

Heart of Wanaka is a community led group that formed in 2021 to address the lack of a coherent masterplan for the Wanaka Town Centre. Through the dedicated work of local volunteers and the generous support of Reset Urban Design we created a strategic vision for the town centre that reflected our communities values and vision for the future.

We would like to thank and acknowledge Reset Urban Design, Wanaka Architects Group and Wai Wanaka for their input and help with informing this submission.

Heart of Wanaka support the principles of Urban Intensification in relation to the Town Centre. We recognise the benefit of reducing urban sprawl to protect our outstanding landscapes and the improved efficiency of infrastructure that can result which will mitigate the ever rising pressure of rates. We also recognise the benefit to business of increased activity in and around the town centre.

Along with the benefits however we recognise there are some crucial risks that need to be addressed. With increased intensity, comes an increased risk of undesirable outcomes.

We note that the Arrowtown Community and Business Association questioned using the Town Centre guidelines there, as they were 8 years out of date. The Wanaka Town Centre Guidelines are 14 years out of date. There is an urgent need to refresh these before larger scale buildings are allowed in the town centre.

The current proposed district plan and the urban intensification plan both refer to the Wanaka Town Centre Guidelines. While there are a number of ideas and themes that have remained relevant, Heart of Wanaka consider this plan to be significantly out of date. The Town Centre Guidelines state they should be refreshed every 5 years. We would like to see a refresh of this plan alongside the re invigoration of the Urban Design Panel. The increase in build heights is a potential challenge to the amenity value and character of our town centre as outlined in the district plan and so this action would address many locals concerns about the impact of intensification.

We have spoken with the Wanaka Architects Group and they are enthusiastic about engaging with council to support this work. Some of the group were involved with the development of the original guidelines and so bring in depth local knowledge as well as nationally recognised skills in this area. Their insight and support for council planners and developers will improve architectural and amenity outcomes in line with the Heart of Wanaka principle of Built Form and Infrastructure.

The Town Centre Guidelines state that 'The Wanaka Urban Design Panel undertakes design reviews on behalf of Council for significant public and private development proposals in Wanaka, with particular emphasis on the town centre.' There have been very successful outcomes in the past where advice has supported the consent process and created improved outcomes for developer, council, and community.

HoW also note that Urban Intensification in and around the town centre will bring traffic considerations. While residential intensification around the town centre will enable more pedestrian access to the town centre, the overall increase in business activity will also require more infrastructure for vehicle and public transport. The Parking Management Strategy is a vital enabler of good planning in this area and this piece of work needs to be completed as soon as possible. We note the original Parking Strategy states that 'providing more carparking does not align with our vision for the district'. This is clearly unworkable in an intensified urban centre. As a remote, rural, visitor dependant town, a good parking plan is critical to the success of our town centre. We are also aware of other groups who want to progress their own parking plans and so would urge council to progress this work as soon as possible. A well structured and organised parking management plan is vital to support the intended outcomes of the urban intensification plan. The heart of wanaka plan also addresses this from a high level view and proposes ideas such as all day parking for town centre workers along hedditch st. Ideas such as this will significantly improve the accessibility and function of the town centre.

Our written submission also encouraged the consideration and adoption of a good lighting plan to ensure the increased activity in the town centre does not lead to increased anti social behaviour. Through our engagement with local police we have a clear idea of the importance of this. Local police communicated the effect on the Queentown Town Centre when the Luma exhibition came into town. Business owners and police noted a reduction in antisocial behaviour, increased access by local families, and increased business where the light installations improved the amenity of town centre laneways and streets.

HoW have also worked with Wai Wanaka to consider the increased pressure any urban intensification will place on the environment around the Town Centre. We know that Lake Wanaka and Roys Bay are currently already experiencing degradation in water quality. These are very large ecosystems with considerable system inertia. Proper thought needs to be given to how we manage street runoff, flood threats, and other threats to the quality of our water that increased activity in this area may bring.

We urge council to formalise a Water Sensitive Urban Design approach as a part of the Town Centre Guidelines. This approach has been successfully implemented in the Kirimoko development. Items such as a reduction in impervious surfaces and urban canopy trees to improve filtration of water will help maintain the natural drainage hydrology of the catchment, with particular care being taken around the affects on Bullock Creek. These approaches should align with the ORC Land and Water Plan. The potential for the Urban Design Panel to support these approaches and to also encourage green building systems such as green and/or blue rooves can improve environmental outcomes, and most importantly sustain and regenerate this vitally important environment for our community.

In summary, Heart of Wanaka ask that, The Town Centre Guidelines are refreshed and the Urban Design Panel re formed, with urgency. We ask that the Parking Management Strategy is accelerated and brought into alignment with any urban intensification in the town centre and surrounds. We ask that potential environmental impacts such as street runoff is managed better in alignment with the Ecology principle in the Heart of Wanaka plan and Wai Wanaka's knowledge. We also ask that council directly work with Heart of Wanaka to ensure our community values and amenity of the town centre are respected and preserved.