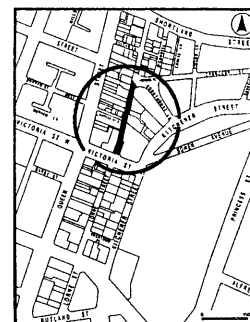


(3) **High Street - Victoria Street East to Freyberg Place**

The entrance to High Street is marked by the Southern Cross Building Society and Council's Victoria Street Carpark, both of which rise directly from street level. Verandahs and colonnades along the High Street edges of these significant masses of building help to achieve a transition to a pedestrian scale at ground level.

The extension to Council's Victoria Street Carpark exit provides extra footpath width under the projecting building above. However, the sense of containment which might have been achieved in this arcade has been dissipated by a bland, unmodulated line of shopfronts, and particularly by the intrusive downward-pointing coffered ceiling lights.



... Verandahs and colonnades ... help to achieve a transition to a pedestrian scale at ground level ...

Closer to Freyberg Place, the variety of small interesting shops which characterise High Street becomes obvious. These shops extend down Durham Street East which has a very enclosed but slightly mysterious "alley" feel, encouraging further pedestrian exploration and presenting excellent opportunities for the intended development of a greater profusion of smaller shops and/or food stalls.





..Durham Street East which has a very enclosed but slightly mysterious "alley" feel ..

Freyberg Place enlivens the enclosed intimate character of High Street with a sudden burst of sunshine and greenery. This is potentially one of the most successful urban spaces in the city, providing opportunities to observe activity from street level, or from higher levels, such as Rakino's Cafe on the first floor of no 35 High Street or the higher ground behind the Freyberg statue previously occupied by The Palms restaurant.



.. Freyberg Place enlivens the enclosed intimate character of High Street with a sudden burst of sunshine and greenery ...



The Palms Restaurant itself occupied a marvellous vantage point on the former District Court site overlooking High Street, being accessed via the stone steps of the former Wesleyan Chapel. There is the opportunity to capitalise on this change of level for a similar use when the site is eventually developed.

The currently 'on-hold' NZI development on the corner of Chancery Street and Courthouse Lane has left a gaping hole in the precinct, and the sense of enclosure that Freyberg Place and the surrounding streets enjoyed has largely been lost. Despite this the amenities of sun, shelter, and open space can still be enjoyed. Any future development in this area needs to complement and contain the space of Freyberg Place, rather than to attempt an extension of the space.

Particular planning controls exist to protect sunlight admission to Freyberg Place, and to protect the landscaped knoll so critical to the character of the area. These planning measures are essential to conserve the pedestrian amenity of the locality.

Freyberg Place lends itself naturally to becoming the open-space focus of the precinct.

(4) High Street - Freyberg Place to Shortland Street

This section has a fine-grained, close-knit character within the narrow street.

Small interesting shops and boutiques open off the pavement and extend into Vulcan Lane, inviting pedestrians to explore the length of the lane to reach either Queen Street or O'Connell Street.

The retail character of High Street currently gradually diminishes towards Shortland Street, with De Bretts Hotel and the current NZI building on the High/Shortland Street corner.

The latter building (formerly South British Insurance) has an introverted ground-level architectural character. There are large windows on the street but curtains cover these and interaction with street activity is not facilitated by what has become in effect a blank wall. De Bretts Hotel opposite formerly operated in a very similar way. The windows, though of reasonable size, were high up and filled with obscured glass: pedestrians were unable to see in, and users inside were unable to see out. Recently, however, the window openings have been deepened vertically and French windows installed. This small but significant change has greatly enlivened this end of High Street, and social interaction with the street is now facilitated, especially when the windows are open.





... Small interesting shops and boutiques open off the pavement ...



... The window openings have been deepened vertically and french windows installed ... and social action with the street is now facilitated...



(5) **O'Connell Street**

Like High Street, a narrow service lane was the genesis of O'Connell Street. The street has a distinctive character unlike that of High Street or Lorne Street, and manages to retain something of the former ambience of the early business centre in the locality. There are few verandahs in the street. As a consequence although it is a less hospitable street for pedestrians, the buildings there exert a stronger presence. Although many blank walls exist, a number of building facades have compensated for this by their intricacy and visual interest, and many entrances are recessed rather than blandly located on the frontage

Retail uses are currently sporadic, as the street is on the fringe of retail viability in the Central Area.

However, this 'fringe' quality is compensated largely by expressions of individuality by occupants, such as the De Bretts stained-glass window.

The centre of the street is emphasised by the tree planters at the head of Vulcan Lane, and the ends by landmark buildings creating the 'bookend' sense of completion and containment to the street.

