



Image courtesy of Wellington City Council

COURTENAY CROSSROADS

Is the controversial Golden Mile finally kicking off? April will see work start on major changes to the Kent and Cambridge Terrace intersection, a precursor to revamping Courtenay Place.

But it will be eight months before the work is done, and the contract for the rest of the Golden Mile project

has not been inked. Meanwhile the new road works come on top of the lane closure on Wakefield Street to accommodate the sewage main upgrade, scheduled to continue for another seven months.

This risks even more disruption for local users. Read more on [page 2](#). ➔

In this issue:

07 Volunteers welcome at Mt Vic community gardens

09 Major renovation underway at Clyde Quay School

10 Inspiring wahine celebrated in Pōneke podcast with local link

15 Early merchants remembered in our streets



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Courtenay crossroads

The Kent and Cambridge intersection with Courtenay Place will soon become a construction zone, as the first part of the controversial Golden Mile upgrades gets underway. *Jane O'Loughlin* reports.

In April, an 8-month project will get underway to line up Courtenay Place with the Embassy, instead of Majoribanks Street.

The length of time to carry out work on one corner is partly due to restrictions on when the work can be carried out, as the busy intersection needs to remain open to some traffic in the meantime.

It also means Wellington will be faced with a double-whammy of construction affecting traffic in the area, with work on the Kent and Cambridge intersection to start while the current project by Wellington Water on Wakefield Street continues – and is already causing considerable disruption.

Overall, the Golden Mile project promises to deliver wider footpaths, improved lighting, larger outdoor dining areas, more public seating, a cycle path, and importantly, new non-slippery paving stones.

The council will also undertake infrastructure upgrades, such as replacing pipes, at the same time.

The information was released by the Wellington City Council in a briefing to media headed by Mayor Tory Whanau, who has championed the Golden Mile revamp.

Mayor Whanau said it was Wellington's 'turn' to get its city centre revitalised, after Dunedin, Auckland, and Christchurch had all successfully done so.

“This project is an investment in the future of our city. It’s a transformational project that we need to make Wellington a world class destination, as well as well as a city that we can be proud of.

“There’ll be tons of outdoor dining, nature and trees running through the city, and it will become the community space where people want to be. We know there will be short term disruptions, but the long-term benefits will be huge.”

Although presenting the April start date as the Mayor’s flagship project finally coming to fruition, contracts have yet to be signed for the Courtenay Place part of the project and are not guaranteed to be signed before local body elections get underway later in the year.

This means that the project could be overturned by a future council. **TL**

“There’ll be tons of outdoor dining, nature and trees running through the city, and it will become the community space where people want to be.”

More information about the design, including a fly through animation, can be found on the Wellington City Council website wellington.govt.nz

Change needed on Courtenay Place

The long-awaited upgrade to Courtenay Place is due to start in the next couple of months.

It's easy to be cynical about the Golden Mile changes that now seem to be finally actually happening.

For instance, it seems like madness to remove the bus stops outside the St James and former Reading Cinema.

Putting a cycle lane through a street mainly used by pedestrians, many of whom have had a drink or two, looks like asking for trouble.

The proposed bus and pedestrian shelters appear to be less useful than the current ones.

There's a question mark about whether the removal of all cars from Courtenay Place during daytime hours will make the street calmer and more pleasant, or just dull and lifeless. And there's a real risk that around three years of construction will send even more of our hospitality and retail businesses to the wall.

The project, if it actually ever happens, will be radical, and we are taking it on trust that the transformation will be positive.

And yet, we need change to happen.

I came across some lost tourists on Wakefield Street the other day, looking for the start of a walking route that would take them through Courtenay Place.

I encouraged them instead to head for the waterfront, to walk along Oriental Bay. As I watched them disappear, I was relieved they wouldn't get to see the sad grim state of our premier entertainment district.

As someone who walks through the area daily, I am well aware of its horrors – the slippery paving stones, the dated street art, the bad lighting.

I attended the media briefing for the Golden Mile reveal, and one comment from the Mayor did stick in my mind. Other cities – Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin – have revitalised their city centres. But Wellington still has the city centre that was cool and groovy in the 90s – more than 30 years later it's tired and grim. It needs a rev up.

While the new design has several notable negatives it also has lots of positives, and it seems to be all we have on the table.

Time to step into the 21st century? 



Jane O'Loughlin
Editor

THE LOCAL Mt Victoria

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Apartments advertised

The proposed Mayfair apartment block in Mt Victoria is already being advertised, with top dollar prices.

Ads for the Westbourne Grove development offer a one-bedroom apartment for \$995,000, a two-bedroom apartment for \$1.21 million and a three-bedroom apartment for \$2.35 million: 'Nestled among gum and olive trees and serenaded by birdsong on the slopes of an iconic maunga, Mayfair evokes the tranquillity of a private retreat.'

At time of writing, neighbours of the development were still waiting to hear who would be notified as part of the resource consent process. TL

Pukeahu performers wanted

The Ministry of Culture and Heritage is hoping to encourage more people to stop and enjoy Pukeahu National War Memorial Park, by inviting buskers and street performers to perform on Friday evenings until the end of March.

"The summer busking initiative is to encourage people passing through Pukeahu to experience amazing buskers and pause to enjoy," a spokesperson said.

Email pukeahu@mch.govt.nz if you're interested in performing. TL

Paniyiri popular

Hundreds turned up to the annual Paniyiri festival on 22 February. The hot summer's day attracted large crowds to the Greek Church on Hania Street, to enjoy the Greek food, music and entertainment on offer.

With Hania Street closed off this year, festival goers were able to spill across the road and take welcome refuge in the shade of the pohutukawa tree opposite. TL



Kia ora Mt. Vic!

Let's talk about our community.

Get in touch about any local issues or if you need support. I'm here to help and would love to hear from you!

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Gardening – a growth opportunity

Rory Sedgley and
Becky James are
regular volunteers at the
Innermost Gardens

Helping out in Mt Victoria's community gardens could help you meet people, get fit, learn more about horticulture, enjoy nature and it might even get you some kai.

Jane O'Loughlin took a tour.

Volunteers at the Innermost Gardens at the base of Mt Victoria's town belt are there for many reasons, and only some of them are about actually growing food to eat.

For example, Viv Winter has been involved with the gardens for around nine years, but confesses she's 'not a great gardener'.

For her, volunteering was a way of meeting people in the community.

Rory Sedgley wanted to spend some time outside in the fresh air and grow some food. He has an allotment in the gardens, and helps out with the compost and grass cutting as well.

"It's a good group of people to hang out with on a Sunday morning. It's nice to be part of the community."

Becky James moved to Mt Victoria a year and a half ago, and was looking for something to make her feel more 'grounded'.

"I love gardening and being outside but I live in a flat, like a very small space, so it was a good way to do that in a friendly environment."

Sandy Morris, who is the allotment coordinator doesn't have an allotment herself, but loves to spend time at the gardens.

"I come along because I live in an apartment and I like being outside and I just find it a wonderful place to be."

All of this paints a picture of an activity that is more about companionship and enjoying nature, with a side benefit of producing food.

The Innermost Gardens is a charitable trust, and

run by a committee. They pay the Wellington City Council a peppercorn rent for the area including the hall, which they rent out to groups as a way of fundraising.

Part of the garden area is for the community, with fruit trees and vegetable beds producing kai to share.

Other parts of the garden are set aside for allotments where people are growing vegetables or fruit for their personal use. There is around a six-month waiting list for an allotment.

One part of the gardens that is well used is the compost bins. Apartment dwellers and those without their own way to dispose of scraps can often be seen swinging a bucket on their way to deposit their food scraps.

Over summer, there were a few grumbles from users that the bins were full.

This is because the volunteers who maintain the bins take a break over summer – but evidently those wanting to make use of the compost bins do not.

Morris says there is something users can do to address that issue – come and help.

"It's run by volunteers. If the bins are full they have to take their compost home. But they can come and help at the next working bee!"

Indeed, volunteers are very welcome. Tasks include weeding, scything grass, turning compost – any help is appreciated, and you might get to take some produce home at the end of it.

What's more, you might make some friends as well. **TL**

"It's a good group of people to hang out with on a Sunday morning. It's nice to be part of the community."

Buyers grapple with latest valuations

Last weekend our agency held 122 open homes, and the most popular one was one of our colleague's listings in Mt Vic – proving that our neighbourhood is still one of Wellington's most coveted. I start with that good news to soften the next piece of information, that REINZ shows the median price decrease last month was 11.7%. Ouch.

As much as anything, I think this shows that it is best to take figures with a grain of salt and a healthy sense of the bigger picture. This significant drop in the median price is probably more reflective of the listings that sold in that period being typically lower value properties, than suddenly \$100,000+ coming off the value of your home in one month.

Outside of this monthly blip, the figure that might make you feel like this amount has been wiped off your value of your home is the latest round of Rateable Values that have come down approximately 24% in our neighbourhood. If this brought our rates down as well, we would probably all be cheering, but as you will no doubt know (councils aren't that flush with cash), your percentage of the total Wellington pie remains largely the same, and so do your rates.

So how will the buyers view this change?

In reality they should ignore the RV just as they have been for the past three years. The only issue I can see already playing out in the conversations I have been having with buyers, is that they have become quite used to market value for property being about 25% below RV. Now buyers will need to get comfortable paying a price either around, or perhaps even above the new RV.


I imagine there will be at least a month or two while buyers recalibrate with this new data point in mind, and then we should be back to business as usual. Market value is simply market value

and rateable values are just there to set your rates and nothing more. Recent sales in the area and other competing properties on the market along with strategy and marketing are the only drivers of market value. Not RV.

The total number of listings for Wellington city on NZ's main property site, TradeMe, sits at 963 as I write this. We expect to break the 1,000 threshold shortly. Having lots of listings is fine if there are also lots of buyers, so what are we seeing at open homes? Good numbers! Our average open home attendance has started stronger than what we were seeing at the end of last year. Another promising sign is how many new buyers we are meeting.

If a buyer has been to a Lowe&Co open home previously, they will be in our database and their details show up when we enter their phone number at the door of an open home. What James and I have been noticing at this early stage of the year, is that a number of buyers we are meeting are not in our database yet, meaning they are new to the market.

Many of these buyers will require a period of research, visiting open homes, and potentially missing out on properties with highly conditional offers. But once this initial research period is over this group will be making offers and buying properties. My gut feel is that this will mean any capital growth, if we have some this year, is likely to come in quarter three and four, when the new buyers start successfully buying.

In the meantime, good to see the numbers are strong at Mt Vic open homes – long may that continue! 

Source: REINZ Suburb Report January 2025

“The total number of listings for Wellington city on NZ's main property site, TradeMe, sits at 963 as I write this.”



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Community wins from school upgrade

An ambitious revamp of Clyde Quay School now underway will improve the playground and also have wins for the community.

Report by **Jane O'Loughlin**.

Students at Clyde Quay School on Elizabeth Street returned from their summer break to find the school hall had been lifted and shifted to its new location against the northern retaining wall.

“Moving the school hall and refitting it is the first stage of an ambitious reimagining of our school campus, which is one of the smallest in the country,” said Principal Cameron Ross.

“We want to ensure that the students and the community get the most out of this wonderful space, it packs a punch and reflects who we are as a school and community.”

The master planning work started in 2022, and the school fundraising group, Whānau & Friends of Clyde Quay School Inc, raised a portion of funds for these works as part of two successful Taylor Swift raffles last year. The works were also supported by grants obtained from Lotteries Community Facility Fund, New Zealand Community Trust and TG McCarthy Trust. The school said it had also received generous donations of technical support from Tonkin & Taylor and Studio Pacific Architecture and ‘many other dedicated parents along the way.’

“The school could not have funded these works without this support and the School is immensely

grateful to all who have supported the project to date and can't wait to see this facility used by the community,” Ross said.

The project will mean the former location of the hall will be incorporated into a new multi-sport court to provide dedicated space for students to learn, practice and play a range of sports including futsal, netball, basketball, volleyball etc.

Along with needed building upgrades, the relocated hall will be extended slightly to include a kitchen, bathrooms/shower and two breakout teaching spaces. This will allow the school to host a much broader range of school and community events, along with providing an enhanced teaching space when needed and quiet spaces for students to undertake work in small groups.

The programme of works has an estimated completion date of end of term three. **TL**

“We want to ensure that the students and the community get the most out of this wonderful space, it packs a punch and reflects who we are as a school and community.”

More information and plans can be found on the school website – clydequay.school.nz



Women making (air) waves

Podcast hosts, from left: Aisling Waldron, Laura Trobiani, Eleanora Bello, Sophie Kelsall, Harita Gandhi-Kashyap

Inspirational guests feature on a podcast made locally. **Jane O'Loughlin** reports.

If you follow the podcast *Conversations With Wāhine* then you would have heard the voice of Mt Victoria resident Aisling Waldron.

The weekly podcast is run by the Wellington chapter of the National Council of Women New Zealand.

It aims to promote gender equality and the voices of women in the community, says Waldron.

“Every time we get a guest, we’re either thinking, is this a woman in our community who we can give a platform to that maybe wouldn’t have access to a platform? Or is it somebody who is talking about something or doing a piece of work that could affect or impact women in the community?”

The guest list includes authors, artists, activists, comedians, politicians, sportspeople. As well as women from Aoteroa, the podcast has managed to talk to prominent international guests such as comedian and feminist Debra Francis-White, who has a huge platform internationally, and Randee Kogan, a trauma therapist who treated some of the victims of Jeffrey Epstein and appeared in a Netflix series about the in case.

While the guests are mainly women, occasionally men will feature as well.

According to Waldron, there’s no big secret to securing well-known guests.

“Honestly, we just ask. We just really ask everyone. And nine times out of 10, people say yes.”

The podcast has been going for three years and has surpassed 100 episodes. Waldron has been involved for the past two years.

“The guest list includes authors, artists, activists, comedians, politicians, sportspeople.”


She is passionate about the work the National Council of Women do, whether it’s fundraising for women’s refuges or inputting into policy that affects women. The Wellington branch is very active, and a broad church, she says.

“It’s a really cool organisation in that you have women who are in their 70s, 80s and were here in the early days when this was kicking off and have been part of huge pieces of change in the country.

“But you also have a lot of really young women who are, you know, maybe teens, early 20s.”

Waldron is from Ireland, and moved to New Zealand in 2018. She and her husband have lived in Mt Victoria for around three and a half years. She is a big fan of the area.


“Everyone’s so friendly. You feel like you’re in the suburbs but you’re also like a five-minute walk to the city centre. You know, you’ve got 10 minutes up to Mount Vic, 10 minutes down to the beach.

“It’s just, it’s like a little haven in the middle of the city.” 

Anyone interested in listening can find *Conversations With Wāhine* through **Spotify**, **Apple** or any of the usual podcast providers. More information can be found on **Facebook** and **Instagram**.

ULO ? Unidentified Local Object

Identify the mystery object – something in the Mount Victoria area – to win a \$20 voucher for your favourite local cafe.

Email your answers to editor@the-local.co.nz. If there's more than one correct answer the winner will be selected at random. Congratulations to Dimitri Viatos, who identified the February photo as the mural on the side of the Parthenon building, Hania Street. 



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U3A in March

U3A Wellington City offers anyone not in fulltime employment opportunities to further their learning, share knowledge and enjoy activity that promotes wellbeing. Our lectures are Tuesdays and Fridays from 10.30 am at the Embassy Theatre. \$5 for visitors; \$40 membership. Term one 2025 for U3A Wellington City is in full swing, with two lectures every week until April 11. Details at u3awellingtoncity.org.nz



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One Mindful Breath

One Mindful Breath explores the role of meditation and mindfulness in embracing the wonders and difficulties of our modern lives. Our practice is secular, framed by Buddhist values. We meet every Wednesday at 7.30pm at the Friends' Centre, Moncrieff St, Mount Victoria. Each session has a meditation, discussion, and a cup of tea. The first Wednesday of the month is "Beginners' Mind", great if you're new to meditation. Find out more at onemindfulbreath.org.nz

Mt Victoria Residents Association

MVRA holds regular monthly meetings at the Mt Vic Hub on the first Thursday of the month at 5.30pm. All members welcome.

Innermost Gardens

Gardening Sundays: 10am-12pm on the first and third Sunday of the month. Also Tuesday morning gardening every week during school term 10am-12 pm. Everyone is welcome. Contact innermostgardens@gmail.com or check out our website innermostgardens.org.nz to find out more about how the gardens are run and allotment and composting opportunities.

Crossways Community Creche

61 Majoribanks Street, is a parent-run early learning centre for children aged one to five. It is open Monday to Friday and offers 20 hours of state-funded ECE for over threes. Contact us at 04 384 8201 or email info@crosswayscreche.org.nz

WELLINGTON'S

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LIFTING THE LID

Thanks berry much

Sour Cream arrived in our backyard one day and couldn't get out.

Feathers? Check. Wings? Check. Too big for this nest? Check. Let's go! Wheeeeeeee. That was fun. Let's go back up. Uh oh....

The baby blackbird had made her first flight from the nest... and discovered that while she had wings and feathers and looked like a real bird, she couldn't actually fly. She landed, surprised looking, in our back yard.

Her attempts at flying only got her as far as the ledges on our retaining walls where she left small white deposits along the way. "Ugh, looks like sour cream," observed my daughter, and hence the little bird got her name.

"She's eaten so many of our blueberries she can't take off!" exclaimed my partner, whose advanced understanding of physics is often useful to us.

This may have been true; for several days the blackbird family had been raiding our blueberries. We initially tried to shoo them away, but when we realised the blueberries were not being eaten on the spot but were a takeaway meal for some junior blackbird, we got soft hearted and let them in.

Sour Cream was indeed a plump bird, well fattened on our produce, but also somewhat defenceless.

She hopped around the yard, occasionally hiding under ferns.

If we went out to see her, she stood still, like a statue.

Night was coming – what would happen to her? The million cats that roam Mt Victoria would surely make short work of a young bird that couldn't fly.

We tried picking her up and putting her in a cardboard box but that caused daddy bird to hover around anxiously.

In the end we realised this was nature and we needed to let it take its course. I lay awake that night worrying about Sour Cream, cold and alone under the ferns, and whether she would be there in the morning.

But she proved to be remarkably resilient. Not only did she survive the night, but several more nights. Her skill at staying stock still probably helped disguise her from predators, and our past history of squirting roaming cats with water guns no doubt also assisted in keeping the yard feline-free.

Every day her parents came to feed her. Daddy and mummy blackbird took turns pulling juicy bugs from the lawn and popping them into little Sour Cream's mouth, occasionally supplemented by a blueberry for dessert.

We crept carefully around the backyard, trying not to stress her out. As time went on, her flutters grew stronger. Eventually she made it to the top of the fence, by rebounding off the wall of the house.

"Parkour!" shouted my daughter.

Despite her growing prowess at flying, her parents continued to feed her. She observed them digging bugs out of the lawn and made half-hearted efforts herself, until finally she got the knack.

Usually birds look all the same, so it's been nice to get to know this particular bird family, and trace the progression of one youngster from fledgling through to being able to independently feed herself.

We get our blueberries from New World now. 

"She's eaten so many of our blueberries she can't take off!"



Wellington merchants feature in Mt Vic street names

Many of our local street names derive from early Wellington retailers, as the Mt Victoria Historical Society's *Joanna Newman* explains.

It's time for another in the series on the origin of our street names. We've already heard about businessmen, Lipman and Levy. Here are a few more early Wellington merchants, most of whom lived where the streets named after them are today.

Tutchen Avenue

The Tutchens ran a substantial dairy farm for town supply on land bounded on two sides by Brougham Street and Pirie Street. They started their operation in the early 1860s and, between them, members of the family owned seven town acres and leased two on the Town Belt from the Council. When what is now Porritt Avenue was created, it was named Tutchen Street, but today only tiny Tutchen Avenue off Porritt commemorates the days of dairying on Mt Victoria.

Rixon Grove

This small street is named after Robert Rixon, who owned land in Austin Street. He arrived in Wellington in the early 1840s and had a boot making business in Willis Street. He gave his name to Rixon Grove, which was granted as a right-of-way in 1898 and became a public street in 1924.

Shannon Street

Could there be a connection between our Shannon Street and a small town in the Manawatū? Indeed. It was formed in 1878 when George Shannon bought land there. A few years earlier he had established, with a partner, a soft goods-importing and clothing-manufacturing business, which was the forerunner to the DIC department store. Shannon was one of the directors of the privately-owned Wellington-Manawatū



George Shannon, c1910 [Alexander Turnbull Library 1/1-014834-G]

Railway Company and hence his name was bestowed on a town on that line when the railway was completed in 1886.

Port Street

Port Street was formed by Council in 1881. It was named after Robert Port, who opened a wholesale and retail grocery wine & spirit and general store on



Robert Port announces the opening of his business [Wellington Independent 30.8.1862]

McIntyre Avenue

Charles McIntyre was a baker with premises in Tory Street, who bought land on Hawker Street in 1882. He, too, fell on troubled times and went bankrupt the following year. In a very convoluted history, however, the land stayed in the McIntyre family for many years.

And, so, the street names in our suburb reflect the lives of famous and ordinary early Wellingtonians, their achievements large and small, and even failures. **TL**

Willis Street in 1862. He became insolvent in 1879, as a result of land dealings and a stagnant property market. Perhaps because of the stress of insolvency, he died in 1881 at only 58 but, as late as 1878, he had been respected enough to be nominated to stand for municipal elections.



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