

## 2. LATIMER SQUARE ENHANCEMENT

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The purpose of this report is to update elected representatives on the Latimer Square project now that public consultation is completed and to gain sign off on the terms of reference which will advance the design work for Latimer Square.

### CONTEXT

In July this year the Latimer Square Project Team reported on progress with Latimer Square and gained approval for a consultation document to be released to the wider Christchurch public. The results of that consultation have now been collated and are discussed in this report.

Elected representatives are reminded of the budget line items which existed in the 2002/3 annual plan. The budget line items occur as follows:

2002/03	
Parks & Waterways	<b>\$150,000</b> (less \$40 000 spent on lighting Latimer Square west)
City Streets	<b>\$421,100</b> for major amenity improvements, Latimer Square West (Gloucester to Hereford Street)
2003/04	
Parks & Waterways	<b>nil</b>
City Streets	<b>\$167,122</b> major amenity improvements along Worcester Street through the square.

The joint committee meeting has been arranged so that the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee, the Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee and the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committees, together with the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board can be informed in a more efficient manner.

### BACKGROUND

Latimer Square is an important civic space area which in the 1890s used to be the centre of many lively activities such as bicycle races and fetes. Its more recent history is less positive with issues about safety causing the park to be under-utilised. In reality it should be a prime civic space of similar importance to that of Cathedral Square and Victoria Square and needs to be considered as part of the open space network within the central city.

A cross-unit project team led by John de Zwart from City Solutions has been set up integrating representatives from Parks and Waterways, City Streets, Heritage, City Plan and Central City Revitalisation teams. The proposed planning for enhancing Latimer Square and the streets around it fits well within the Council's vision to revitalise the eastern side of the central city.

The recent consultation exercise has been carried out by way of advertisements in the local papers, bill stickers, City Scene, the CCC "Have Your Say" website and through direct mail drop to residents and businesses in the vicinity of Latimer Square. A brochure called "Latimer Square – Where to from here?" was made available and posted directly to those who requested it. The document was composed based on ideas and information gathered at two earlier public meetings and the Inner City East Neighbourhood Improvement Plan. The feedback from the questionnaires has been independently collated by Opinions Market Research Ltd and several clear themes are apparent. Submitters who indicated that they wanted to be heard had the opportunity to speak to elected representatives on 4 December 2002.

The project team is now ready to begin the design planning stage of the project, based on the findings of the recent consultation exercise, earlier workshops and the Latimer Neighbourhood Improvement Plan. The first stage in the project's planning is the development of the Terms of Reference, which members should already have received.

## RESULTS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The publicity around Latimer Square has attracted a good response. Four hundred and fifty-two submissions were received with an additional 12 arriving late. The three options for Worcester Street namely closure, narrowing or status quo were outlined on the brochure and road closure was marginally preferred. Of the late arrivals eight were from a youth group, five favoured the closing of Worcester Street, three narrowing and one status quo. These figures have not been included in the Latimer Square Consultation report prepared by Opinions Market Research Ltd, but the information has been noted.

Opinions has categorised the comments in to the following themes: Victoria Square (as a comparison), Utilisation, Fountain, Café, Features/Focus, Future, Market, Road/Parking, Lighting, Planting/Trees, Paths Walkways, Vagrants and Miscellaneous.

In general, the feedback was positive with some good ideas put forward by submitters. Several common themes are obvious from the feedback to the questionnaire. They are:

- More events, fairs, cafes opposite, encourage family activity, some organised sports, picnics.
- Comments on the perimeter trees divided - replace/don't touch.
- Hedges/flowerbeds suggested, upgrade paths, install more bins, seating.
- Use Victoria Square as a model although recognised that issues are slightly different.
- Needs a focal point – a fountain and/or pond, a rotunda, statues, market (art or otherwise).
- Improve safety of Latimer Square – provide more lighting, remove anti-social behaviour (although some ambivalence about removing vs helping homeless people, drunks etc).
- Reduce the impact of traffic on Latimer Square. Cycle paths needed. Remove parking.
- Option to close Worcester Street through Latimer Square (47% supported closure, 42% retention of Worcester Street as is, 11% supported narrowing of Worcester Street).

The attached section of the report (pages 6 and 7) summarising the consultation feedback outlines the preferences of submitters and their reasons for favouring various Worcester Street options for Latimer Square.

Fourteen per cent of submitters felt that that Latimer Square should be left as it is, with some commenting that there were more important things to spend Council money on.

Of the submitters supporting change, the closure of Worcester Street through Latimer Square was preferred because:

- The area should be more pedestrian friendly.
- A larger space would be provided making it more useable for sports and events, more attractive, quiet/relaxing, it would make it a real park.
- It would make it more a counterpart with Cranmer Square and return it to its original design.
- It would be safer.
- It would create a focus and assist revitalisation of area.

Those preferring to see Worcester Street remain as it currently is cited the following reasons:

- It allows a “gateway to the east” theme to be developed in the future.
- Effects of reducing traffic along Worcester Street on businesses at Stanmore Road, Fitzgerald Avenue and Linwood Avenue, and effects of increasing traffic on Gloucester and Hereford Streets.
- Disruptive to traffic flows to and around the neighbourhood east of Latimer Square.
- Park can still be well used if remains as two spaces.
- It is a waste of money to change it..

Nine submitters were heard by a representative of the Hagley-Ferrymead Board and of the three committees involved in the project. A summary of the Subcommittee hearing will be separately circulated.

## **PROPOSAL**

### **Terms of Reference**

It is anticipated that the Terms of Reference will form the basis for the development of briefs outlining all the necessary design, resource consent and legal processes. Elected representatives will have received this prior to today's meeting.

### **Processes and Timeframes**

#### *Design Process*

From the Terms of Reference a design brief will be developed to advance the landscape design for Latimer Square. The brief will address the common themes indicated in the consultation process and seek to enhance Latimer Square so that its potential as a major civic space is realised. A preliminary plan for the space will be drawn up and presented to the joint committee.

#### *Resource Consent Process*

Because Latimer Square is listed in the Christchurch City Plan as a Protected Place and because many of its trees are protected, it is likely that works affecting the trees or changing the existing layout of the squares will require resource consent. Heritage Planner Neil Carries advises "Any construction, alteration or modification of the heritage place can be regarded as requiring a resource consent for heritage purposes. It could also be argued that the removal of trees (not just protected trees) is also an alteration affecting the heritage values of the place. Clearly new lighting paths, statues, signage etc constitute alterations. The status of the road in the present Heritage Plan listing is unclear as far as the heritage place is concerned".

If the resource consent is publicly notified the community will have a further opportunity to put across their points of view.

#### *Road Stopping Process*

Submissions from the consultation document, community meetings and the Neighbourhood Plan have indicated a slight leaning towards the closure of Worcester Street, from Latimer Square west to the State Highway (Madras Street).

To proceed with any change to Worcester Street a decision by the Council to proceed with road stopping is required. It is recognised that as part of the legal procedure to stop the road, submissions can be lodged for or against the proposal. It is likely that there will be objections to the road stopping and a commissioner or panel of Councillors will need to be appointed to hear submissions. If the effects raised by objectors cannot be satisfactorily mitigated then the Council will need to decide whether or not to pursue the road closure idea. The proposal could proceed to the Environment Court.

### **Latimer Square West – Kerb and Channel Replacement**

The consultation has generated very little comment on the proposals to replace the kerb and channel in Latimer Square West. Before proceeding with this work, City Streets staff feel there is a need to approach the businesses along this section of road to discuss the proposed changes.

The proposal is to retain the original kerb blocks along the frontage of the Christchurch Club, provide angle parking along the western side of the street, widen the grass area on the eastern (park) side to allow the trees more space, and create narrowing at the intersections with both Hereford and Gloucester Streets.

The final design at the intersection at Worcester Street is dependent on the outcome for Worcester Street through the park and the park design. However the work along the park frontage to Latimer Square West could be undertaken without this aspect being finalised. The upgrading of Latimer Square West and the replacement of the kerb and channel could be constructed in the middle of 2003 but it would be more practical to delay the work until the design for the park is completed. This would allow all the paving, for example, to be consistent in texture and colour if that is what the design reflects.

## **Fitzgerald Statue**

While many people discussed the need to make Latimer Square more useful in terms of activities others suggested that Latimer Square needed a focus. Ideas such as a café, artwork, band rotunda or the relocation of the Fitzgerald Statue were put forward. Only a few submitters mentioned the possibility of relocating the Fitzgerald Statue from Rolleston Avenue to Latimer Square.

The Latimer Square project team had made a request to the Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee that a decision be made on this issue before the brief for Latimer Square was finalised. It was felt that if the Fitzgerald Statue were to be placed in Latimer Square it needed to be part of the landscape brief because of its importance to the city and because of its likelihood of becoming a landmark within the park space. It would, therefore, become pivotal to the park design and it would be unfortunate if a decision on the statue delayed the advancement of this project or was later plonked into the park.

A recommendation was made by the Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee at its meeting on 28 November 2002 to retain the statue in its current location in Rolleston Avenue.

The Parks and Waterways Unit support this decision as it is believed that Latimer Square can be more easily enhanced and enlivened by exploring other opportunities as a point of interest and to engender a new vibrancy for the space that is long overdue. In addition, to this the Fitzgerald Statue in its present location complements the other statues and the stately architecture of the Rolleston Avenue/Botanic Gardens entrance. It is also a focal point at the end of Cashel Street when viewed from the city mall.

## **CONCLUSION**

The cross-unit project team is working well with a total solutions approach to the enhancement of Latimer Square. Consultation to date has included neighbouring business owners and residents as well as the wider Christchurch community. Slightly more submissions were received preferring the closure of Worcester Street through Latimer Square. The closure can only be advanced through the road stopping process and the Council will need to decide whether to initiate this procedure.

It is very clear from the comments received that it is desirable to improve the appeal and usefulness of the park through the provision of activities and events rather than substantially modifying the physical park space. Other suggestions have been made in the feedback and these will be incorporated in the design briefs, together with staff advice and information from the NIP. The Terms of Reference are based on the findings of the consultation and will shape the scope of the design and planning work for Latimer Square to improve the usefulness and appeal of the park for the next 50 years.

## **Staff**

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
  2. That the Terms of Reference for the Latimer Square Enhancement Project be received and a recommendation made as to their endorsement by the Council.
  3. That the road stopping process for the section of Worcester Street through Latimer Square be initiated.
  4. That the Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee's recommendation to retain the Fitzgerald Statue at its present Rolleston Avenue location be supported.