

6 July 2006

Re: Courtenay Place Park

This submission is from the Wellington Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington.

1) Opposition for the proposal

The Architectural Centre opposes this proposal. We consider that there are not enough positives provided in the proposed scheme to warrant the expenditure and that it would be more prudent to save the money for a more considered park. In particular we consider that the proposal to increase the north-west direction of the road to three lanes of traffic is short-sighted is contrary to council attempts to reduce inner city traffic.

2) The Current Situation

In our opinion the traffic flow current works well, and the pedestrian/vehicle relationship is good. If there is something that could be improved it is the placement of the bollards along the main street side of the raised grass platform. In their current position they hinder pedestrian traffic. We acknowledge that this is a difficult narrow corner for vehicular traffic but see this difficulty for vehicles as a positive contribution to discouraging inner city car use.

3) Proposed Design

We understand that the driver of the project is the plan to convert the current historic toilets (which are no longer used) into a bar. While this project will be a positive addition to this part of town, if the proposal is to go ahead, it needs more design input, and needs to reflect the fact it is an urban park, through the assertive use of urban materials (such as concrete), rather than increasing the number of trees. We consider that as the proposal doesn't appear to address any of the negative aspects of the current park (e.g. drainage of the grass, and the position of the bollards, etc) there is little point to proceed. We do not support increasing the traffic to three lanes, and consider that this is counter to other council objectives to reduce the levels of inner city traffic. Because of the dominance of pedestrian traffic, the current left-turning lane into Taranaki Street works well to calm and inconvenience traffic flow. We also note that a redesign of this area of Taranaki Street and Courtenay Place needs to also consider how Taranaki Street might be improved, particularly from a pedestrian viewpoint, as well as the relationship between this site and Te Aro Park. We do not consider that the proposal does this adequately.

4) Conclusion

While we oppose this proposal, generally we support the direction the council takes in considering urban issues. One area though where we consider the council is deficient however is the design of small city parks. Recent examples include Glover Park which is a bland soulless design, and an insult to the designer of the previous park who had provided a thoughtful and considered structure with interesting use of concrete geometric forms. The current Glover Park design is a crude attempt to displace a group of people who have the same rights as other Wellington citizens to inhabit urban spaces. It saddens us to see design used in such a gutless political and immoral way. Another example of bad decision making re: inner city park spaces was the removal of the raised circular platform at the corner of Courtenay Place and Kent/Cambridge Terraces. This public space was a popular resting place for people to sit, lie and play on. Its removal has detracted from the pleasure of that small and successful urban space. These examples seem in contradiction to a council which has many design successes – the Waterfront development and Waitangi Park being obvious ones – and



the architectural centre inc.
PO Box 24178 Wellington

clearly expertise in small urban park design is an area the council needs to strengthen. The Courtenay Place Park has the potential to remedy this, but not if its design is at the expense of encouraging more traffic on Courtenay Place and denying the urban character of the Courtenay Place quarter in its design.

Yours sincerely

Christine McCarthy
President
The Architectural Centre