

27 November 2018

Karori Town Centre
Freepost WCC (123)
Attention: Gerald Bunt
Wellington City Council
P.O. Box 2199
Wellington
ud.karori@wcc.govt.nz

Re: Karori Town Centre: Public Space Improvement Project

This submission is from the Architectural Centre. We are an incorporated society dating from 1946, which represents both professionals and non-professionals interested in the promotion of good design.

We oppose all of the current "options" for the following reasons:

1. The options are not really options per se but rather potentially complementary fragments of a larger project. The difficulty is that even if all of these fragments were implemented they would not effect a compelling town centre.
2. The documents state that there is current "scoping of development potential" of the St John's site, and an urban design brief which has been approved by Council. There does not appear to be a link to this brief in the consultation documents, so we are not able to comment on it.
3. The "heart" of the Karori Town Centre is the mall, the library and potentially the community centre and events centre. Currently a petrol station occupies the key location that ties these together. Petrol is last century. It is not the future. This idea is coming to the end of its shelf life. Meantime its occupation of a key site is the stumbling block to achieving coherence to Karori. The proposed options tweak around the periphery, which might tart up the place, but do nothing that adding a few seats would accomplish on their own. These will not achieve any significant urban design benefit because they are a superficial glossing over avoiding the elephant in the room (or rather than Mobil petrol station in the way).
4. The council needs to acquire the petrol station site. There is potential for Mobil to re-establish itself on the St John site in a landswap. The corner site is a better prospect for a dying industry. Mobil will no doubt be in the process of transitioning to electric and renewable fuels which will likely require significant changes to their fuel infrastructure. The WCC should take advantage of this situation, enabling them to re-fuel their business as they transition on to the Campbell St cnr site.
5. An alternative would be for Mobil to be encouraged to relocate into a combined mall redevelopment project, though we acknowledge the lack of public ownership of the mall site may limit the council's ability to leverage a solution here.



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6. It might be argued that of all the options Option D strikes at the core of the issue - but the context of inadequate public transport will undermine this. When there is excellent public transport linking Karori with the city then a bold move - re-designing Karori Road around the shopping area, increasing pedestrian attractiveness across the community and reforming the road to prioritise cycling and LRT - will be valid. In the current situation Option D will further narrow the road, reduce flexibility for cyclists, for whom there is little space to share with very high traffic levels, and increase the road rage experienced by car and bus drivers and inflicted on cyclists and pedestrians.
7. Consequently we do not support pilfering \$1 million of rate payers' dollars to defer Karori angst about the poor quality of the suburb's environment. A meaningful and substantive long term project needs to be laid out and incrementally put in place. We consider core to this is the making of a public urban space - the Mobil site being the perfect one for a Karori town square - and significant investment in public transport to provide a viable alternative to private car traffic.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed Karori Town Centre: Public Space Improvement Project. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Nāku iti noa nā



Christine McCarthy
President, Architectural Centre