
Project title: Cable Car Precinct
Strategy area: Cultural Wellbeing

1. The Proposal

The area located at the top of the Cable Car is rich in historic buildings that could tell important stories about Wellington and New Zealand. While the viewing platform is constantly supplied with new visitors, few are drawn deeper into the wider area, and Wellington is missing the visitor industry opportunities that the wider site offers. The area is not a coherent package for the visitor.

Over the past year, a number of key stakeholders in the area at the top of the Cable Car – including representatives for the Cable Car Museum, Carter Observatory, Botanical Gardens, Skyline Restaurant and Cable Car – have begun working together to develop the concept of a precinct for the location. Council was instrumental to initiating this process. This has involved commissioning the Stafford Group and The Whiteboard to help develop the “story” for the “precinct”.

It is proposed to re-develop this area by upgrading the existing infrastructure and raising the standards of the physical environment, utilising the resources and assets that are on site now. This in part is to be achieved through landscaping, particularly creating stronger visual links between the various buildings and activities within the “precinct”. Stories of visitor interest for all the buildings and attractions within the area will be identified and told, being presented in an accessible, imaginative and cost effective way. This will help in maximising the cultural, social and public-good return of the assets through the recognition of their uniqueness, value and relevance to New Zealand’s and Wellington’s history.

There is a common theme of science in this area of the precinct; the observatories, the story of time in New Zealand, the weather and the proximity of the earthquake fault line are all stories that can be told here. It is proposed to recapture the Victorian theme of the buildings. Other than the Carter Observatory, the Cable Car Museum, the Wellington Cable Car Company and Skyline Restaurant, along with the anticipated landscaping, it is proposed to identify and communicate the following buildings/features as below:

The Thomas King Observatory – This observatory was constructed in 1912 and was operated by the Wellington Branch of the Royal Society. After the development of the Precinct is completed, the Observatory would still be managed by the Carter Observatory and would be a centre point of information, telling the stories of the science area of the Precinct including, *where’s my house, what grows in my garden, whose fault is it and why is it so windy here?* These stories and activities would be focused at educating children through interaction.

The Dominion Observatory – was originally operated by the Dominion Government and provided a national time service. It was home to New Zealand's first Government astronomer and was used for tidal, astronomical and seismological research. This building tells the story of time in New Zealand and the Precinct group would like to communicate its history and significance to the general public.

The MetService Instrument enclosure – has been providing readings since 1927 and is now the most valuable to climatologists due to consistent recordings over time. The small octagonal building was first set true north and was used as a compass for readings from the roof. The Precinct Group would like to see this area restored to its historic integrity and interpretation panels erected in a viewing platform to relate to the site's significance and activity.

The Garden Battery Ammunition Store – built in the 1890's to repel anticipated Russian attack. It was part of an extensive system of on-shore defences for the city and harbour. The Precinct Group would like to see this interesting space developed to tell the stories of the city's coastal defences and home guard.

Sculpture - building upon the Victorian theme it is proposed to incorporate a sculpture in the overall design of the area. The approach to science instrumentation in Victorian times gave us beautiful instruments crafted in brass and where art and science merged as superb craftsmanship gave rise to accuracy and scientific readings and instruments. This relationship between art and science could form the basis of a sculpture.

The proposal will involve working closely together with the MetService and the Department of Conservation in developing the above as they are the majority landowner and also in identifying the various roles that each entity will play in developing this area and raising its historical significance.

The site development would also need to be supported by an increased standard of visitor services i.e. parking and toilets.

It is proposed to undertake the above over a period of three years starting implementation in late 06/07.

2. Strategic Fit

The Precinct Group's vision reflects the values and aspirations encapsulated within the City Council's recently reviewed strategic direction, particularly in the areas of Urban Development, Economic Development, Transport and Cultural Well Being. The proposal also aligns with the 2006-09 priorities particularly aiding in strengthening and further developing the city's status as a centre of creativity and innovation and allows Council to take a proactive role in protecting our local sense of place.

The "precinct" will contribute to both the quality and variety of the experience of living in the city, becoming a unique space in Wellington and in New Zealand. The Precinct has the only cable car in the country, the National Observatory, the Dominion Observatory and the Cable Car Museum. The plans for the Precinct are designed to make visiting the site truly memorable with the stories to be told on site affirming Wellington as the capital city and building upon its sense of place.

The finished precinct will be a defining area for Wellington locals as well as a visitor destination, helping in the recognition of New Zealand and Wellington's history and creating stronger visual links to the heritage listed buildings and areas. The development will enhance the heritage values that the site and its buildings hold, creating a better quality interface between public space and private buildings.

The Cable Car Precinct's location makes it one of the closest tourist and visitor attractions to the CBD and is convenient to visitors with limited time available. The proposal will "capture the audience" that currently ride the cable car, drawing them deeper into the wider area. While it will not have the impact of a major "bringer" attraction it will be leveraging a second tier attraction (Carter Observatory) which is consistent with the objectives of Positively Wellington Tourism.

Through the partnership with the Cable Car Precinct Group and other stakeholders i.e. Department of Conservation, Met Service and Friends of the Town Belt, the Council will be able to play a key role in managing directing and shaping the urban development of this public space.

3. Relationship to Existing Activities

All of the attractions and sites are already in place. This initiative proposes linking them together more coherently into a precinct with enhanced visitor appeal.

Four organisations within the "Cable Car Precinct" have projects recently completed or are in the planning stages, turning their operations into more customer-friendly attractions. These projects include:

- The Skyline Restaurant has recently re-modelled its interior layout to enable social functions, formal occasions and weddings to proceed in spaces separated from the restaurant area. They also recognise that there is a need for a city type destination café with a different style of operation than the cafeteria confectionary bar they operate at present.
- The Cable Car Museum is so popular that it has been extended to house an additional newly refurbished historic cable car as part of the museum collection. The new extension also enables the museum to increase its retail operation.
- Wellington Cable Car Limited (WCCL) has engaged a Wellington firm of architects to devise a scheme plan for an upgrade of the Lambton Terminal. This includes new ticketing systems, interior finishes, replacement of the existing balustrades, new floor surfaces and facilities for audio-visual presentations.
- The Carter Observatory has engaged consultants to help in developing a proposal to revamp its interior layout and visitor products including extending retailing and a high quality planetarium show.

Carter Observatory, WCCL and the Cable Car Museum projects have a combined value of approximately five to seven million dollars.

While the proposal and other initiatives/projects within the area will complement each other, the Cable Car Precinct project can stand alone in its own right. One of the

objectives of the proposal is to draw visitors into the wider area, tapping into the two to three hundred thousand local, domestic and international visitors who visit the look-out and ride the cable car each year. The objectives of the “Cable Car Precinct Group” could still be achieved if the other developments were delayed in their timing or were not to proceed.

4. Proposal Costs

It is expected that a range of small capex projects will be phased over a three year period. The below table identifies high level costs in regard to amount and timing. Over the following months further work will be undertaken on the proposed project details and costings and the projected costs below can be refined. To fit with other activities within the area e.g. Carter Observatory, the timing of the below costs may need to be adjusted i.e. earlier or later.

Due to the project being in its initial phases, it is anticipated that the project will not be at a stage to draw down on the funds until late 06/07 at the earliest.

<i>Outline project costs per year</i>									
Project Component	Capital expenses \$000								
	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	13/14
	\$100	\$400	\$400						
<i>Total</i>	\$100	\$400	\$400						

5. Project Outline

The project is at its initial phases. It is proposed to develop the concept further over the following months to a business case. This will also involve defining and refining the outputs of the core planning processes of the project. Although stakeholders have been consulted throughout the development of the concept story, further consultation needs to be undertaken. Objectives have been proposed by the Cable Car Precinct Group, however these have yet to be formally discussed with other stakeholders in the proposed project. Stakeholders are both internal and external to Council.

It is important to start these processes now so that the redevelopment of the area occurs around the time of the completion of the other projects/developments in the area e.g. the Carter Observatory development. This will allow the various projects in the vicinity to reach their full potential and complement each other.

6. Conclusion

The plans for the Cable Car Precinct will, using existing assets and infrastructure on site, create a tourist attraction that is coherent, interesting and relevant to Wellington. The proposal will greatly enhance the quality of the visitor experience allowing the area to reach its full potential as a major Wellington asset. The initiative has potential beyond its expenditure. Further work should be undertaken on the proposal to allow implementation to begin late in the 2006/07 financial year.