

Presentation Title (limited to 10 words)

Is Bling Better?

Bridge St Nelson, doing more with less / valuing what matters

Times have changed for central city street design and the direction is clear - get back-to-basics, focus on connectivity, resilience, and cost-effective materials. The days of wall-to-wall stone and bespoke features are behind us, but all is not lost, because constraints catalyze creativity, and we believe through strong design and use of simple materials, it is still possible to deliver great streets.

In today's climate, public investment in infrastructure needs to work hard to realise broader outcomes, and this requires our skill as designers is now more than ever. We propose that it is still possible to build high-quality urban streets that attract residents, support environmental health, and leave a lasting legacy, but it takes a design led approach and clever use of materials.

This presentation will track the Bridge Street project in Whakatū Nelson through a 5-year arc of shifting economic and political priorities. From the vision of Te Ara Whakatū Spatial Plan, to the current Detailed Design, this case study will demonstrate how it is possible to deliver broader benefits through investment in connectivity and infrastructure resilience, some of which include:

- increasing vegetation by over 400%
- improving active travel
- embedding cultural values
- providing for street-based activity
- raising future residents.

The positive impact of the design can already be seen with an uplift in private investment in the surrounding blocks.

So, in this current climate, the pressure to do more with less is a challenge that we should accept, because a street doesn't need to be paved in gold to be successful. However, we do need to make the investment work hard, taking a design-led approach to simplify complexity and use cost-effective materials, while still creating spaces that serve our community now and in the future....and through it all, we might just find that bling isn't necessarily better.

Preference for oral presentation.

Dual speaker- Alan Gray, Megan Walker