

Future Ponsonby is a new strategic plan to guide Ponsonby Business Association over the next five years. The strategy has been developed through a data-driven approach and engagement with our members and wider community to identify drivers of change and priorities for the future.

We have had a very high level of engagement through our community campaign, receiving over 550 responses to our online survey that was open to all, and we also obtained deeper-dive perspectives through one-on-one interviews with a diverse range of Ponsonby stakeholders.

This revealed three key qualities about what makes Ponsonby special and loved: a strong sense of belonging to a vibrant and walkable urban village; a strong sense of place that is highly memorable for its character; and an authentic, quirky and entrepreneurial spirit that stems from our many successful and innovative businesses that underpin the dynamic and creative vibe.

Acknowledging that there is always a diversity of perspectives, three key concerns for the future have also emerged. Foremost among these was a strong sense that the busy road is still not working well for everyone. Secondly, there are concerns that Ponsonby risks becoming less

local and distinctive, and more bland and generic over time. There are also concerns around how current social challenges are influencing the life of the street and how this impacts people and businesses.

These insights have told us what is important to our members and the wider Ponsonby community, and directly informed the development of the strategy.

The Future Ponsonby Strategy sets out a direction around four core pillars. These pillars are Vibrant Built Environment; Authenticity, Experience and Identity; The Bigger Forces of Change and Caring for Our Place. The four areas are closely interrelated and collectively provide a strong focus on people's experiences and perceptions of place as the things that matter most to Ponsonby's future.

The new strategy will be a key guiding document for Ponsonby Business Association. The strategy has formed the basis for a new business plan identifying priority actions for the 2024-2026 period, and can inform our positioning and responses on a wide range of issues that will influence the future of Ponsonby over the next five years and beyond.



Data Baseline Highlights



Over 13,500 jobs and 18,000 residents in the immediate Ponsonby area (2018 census), with a very high proportion of people who both live and work locally.



The new City Rail Link Karanga-a-Hape Station, Great North Road upgrade and Leys Library restoration are key influences on Ponsonby in the next 5 years.



Urban intensification within the southwestern part of Ponsonby and Great North Road will continue in the next 10 years, with over 150 new homes delivered in 2024 alone. The Pompallier on Ponsonby development represents a counter-pull to the north.



The new community space at 254 Ponsonby Road will open in May 2025, and present new opportunities for activation and events.



Ponsonby has very high rates of walking, but low rates of cycling while being surrounded by a growing network of cycleways. Public transport use is growing and there are plans to increase frequency and improve services by 2030. Traffic volumes are around 20% below their pre-COVID peak.



Case study projects and initiatives, particulary from Australia, have been identified as informants to the strategic direction.



What makes Ponsonby special & loved?



A Sense of Belonging to a lively, walkable urban neighbourhood.

We enjoy living and working locally, in a casual, comfortable urban neighbourhood, that is also appealing to visitors. Many commented on how being able to walk everywhere strengthens the community vibe: bumping into people whilst shopping and eating locally.

The food culture is why many spend time in Ponsonby. Residents love that they have this variety on their doorstep, and that their neighbourhood is a gathering place for all Aucklanders and visitors from afar.



A Sense of Place, due to its memorable and eclectic buildings.

Ponsonby boasts great heritage structures and well-preserved facades, contributing to its historical charm and appeal. Alongside the heritage, there is also eclectic, characterful and high quality contemporary architecture that speaks to a creative and progressive present and future.

It is also recognised that there are distinct and memorable buildings within each area along the road, and in specific side streets, which make Ponsonby more interesting. Together the heritage, the new buildings and the distinct sub-areas contribute to Ponsonby being an exciting place for residents and visitors.



Authentic Quirkiness and Entrepreneurial Spirit.

The presence of successful, creative entrepreneurs underpins the dynamic and creative vibe. In particular, many retail shops and hospitality businesses have carefully crafted authentic, coherent experiences that attract both locals and visitors.

Our business owners have a strong sense of how they curate the customer experience -leading rather than reacting to their customer's needs. These business owners note that they feel a real sense of community with their peers and their customers, relationships that have developed over decades and underpin their commitment to the area.

What are people concerned about?



The road is not working well for everyone.

Having a walkable, vibrant street is key to maintaining local vibrancy. While there have been some changes that have improved things over time, the busy road continues to trigger concerns about safety due to high traffic volumes, speeds, and kerbside coming and going. These qualities were identified as discouraging people from crossing and remain a barrier for the local community. There were concerns that footpaths were poorly maintained and cleanliness is sometimes an issue.

The lack of safe provision for cycling along Ponsonby Road was also cited frequently as a concern.

The the most significant and frequent concern is that the busy road has a disproportionate impact on everyone who could not or preferred not to drive but came to spend money in Ponsonby. There was a minority who commented that they found parking difficult and were frustrated by roading changes in both Ponsonby and in wider Auckland more generally.

Overall, competition for street space was identified and there was a sense movement through is still being prioritised over access to, Ponsonby. Most people want to see more emphasis on place functions over through traffic, while recognising Ponsonby Road plays an important role in accessing residential neighbourhoods to either side of the ridge. The sense Ponsonby was getting less transport and streetscape investment than neighbouring areas was sometimes identified. Some respondents called for street change while others expressed fear and concerns about disruption and the potential to destroy what makes Ponsonby special and loved.



Becoming less local & distinctive, and more bland & generic.

There was a fear that the physical environment was shifting towards a generic mall-like environment, which is perceived as bland, basic, and overly commercialised. Bland retail options for example, are seen to displace or replace customers with those who would be as happy in other parts of the city, and not sustain what was available to local residents. But there's also a concern about the heavy reliance on retail and hospitality for street life, where these sectors are so vulnerable to wider economic forces. There was a desire for fewer decisions to be driven solely by consumerism and commercial interests, and more focus on authentic expression of community values and cultural heritage, including our LGBTQIA+, Māori and Polynesian communities as well as the creative values and community spirit underpinning many independent businesses. Alongside concerns for the social and physical fabric, there was recognition that recent commercialisation of retail and events, such as market days and the Pride Parade, have not been successful - and a desire to focus on more creative-led activations and supporting grassroots activities.



Responding to challenges in the social life of the street.

Many people understand that Auckland includes people facing acute social challenges such as mental ill-health and homelessness. However, some people felt uncomfortable and unconfident dealing with people behaving differently to themselves on the street. Some described how this was limiting their use of public places or encouraging them to drive when they would otherwise walk.

There was a specific concern about how wider political and social forces play out in the social life of the street, impacting the appeal and viability of retail – potentially fuelling empty premises and reducing social cohesion.

It was noted by some that Ponsonby needed to respond to this - and be clear of its own vision of how to be inclusive and care better for all in its own community - from retailers and people in public places, to youth, Māori and Pasifika, and those experiencing mental ill health.

Engagement Summary A Sense of **Becoming less** Belonging to a local & distinctive, vibrant, walkable and more bland & urban village. generic. What What are makes Authentic, The road is not people Quirky, working well for Ponsonby Entrepreneurial everyone. concerned special & Spirit. about? loved? A Sense of Place, due to Responding to its memorable current challenges and character buildings FUTURE PONSONBY STRATEGY 2024 – 2028 | 8



Special & Loved

Sense of Belonging

Walkable

Exciting Food Culture

Sense of Place

Memorable & Character Buildings

Distinctive & Memorable Places

Authentic and Quirky

Entrepreneurial Spirit

Community with social values

Concerned About

Reducing social cohesion

Street not working for everyone

Reliance on hospitality

Losing our DNA

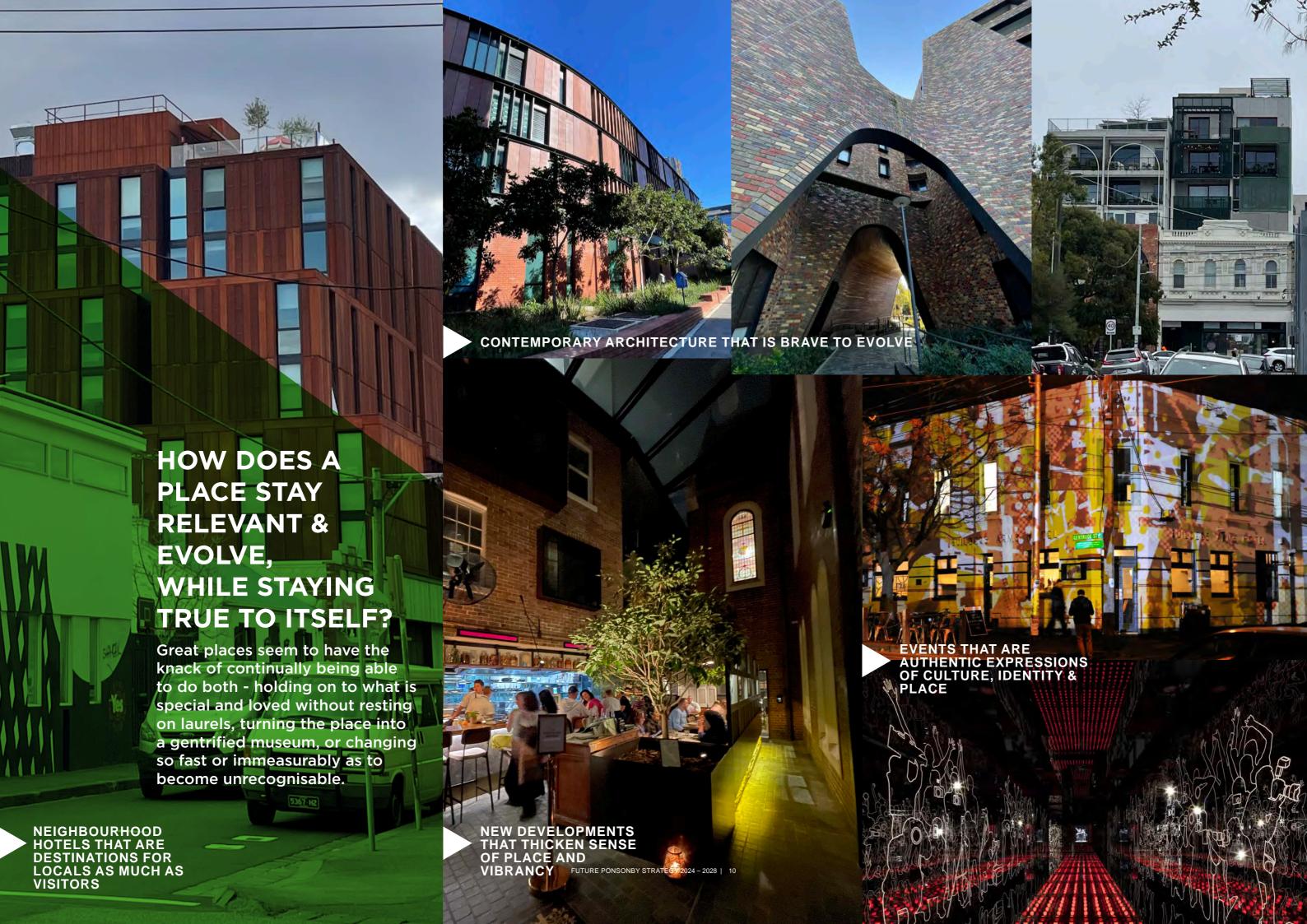
Cookie cutter buildings

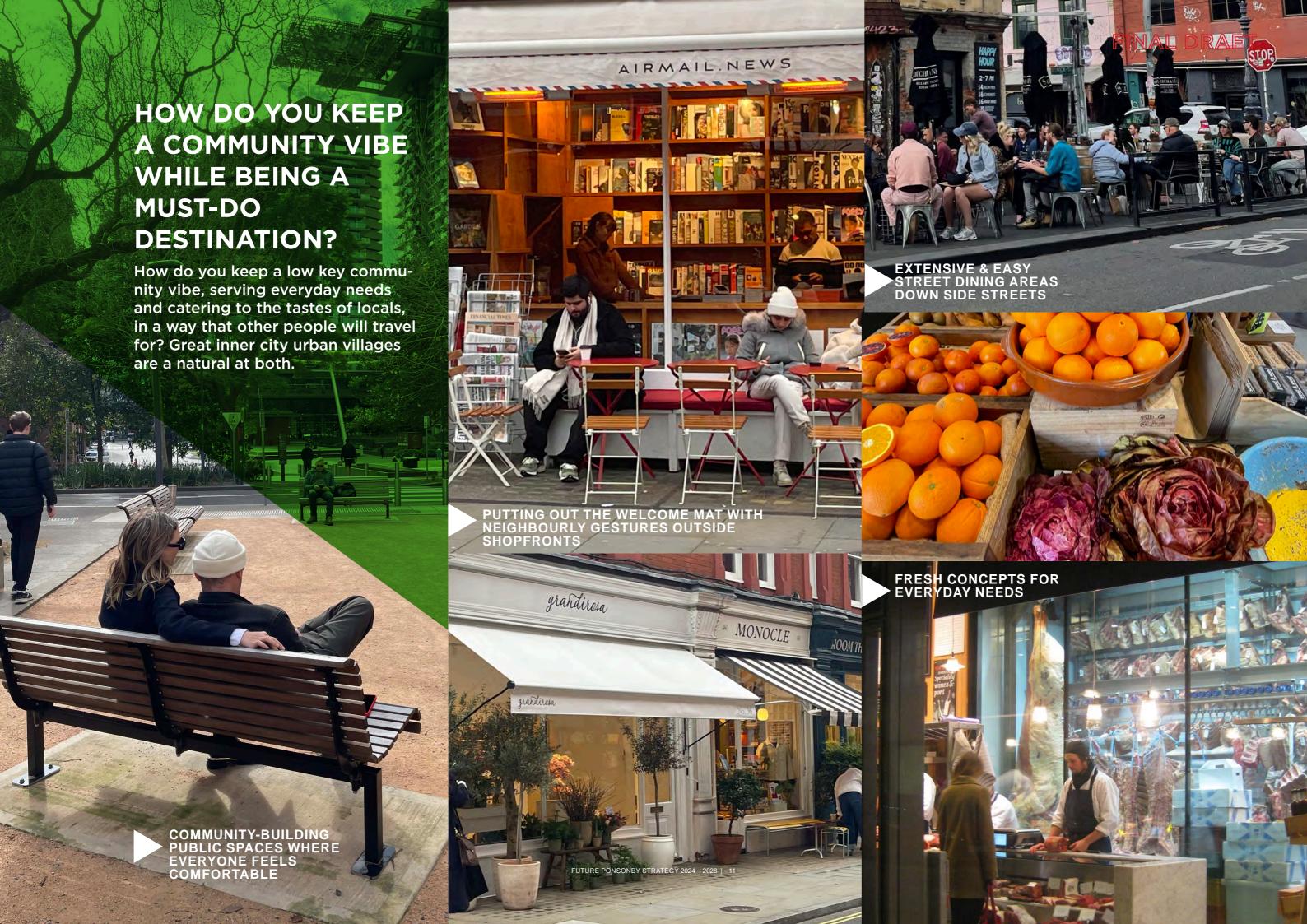
Homogenisation

Bland & Generic

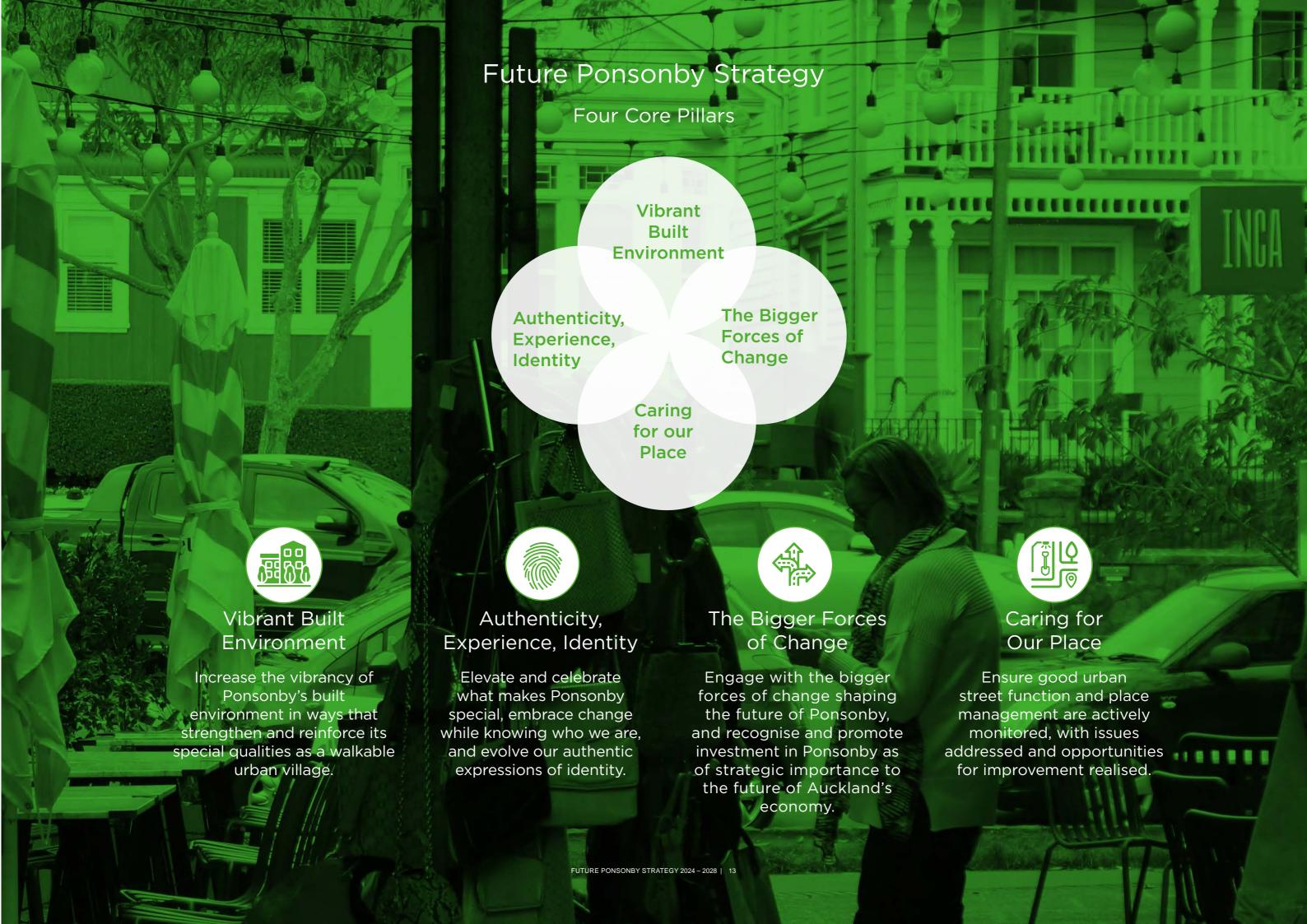
Corporates

Commercial strip and destination









Vibrant Built Environment



Increase the vibrancy of Ponsonby's built environment in ways that strengthen and reinforce its special and loved qualities as a walkable urban village.

Buildings

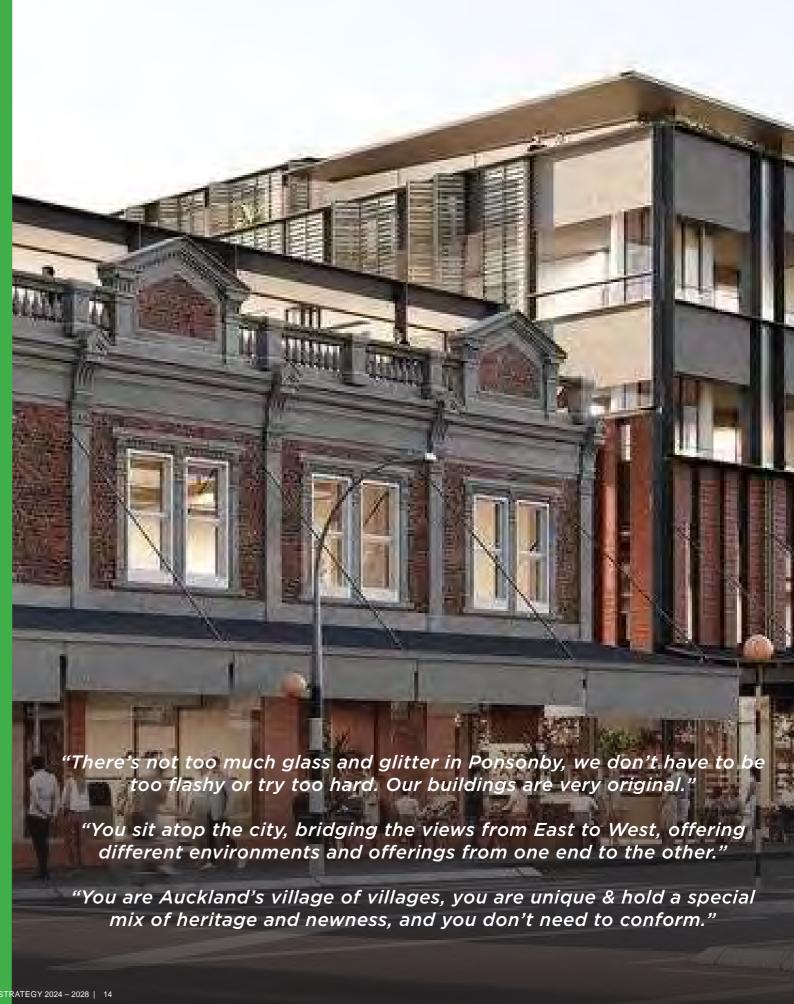
ensure we hold on to the memorable qualities that contribute to Ponsonby's strong sense of place. Ponsonby's architectural character is defined by its heritage, so new architecture will always maintain a dialogue between the old and the new.

Streets and Spaces

Ponsonby's street-life is its urban currency. Ponsonby's streets will prioritise being a destination to, versus just movement through, supporting places that are safe to and footpaths will support its community with respect.

Neighbourhood

Elevating the qualities that make Ponsonby a vibrant, walkable urban village, and strengthening connections with surrounding areas. Neighbouring areas contain a mix of intensifying, sometimes high growth mixed use areas, and stable, established residential streets with special character. Opportunities exist to improve the walkability to Ponsonby Road from nearby areas, including Great North Road and Karangahape Road, in ways that can leverage off the big investment in transport accessibility occurring on the southern fringe of Ponsonby from City Rail Link, Great North Road upgrade, and prospect of future Northwest Rapid Transit.





Buildings

- Buildings that add features and elements at the shopfront and street frontage to create a welcome mat that encourages and supports high levels of interaction and engagement with people on the street, with designs and activations that consciously blur the boundaries rather than reinforce hard lines.
- New and redeveloped buildings that are brave and progressive, work well with the old and add to the character and memorability of Ponsonby.
- Old buildings that are brave to evolve while retaining their special character.
- > Buildings that maintain a considered eclecticism.
- Buildings that facilitate a mixture of uses and are readily adaptable.

Streets and Spaces

- Streets and spaces that strongly support safe pedestrian movement along and across the street.
- Streets and spaces that strongly support high quality, hospitable environments for outdoor dining.
- Streets and spaces that support a quality retail shopfront and street trading environment.
- New and enhanced public spaces that support social exchange, events, activation and programming and foster a shared sense of community.
- New and enhanced public spaces that strengthen sense of place and reflect Ponsonby's DNA through authentic expressions of culture, identity and place including for mana whenua, including opportunites to recognise and interpret heritage as identified in the Ponsonby Road Plan (2014).
- Further roll out of side street crossing improvements to extend the benefits of these further along both sides of Ponsonby Road over time.
- Grow the number of pocket parks and moments at street corners that offer respite, a place to pause and the bump space for social encounters.
- A programme of activation and events for the new public space at 254 Ponsonby Road that supports making this new space a community success that contributes positively to the vibrancy, sense of place and belonging.
- Understanding the street edge of Western Park as part of Ponsonby Road, and explore with Council and the Local Board opportunities for improvements to this part of the park over time, as well as the potential for activation and programming, that support the life of the street.

Wider Connections

- Support the continued "thickening" of distinct sub-places and precincts emerging in the side and back streets to parts of Ponsonby Road, with opportunities for public and private investment.
- Valuing new apartment buildings and commercial workspaces along and just back from Ponsonby Road and in the wider neighbourhoods as adding to the vibrancy and increasing the critical mass of the local walk-up community accessing Ponsonby Road.
- Potential laneways, parklets, pocket spaces, street corner and other walkability and public space 'stepping stone' improvements in the southwestern area between Great North Road and Williamson Road through to Richmond Road to promote walking through to Ponsonby Road from these nearby high growth areas.
- Walkability and public space improvements to 3 Lamps as Ponsonby's northern community hub with enhanced connections through to St Mary's Bay and Herne Bay.
- Support greenways and other community connecting initiatives such as LAMP being proposed by Auckland Transport and the Local Board to develop in ways that strongly link mixed use and residential side streets and connector roads with Ponsonby Road to enhance walkability for locals in ways that incorporate design cues that reflect Ponsonby's DNA and sense of place.
- Improve active mode connections with the future Beresford Square entrance to Karanga-a-Hape CRL Station 600m to the southeast of Ponsonby Road, via Hopetoun Street and Western Park, as well as wayfinding improvements to between both station entrances and Ponsonby Road.

Authenticity, Experience, Identity



Elevate and celebrate what makes Ponsonby special, embrace change while knowing who we are, and evolve our authentic expressions of identity.

An ever-evolving offering that is fit for the future

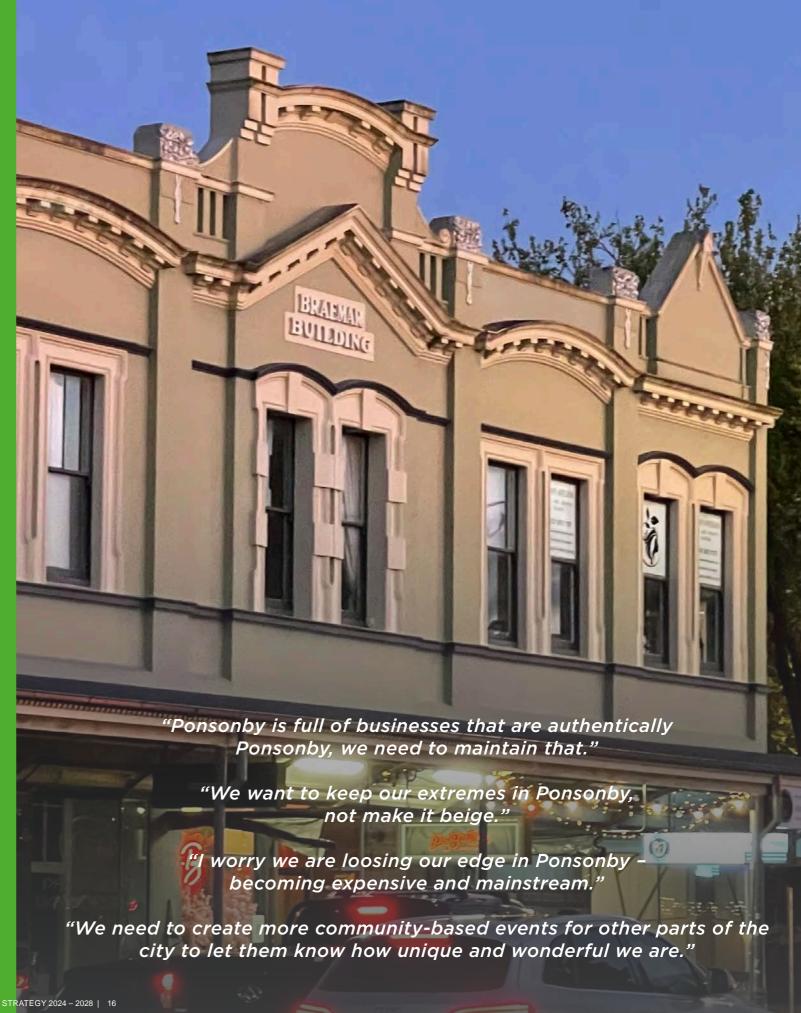
Recognising that renewal creates relevance to a new generation, and that Ponsonby cannot afford to rest on its laurels. Embrace new entrants and new ideas and be progressive and courageous in working to ensure Ponsonby continues to present an ever-evolving, diversified offering different to elsewhere that strongly supports local life. Stay forward thinking, leading edge and at the forefront of social and lifestyle change in Auckland and Aotearoa. Leverage off Ponsonby's strengths to foster new opportunities based around authentic experiences of place and community that resonate with locals and strengthen Ponsonby as an urban village destination.

Keeping the community vibe

Ponsonby has a proud history of being a diverse and inclusive community. Ponsonby's built environment and businesses will always offer an urban and social platform and forum for exchange that facilitates tolerance and expression and is accepting and welcoming of the urban change that brings.

Articulate our DNA

Look to evolve brand positioning, identity and digital presence in ways that strengthen authentic expression of local place and community, reflect what is special and loved, and resonate with what customers are looking for, whether they be local or from afar.





An ever-evolving offering that is fit for the future

- Embrace new entrants and new ideas as central to the renewal needed to stay relevant for new generations, and ensuring they can have a voice for the future
- Work with building owners and businesses to continue to evolve and grow the brand offering and tenant mix in ways that amplify the independent, entrepreneurial, curated and community experiences people come to Ponsonby for
- Support new activities that diversify and grow the offering beyond retail and hospitality, in ways that complement what is already there and offer up new experiences for locals and visitors to experience Ponsonby that feel authentic, distinctive and in tune with the community
- Value the life admin and everyday needs roles of Ponsonby Road for locals and promote opportunities for new offerings that support local life, such as new fresh food and market concepts ("the butcher, baker and candlestick makers")
- > Ensure that Ponsonby continues to invite opportunities and provide space for new entrants and new ideas, incubate innovations and embrace new concepts, to maintain its market-leading, entrepreneurial edge and be at the forefront of social and lifestyle change
- Explore opportunities to evolve retail opening hours to be more in tune with changing lifestyles and align more closely with those of hospitality businesses

Keeping the Community Vibe

- Streets and spaces that are accessible, inclusive and welcoming to all in ways that strengthen a sense of belonging
- Streets and spaces that feel comfortable for individuals and groups and facilitate spontaneous expression, inhabitation and social interaction
- New urban developments that engage with the community emphasis and vibe of Ponsonby
- Value, encourage and support businesses that choose to enhance the community vibe on the street, through community-building gestures such as bench seating, planting and dog bowls
- Recognise and promote the value of shopkeepers and front of house staff as street custodians with eyes and insights in tune with the life of the street and how this change over time
- Foster a stronger sense of shopkeeps as being team players with a shared sense of collective responsibility for maintaining the life of the street and community vibe
- Evolve events programming over time, to put greater emphasis on authentic, local experiences that celebrate the Ponsonby community and benefit local businesses

Articulate our DNA

- Social media campaign highlighting the people that make Ponsonby special and loved
- Undertake further work to develop a new way of articulating and expressing the unique DNA of Ponsonby, to better inform future activities and initiatives, including branding.

The Bigger Forces Of Change



Engage with, influence and harness the bigger forces of change shaping the future of Ponsonby, and recognise and promote investment in Ponsonby.

Engage with global trends

Engage with global trends the future of bricks and mortar retail, the experience economy and how this is influencing changes in urban places. Consider and where appropriate, take action and advocate for ways through which this may influence planning, placemaking and place management that influences the future of Ponsonby.

Leverage transport & land use change to the south

Recognise that there is opportunity for Ponsonby in the high levels of transport investment and urban development occurring in the areas to the immediate south of Ponsonby, along the ridgetop routes of Great North Road and Karangahape Road. New and improved infrastructure and public transport services are being established, and the trend of incremental intensification of urban development along and to either side of these corridors is anticipated to accelerate and become more accentuated over the next 5 -10 years particularly in response to City Rail Link coming on-stream. These areas, including the train station, are readily within the walkable and bikeable catchment of the southern part of Ponsonby, which present opportunities for Ponsonby is connectivity barriers are addressed.

Stronger Together

Recognising that Ponsonby is closely connected with the city centre and with neighbouring city fringe areas including Karangahape, Eden Terrace, Newmarket, and Parnell. Understanding Ponsonby as an integral part of a wider central city economy with the city centre at its heart. Breaking down artificial boundaries and barriers between these areas and always upholding ways to be stronger together that over.





Engage global trends

- Engage global retail, hospitality, and urban place trends around, for example, around the experience economy, place economy, adaptive re-use, and the interrelationship between the digital world and the physical built environment of bricks and mortar, to support the ongoing evoluation and renewal of Ponsonby.
- Consider and identify where understanding of these trends can assist Ponsonby in continuing to evolve in ways that set itself apart from other retail, hospitality and urban place experiences in Auckland and New Zealand (the ever-evolving offer).

Leverage transport & land use change to the south of Ponsonby

- Work with City Rail Link Limited and Auckland Transport around physical wayfinding and signage, as well as communications and marketing initiatives, that help cement in Aucklanders minds the proximity of Karanga-a-Hape Station to Ponsonby, and the ability for the new station to open up new ways of accessing Ponsonby, ahead of, and during the opening period where new perceptions and travel habits will be formed.
- Improve active mode connections with the future Beresford Square entrance to Karanga-a-Hape CRL Station 600m to the southeast of Ponsonby Road, via Hopetoun Street and Western Park.
- > Push for planned improvements sooner to Inner Link operations that improve access for Ponsonby, and engage with Auckland Transport on the potential to refresh the Inner Link service and place -based branding to coincide with CRL opening, to promote an enhanced route as a way of connecting Ponsonby with other nearby destinations including the nearby train stations at Karanga-a-Hape and Waihorotiu.
- Potential walkability and public space 'stepping stone' improvements in the southwestern area between Great North Road and Williamson Road through to Richmond Road to promote walking through to Ponsonby Road from these nearby high growth areas.
- Seek intersection improvements at and around the junction with Great North Road and Karangahape Road, and across Newton Bridge, to improve safety and connectivity for active modes, in anticipation of the increased footfall through this area from CRL and bus services as well as urban development responding to the transport accessibility uplift.
- > Stay involved in further developments of any Northwest Rapid Transit project, to seek opportunities for enhanced public transport access to Ponsonby, and understand how this project will influence the area.

Stronger Together

- Reinforcing and promoting the close physical and cultural ties between the twin ridgetop routes of Ponsonby Road and Karangahape Road and the ways in which these areas can come closer together in future (e.g. Art Late).
- Working closely with neighbouring business associations, and local and central government agencies, in areas of common interest, such as safety and security, supporting the nighttime and visitor economy, events, marketing, and publicity.
- Promoting the value and contribution of Ponsonby and the wider city fringe area to the urban economy of Auckland and New Zealand and making the case for greater public investment.
- Advocating for more integrated planning and policy development across this expanded central city area, working across the often invisible or arbitrary boundaries or distinctions between BID areas, spatial and land use planning, policy and funding mechanisms that result in different implications for different places.
- Advocating for a different approach to strategic and statutory planning for the future of Ponsonby and the city fringe in plans by Auckland Council and the Local Board, especially the next generation Auckland Plan and Auckland Unitary Plan, that better recognise the importance of Ponsonby as an important central city place and destination and top tier retail and hospitality destination.

Caring For Our Place



Ensure good urban street function and place management are actively monitored, with issues addressed and opportunities for improvement realised.

Maintenance

Ensuring essential maintenance and upkeep of streets is occurring, and occurring in a timely way that minimises disruption for business and the community.

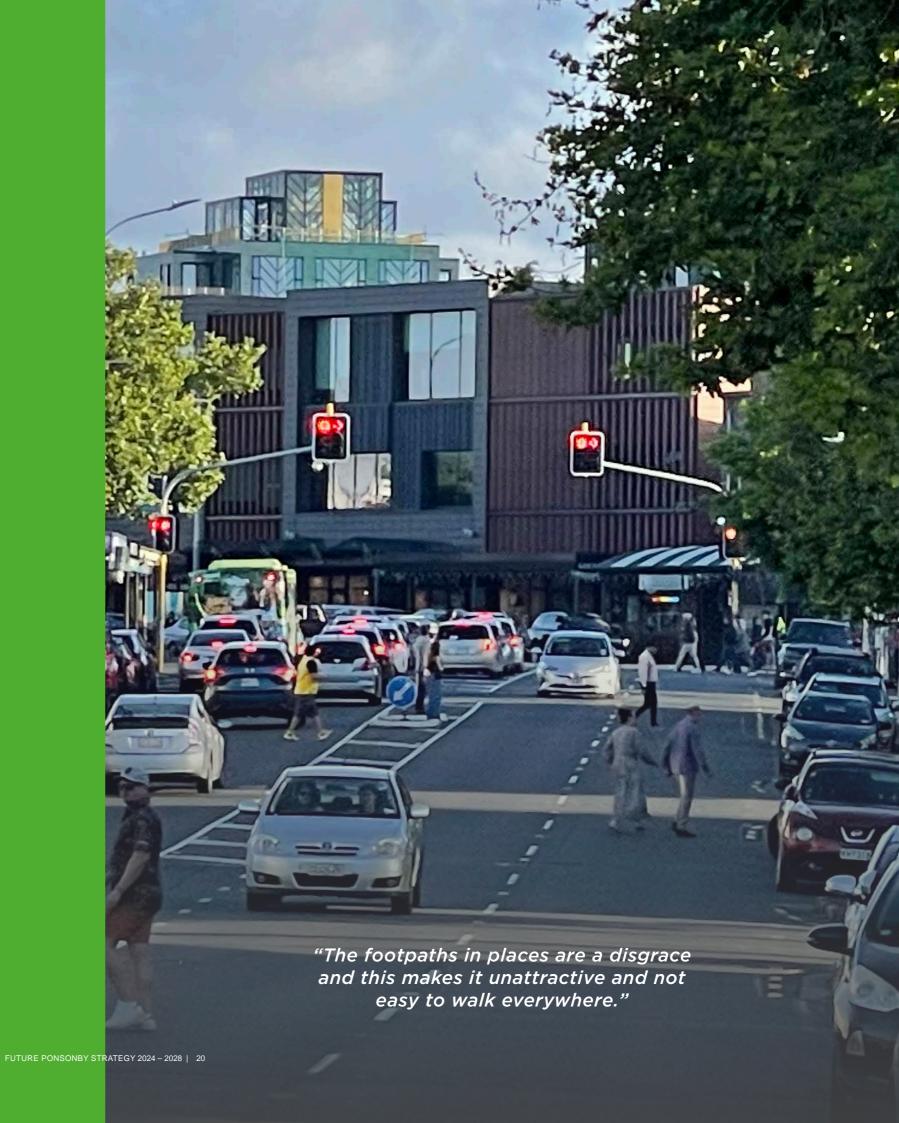
Safety and security

Reducing crime, improving safety and security, and increasing positive perceptions.

Street operations

Improving street operations, in response to identified issues, to better support the place functions of Ponsonby Road.

Maintaining close and ongoing connections, monitoring and reporting between the business association, Auckland Transport and local board to review and respond to matters in a co-ordinated way.





Maintenance

- Ensure that current cleaning service levels in place for the public realm are maintained and improved where necessary.
- Improve the upkeep of footpaths, and consider a potential programme of renewals, in recognition of the variable condition, and lack of funding for a more comprehensive upgrade in the next decade or longer.
- Improve the response times for responding to damaged assets in the public realm, with replacements matched to the level of capital investment and recognising the high place value value and importance of Ponsonby in the wider city.

Safety and security

- Continue current rollout of CCTV and continue to monitor their operation as part of 'Back-of-House' operations to support safety and security.
- Work with Boffa Miskell to undertake a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design ("CPTED") assessment of Ponsonby that identifies safety issues that relate to how the built environment is designed and managed, and recommendations for improvement.
- Promote urban design and property developments that support safety to the urban space around them.
- Work with the Police, Māori Wardens, and central and local government agencies on other ongoing and future initiatives to improve safety and security.

Street operations

Improving street operations, in response to identified issues, to better support the place functions of Ponsonby, around such matters as access and parking, loading zones, rideshare and taxis, hire scooters, and temporary traffic management for construction and events

