
PETITION TO PEDESTRIANISE COURTENAY PLACE

Summary

Primary Petitioner: Sean Murrie
Total Signatures: 839 (as at 2pm 26 May 2020 – www.change.org)
Presented by: Sean Murrie

Recommendation

That the Strategy and Policy Committee:

1. Receive the information and thank the petitioner.

Background

1. Wellington City Council operates a system of e-petitions whereby people can conveniently and electronically petition the Council on matters related to Council business.
2. Sean Murrie, Director - The Malthouse, opened an ePetition via the Change.org website - https://www.change.org/p/wellington-city-council-pedestrianise-courtenay-place-in-wellington-to-help-local-businesses-survive-covid-19?recruiter=1088632407&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=share_petition&recruited_by_id=2fed4f80-941f-11ea-bddb-2dd18afb22d4&utm_content=fht-22118133-en-au%3Av12.
3. The e-petition details are as follows:
To highlight to Council, the strong support of both the local and wider communities to trial a collaborative approach to closing off (all or part) of Courtney Place and the timeliness of the opportunity given various initiatives and planning- Innovative Streets, Annual Planning and City recovery planning.
To investigate a move to close off (pilot a temporary closure of) Courtenay Place, within the next three months, to traffic and allow businesses to use the street for socially distanced and provide for better amenity for patrons.
4. The background information provided for the e-petition was:
To improve the vibrancy of the local area, support local businesses, enable an informal street activity/meeting place and improve the amenity value for pedestrians.
5. The Change.org link provided above also provides the following background information and details:

Pedestrianise Courtenay Place in Wellington to Help Local Businesses Survive Covid-19

Covid-19 has had an immeasurable impact on the hospitality businesses in Wellington being unable to operate for so long during the lockdown. Many of these, especially the smaller venues located in the city centre, will also be very limited for future trade with the social distancing requirements. At this stage it seems inevitable that large numbers of staff will lose their jobs, and businesses will close down.

Several city centres around the world including Milan, Italy and Vilnius, Lithuania have blocked cars and created pedestrian only zones to help with social distancing. These cities are allowing cafes, bars and restaurants to place tables outside in public spaces to enable them to operate within the social distancing requirements between patrons. While NZ has achieved great success in fighting the virus so far, there is no guarantee that we won't see a second wave of the pandemic, and face further restrictions.

We propose a move to close off Courtenay Place to traffic and allow businesses to use the street for socially distanced seating. Each cafe, restaurant or bar would provide their own seating, and monitor their patrons. This could be approached with a trial period beginning in the weekends, and if it proves successful then look at the possibility of extending it during the week, and creating more permanent structures. The street has been blocked off previously for large public events, with traffic and buses rerouted accordingly. There could also be further room for extra activity, for example food trucks, entertainers and stalls, if this was to become a permanent fixture.

We believe this is a great opportunity to revive what could be one of the best entertainment districts in New Zealand. It would create safe spaces that can be enjoyed by all ages during the day, with no traffic, more walking and cycling, and a much more diverse entertainment offering not solely focussed on late nights.

It is a novel time to trial such an opportunity, that could create very positive outcomes in terms of not only helping hospitality and other small businesses, but also help transform Courtenay Place into an area the city can be truly proud of.

6. As at the time of writing this report (26 May 2020), the Change.org e-petition was still open, with 839 signatories. Due to the nature of the Charge.org e-petition service it is not possible to authenticate the signatories both in terms of confirming individuals, nor place of residence.

Officers' response

7. Officer's recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee receive the information.
8. In considering the request outlined in the Change.org petition, officer's will prepare a future report that considers the proposal in light of a range of considerations, including but not limited to the following:
 - Alignment with the current LGWM Programme and improvements proposed for the broader Golden Mile corridor including Courtenay Place
 - Implications and alignment with the current COVID-19 response and Innovating Streets initiatives, including resourcing and capacity considerations
 - The outcomes and information gained from the temporary one-off closure of Courtenay Place during the weekend of Friday 23 June / Saturday 24 June at a cost of approximately \$30k

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- Information and comment from Greater Wellington Regional Council in regards to the implications for the public transport bus operations
 - A recognition that any intention to expand the footprint of a premises for the purposes of drinking alcohol can only be realised by submitting a formal application to change the conditions of an existing alcohol licence. Special licence applications are not deemed to be suitable for this purpose
 - An analysis of the pros and cons of longer term or permanent closure of Courtenay Place, including parking revenue and other operational issues
9. The report, scheduled for the end of June, will provide advice and recommendations on the above.

Attachments

Nil

Author	David Chick, Chief City Planner
Authoriser	David Chick, Chief City Planner

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Engagement and Consultation

Details of any engagement or consultation will be considered and outlined in the future report to be presented to the Committee.

Treaty of Waitangi considerations

Treaty of Waitangi considerations will be considered and outlined in the future report to be presented to the Committee.

Financial implications

At this stage, the cost of any long-term temporary or permanent closure of Courtenay Place is unknown. The financial implications, including capital and operational, will be considered and outlined in the future report to be presented to the Committee. This will also include, implications associated with the Greater Wellington Regional Council's operations of the bus service. By way of indication, the Friday 23 June / Saturday 24 June temporary one-off closure of Courtenay Place cost approximately \$30k.

Policy and legislative implications

The LGWM Recommended Programme of Investment, maintains the importance of Courtenay Place as a public transport corridor with greater emphasis on pedestrian amenity. Details of any additional and legislative implications will be considered and outlined in the future report to be presented to the Committee

Risks / legal

The risk and legal implications will be considered and outlined in the future report to be presented to the Committee.

Climate Change impact and considerations

The climate change implications will be considered and outlined in the future report to be presented to the Committee.

Communications Plan

The outcomes of this report will be communicated to the petitioner. Any additional requirements for a communications plan will be considered and outlined in the future report to be presented to the Committee.

Health and Safety Impact considered

The broader health and safety implications, including the response to COVID-19, will be considered and outlined in the future report to be presented to the Committee.