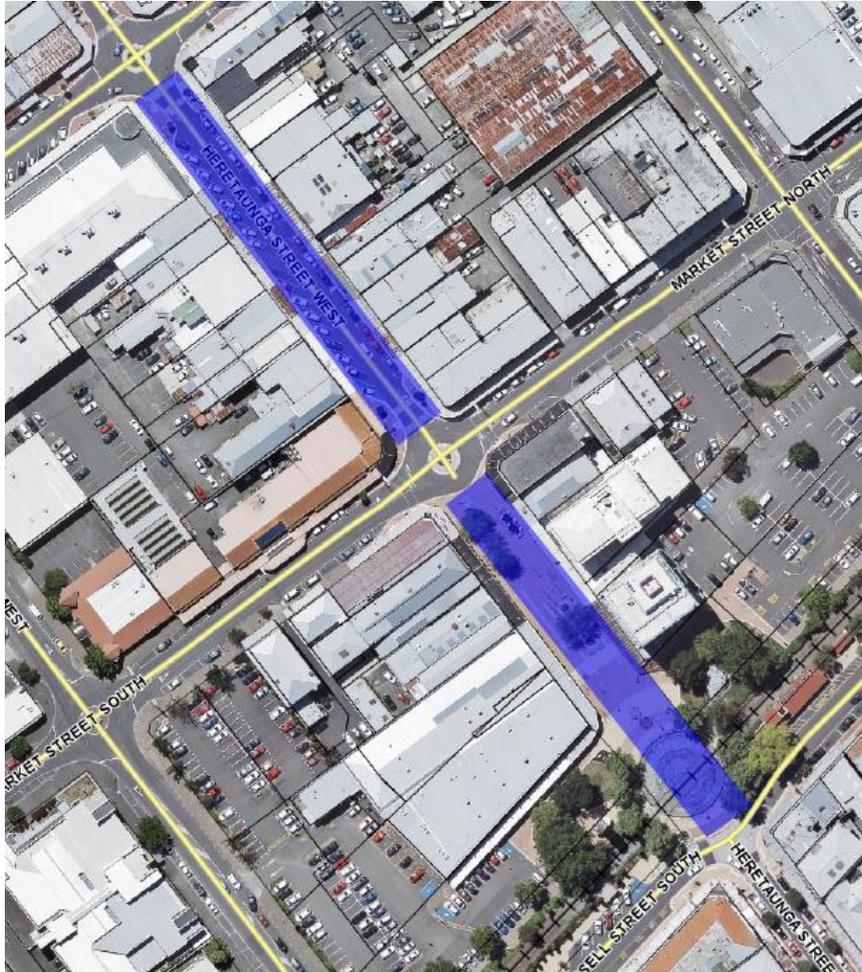
Hastings CBD Challenges

Hastings CBD is mainstreet length disadvantaged over being city blocks clustered. The mainstreet elongation challenge is exasperated by a railway dissecting the core of the city and is further impeded by a pedestrian only mall. The mall prevents vehicular traffic circulation from Heretaunga Street East (and Russell Street), to Market Street. The mall with the railway combines to substantially reduce city centre connectivity that impedes cross railway people flows. This results in suboptimal city centre vibrancy.

Existing Pedestrian Mall

In the 1980s a Massey University property and valuation degree senior lecturer Mr Jim Coyle – once DB Breweries' property manager, thought the Hastings CBD pedestrian-only mall development would be a mistake. Jim thought a railway line coupled with a mall that prevented cars thoroughfare, would impede Hastings people flows and commercial function. The late Mr Coyle thought the mall would degrade city centre retail and office vibrancy generally.

Hastings' CBD was 1980s partitioned by the mall creating separate CBD districts instead of a seamless city centre. The railway line would not be easily moved however, the mall impediment could be considerably improved by restoring light cars one-way connectivity from Russell Street, as done in Emerson Street Napier. Ideally, prime retail 200 Block West would be similarly configured. Both blocks should be a hybrid mall place (combined 260m shown purple shaded):



Hybrid Mall Napier Success

In the mid-1990s, Napier created the upper-lower Emerson Street hybrid city centre place (460 metres in length). This was a compromise between retaining a full traffic traditional mainstreet and building a pedestrian-only mall like Hastings. The Napier compromise looked like possibly a bad idea because it was neither – it presented as Napier City retreat given heated community debate.

Napier's mainstreet design has been very successful and in hindsight, the 1990s decision by Napier Councillors and the Mayor was brave and enlightened.

Napier hybrid mall shaded purple allowing one-way car traffic except for Hastings Street to Marine Parade:



Emerson Street cars are light thoroughfare access allowed but pedestrians are prioritised and the mall is cyclist friendly. Napier's hybrid mall is a massive factor in the well-established success of central Napier. Napier's heart is a social place used substantially for timeout including music and arts and is doubly a very strong retail location. Napier's city centre is more vibrant on weekends than the Hastings CBD. Napier is better supported by national and Australasian mainstreet retail brands.

Prime mainstreet rents in Napier are higher than Hastings (refer to Turley & Co market metrics data). This is proof of the success of the Napier design. Pedestrian counts are higher and people numbers are CBD success key.

The hybrid mall is Napier City centre vibrancy proven for 20 years. The Hastings mall and 200 Block are much less successful. The Hastings no cars allowed mall design substantially impedes city centre people and vehicle connectivity for Hastings' broader city centre. The Hastings no car thoroughfare mall in effect partitions the CBD that negatively impacts the vibrancy and success of the 100-200 Blocks West and Heretaunga Street East. It creates almost two towns currently.

Napier's one-way and low incidence of cars mainstreet road corridor (that is narrow), is an example of a very successful regional New Zealand city centre configuration, without street side parking, giving over two-thirds of the roadway to people on foot. This design could be emulated by Hastings whilst retaining most of the features of the existing mall.

Councillors please need to be brave and make the best decision for the heart of Hastings that could be substantially more vibrant and commercially more successful.

Hastings Considerations

The argument for creating a Hastings 200 Block West and 100 Block West (and maybe 100 Block East), hybrid mall is well proven by Napier's experience. The arguments against, other than works disruption and the HDC capital costs, include a loss of 200 Block kerbside parking. Emerson Street retail performance is stronger than Hastings without Napier parking immediately adjacent to mainstreet shops. People are clearly happy to walk to a good inner-city place with strong retail representation. These are co-requisites.

Hastings' 200 Block offers just 33 carparks of which 4 could be accommodated in a cars allowed mall (200 Block West), and 2 incorporated into the existing mall roadway. The 27 parks shortfall could be replaced by HDC acquisition of 700-800m² of land for parking potentially by removing an old building, further reducing the retail supply footprint and providing another connection point to the heart of the city – possibly incorporating a micro park in the 200 Block and improving adjacent land development prospects.

The Hastings 200 Block and the 100 Block West road corridor is combined 260 metres compared to the Emerson Street upper-lower hybrid mall that is 460 metres. Upper Emerson Street only both sides of Hastings Street is 290 metres. Napier has a retail mainstreet of 460 metres without kerbside parking other than 5 minutes drop off bays. This works well and is trees landscaped like the Hastings mall – much of this could be retained, whilst reintroducing a narrow lane for one-way light vehicular traffic through the mall from Russell Street to Market Street.

Napier's people-centric and cars allowed mall is dissected by Hastings and Dalton Streets. It enables one-way traffic from either end of Emerson Street to Dalton Street. In Hastings, cars could flow one-way from Russell and King Streets to Market Street. The Heretaunga Street railway crossing would need to be reinstated that would be workable given low frequency rail traffic (Turley & Co has rail crossing formation suggestions). The existing main mall could be periodically closed to traffic for festivals and markets activity.

Other

Turley & Co's thinking is not fresh or radical. The CBD design option proposed exists already in Hawke's Bay since about 1996. Turley & Co people have thought for over a decade that if a people focused hybrid mall was successful elsewhere, then Hastings should unashamedly emulate this, uniquely designed for Hastings.

Hastings has progressed substantially in the past decade. Hastings District Council initiatives starting with CBD landscapes and trees, and more recently micro parks and other vibrancy works and initiatives, are very good and great to see. The vibrancy plan for the CBD is good. The 1980s built no traffic mall is, however, a massive fly in the ointment and was a CBD connectivity mistake.

Without lightly reconnecting car traffic for Russell Street through to Market Street – through the current mall roading area, we think Hastings District Council’s welcome and substantial proposed investment in reworking the city centre mall would likely be misdirected and a massive missed opportunity.

We would like to see Council pause please and rethink what is currently planned and to canvas the community about alternative designs. It seems only one CBD revamp option is currently presented. Much better would be the best city centre layout design competition with options for debate. Consideration of a hybrid mall for the existing mall and 200 Block West should be part of deliberations.

Why would Hastings not want to emulate a proven successful Napier design?

1980s Mistake Reiteration

Making a fundamentally flawed Hastings mall (100 Block West) more attractive, will not fix the core issue if not reversing an error by the city about 25 years ago. That mistake would be perpetuated and maybe not rectified for 10-15 years, or longer. Hastings would miss out on connectivity and vibrancy gains. Mainstreet retail support could be weakened and the relative attractiveness and competitiveness of Hastings CBD held back compared to what it could be.

Hastings Competitive Positioning

The Hastings CBD needs to position to compete better. This starts with the best foundation design and thereby people connectivity for the inner-city blocks working better together.

Disclosures

Turley & Co www.turley.co.nz commercial property strategy and valuer staff have no conflicts. We are not Hastings CBD property owners or tenants. We have clients that are commercial property owners and tenants in the Hastings City centre although they have not been canvassed about this submission to Hastings District Council.

For Turley & Co Ltd: Pat Turley | pat@turley.co.nz | 021 33 33 93



Tim Whittaker Te Mata Peak Millennium Sunrise

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