



28 February 2014

Submission to the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan

**From The Karangahape Road Business Association**

Traffic Management, Rail, Pedestrian, Cycle, Street Connections & Public Space.

Over the next few decades the Karangahape Road area will experience a dramatic increase in growth, especially in the wake of the completion of the Central Rail Link. This will encourage many more people to frequent the area for shopping and entertainment – the creation of an entrance to the Underground rail Station in Mercury Lane would for example enable people from Avondale, New Lynn, and Henderson to easily travel into K Rd at night to attend theatrical performances at the Mercury Theatre .

More people will live in the area as well. In years to come the area surrounding Karangahape road will be inevitably rebuilt with higher residential units. A higher residential population is to be welcomed from every point of view – it will benefit the area economically and socially as well as improving the general environment ecologically by reducing commuting times and pollution.

The increase in the number of residents in the area will probably bring a greater mix of people; at the moment there are few elderly folk or children for example but that may change swiftly after the completion of the CRL and more residential units. The perceived and real safety and visual attractiveness of the streetscapes will be a crucial part of any development for the K Road area.

In particular the volume and speed of traffic will need to be addressed. Karangahape Road is an important traffic route and the Business Association would not like bus routes (for example) to be re-routed away from the area, but certain things should be examined.

Some roads in the area are prone to high traffic speeds as they have become to be virtually treated as part of the On-Ramps for the Motorway System. These areas are very pedestrian unfriendly and it is vital that traffic calming solutions be implemented sooner than later.

The areas identified are;

1) Pitt Street & Hopetoun Street.

- 2) K Road between Howe Street and Ponsonby Road.
- 3) Newton Road.
- 4) K Road between Liverpool and Symonds Street.
- 5) Symonds Street and Upper Symonds Street.
- 6) Queen Street & Upper Queen Street.

### **Pedestrian crossings;**

Following the success of the K Road Crossing at St Kevin's arcade and other examples throughout the CBD it is recommended that new pedestrian crossings be created at the following points;

- 1) Pitt Street at Poynton Terrace
- 2) K Road at Hereford Street
- 3) Newton Road at Ophir Street
- 4) K Road at Liverpool Street
- 5) Symonds Street at City Road
- 6) Queen Street at City Road & Scotia Place.
- 7) K Road at East Street.

### **Road Narrowing:**

Further to creating a pedestrian friendly environment the openings to several side streets should be narrowed. This has been a standard concept for some decades and there are numerous examples throughout the CBD.

The widening of pavements and the introduction of textured crossings should be implemented at;

- 1) Abbey Street
- 2) Gundry Street
- 3) Hereford Street
- 4) Edinburgh Street – it might be possible to close off this street and locate public toilets here.

5) Howe Street : - The Howe Street intersection is becoming increasingly problematic with interactions between pedestrians and traffic causing alarm. At night there are alarming numbers of intoxicated people crossing diagonally. This intersection needs to be redesigned, possibly in conjunction with Edinburgh Street being closed off.

6) Pitt Street.

7) Scotia Place.

8) Liverpool Street (at K Road end)

9) City Road (at Symonds Street end)

10) Turner & White Streets, (at the Queen Street entrances but also at the intersection of the two streets).

#### **New Public Space:**

The greater number of people living in the area means there will be a need for extra Public Space – this could easily be done if instead of widening the footpath on both sides, the roadway is placed to one side. Sites for such spaces have been identified at the following;

1) Gundry Street

2) Hereford Street

3) Howe Street

4) Beresford Square; the narrowing of the lower end of Beresford Square at the corner of Hopetoun Street would result in quite a large area which would be ideal for the provision of a children's playground and community Gardens.

#### **Street Planting and parking:**

Several places could be improved by street planting (palms) and the creation of insert car parking spaces;

1) Pitt Street (the pavements are very wide here and the creation of insert parking would get rid of the need and expense of the current clearway)

2) Hopetoun Street.

These streets could benefit from street plantings, possibly palm trees;

3) K Road between Howe Street and Ponsonby Road.

4) City Road.

5) Liverpool Street.

6) South Street.

7) Galatos Street.

8) Canada Street.

**Better connections:**

The attractiveness of the existing public spaces in the Karangahape Road area should be improved. In particular access to the Major green Spaces need to be looked at;

The Symonds Street Cemetery, for example has an entrance from Upper Queen Street which is a glaring example of how not to design for the public; Access to the Cemetery is through a dreary covered car parking building with no indication that there is actually a public right-of-way; This was a joint project between the Council and the private developer which is frankly scandalous.

Myers Park is the major Green Space for the area and specifically intended for children but access to the park is inherently difficult for caregivers with small children and prams, the disabled and cyclists. The current redesign of the park has not significantly addressed these issues.

It is recommended that

1) A Ramp be constructed at the lower end of Myers Park connecting Mayoral Drive with the Park. This will create a connection with the red Link bus route stop.

2) The stairs at the upper Greys Avenue entrance ( Lancelot Terrace next to the Amora Hotel ) be removed and a ramp formed.

3) A formal connection between Scotia place and Poynton Terrace be created. This would require purchase of private land or the creation of an easement.

4) A ramp be constructed connecting Poynton Terrace to Myers Park.

As the number of residents in the area increases, Myers Park will become more important as a place to be enjoyed by all residents including the elderly and the very young – the park's design must reflect this.

**Cycleway routes, and public spaces;**

Dedicated cycle routes should be made on Pitt Street and Greys Avenue, possibly on the pavements.

There is talk of utilizing the decommissioned Nelson Street Motorway Off-Ramp as a Cycleway but this would only work if there is a way to access it from K Road. The proposed link from Ngata and Day Streets actually runs over private land. It would be better to create a bridge at either South Street or Galatos

Street as it would then be possible to link along Canada Street to the existing Cycleway at Don McKinnon Drive and the soon to be completed Grafton Gully Cycleway.

To facilitate this it would be ideal to create some sort of connection between Galatos and South Streets. This could be built in the form of a Public Square running between the two streets on the properties next to the 1911 Druids Hall (Galatos) or simply by extending extra development rights to the large property at the end of Galatos Street – until recently it was possible to walk along the edge of the motorway here but recent improvements by AT has blocked access to this narrow pathway.

Contiguous to this would be a new Public Space or passageway between Mercury lane and East Street. This land is to be purchased as part of the CRL development and so creating the space before selling the remainder of the land back to the private sector would be extremely easy and cost effective. It would greatly benefit the pedestrian and cycle access to the south of Karangahape Road if there was a public space just here. Such a square or passage way would be directly adjacent to the Mercury Theatre and would have the Metro Station Entry sitting in the middle of it. This would greatly benefit any apartment Blocks in the immediate area and the local businesses.

Another location for a new Public Space or passageway would be between Abbey Street and Edinburgh Street. The building of Apartment blocks in this area will create the need for public space and this would greatly benefit the two Community Facilities in this area; The Old Folks Association in Gundry Street and the Maori Hall in Edinburgh Street – facilities such as these will become increasingly important as the residential population of the area increases and changes. The purchase of one property by Council would provide a Community Focus here and improve Pedestrian and Cycle flow.

Paramount for the pedestrian friendliness of the Karangahape Road area is the rebuilding of the K Road Overbridge. The current bridge was constructed in 1970 with a lifespan of 50 years. Its creation resulted in a break along the Karangahape Road Bridge resulting in the economic decline of the western end of the street and the creation of the Red Light District around the Howe Street intersection.

The rebuilding of the Overbridge with shops on each side would be the single most important thing to revitalise the Karangahape Road area by improving the pedestrian experience. The rebuilding could easily incorporate public spaces allowing views south to Mount Eden and north to the Harbour Bridge. As no tall buildings could be constructed to the north over the motorway such a structure could be surmounted by Photo-voltaic panels and thus supply electricity for public lighting along Karangahape Road.

A similar situation exists with the Upper Queen Street and Upper Symonds Street bridges which will also need to be rebuilt in the next two decades. There is no reason why they couldn't be rebuilt with shops on one or both sides of the them and thus create a pedestrian link between Upper Symonds Street and the Karangahape Road area.

Indeed the whole area between the two bridges could be utilized as a major project. Such platforms over rail and motorway systems have been built in Europe and elsewhere; the area above the motorway bounded by Upper Symonds, Alex Evans and Upper Queen Street is not very big and is square in outline.

It could easily be rebuilt as a platform with tall buildings (residential or office blocks with retail on the ground floor) leaving a central public square reconnecting St Benedicts with the Cemetery again.

As the only thing to the north would be the Cemetery there could never be any high rise development to block the sun. As with the K Road Overbridge, surmounting the buildings with Photo-voltaic panels would create a Power Plant capable of supplying electricity for public lighting in the surrounding area. This could be a project with major implications and have the capacity for Auckland Council to gather more than one important design and ecology award.

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