

The Future of the Village Centre

THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Research by NZ Post recently found that New Zealanders spent \$3.6 billion online in 2017, with the average online shopper spending more than \$2,350 annually. The report also found that local retailers' online revenues increased by 9% - outstripping growth in "bricks and mortar" sales.*

What is the future of the traditional village centre in an increasingly digital age? How can businesses at the geographical centre of a community survive and thrive?

"I believe there are genuine opportunities for retailers who strive to deliver a fantastic customer experience," says Greg Harford, Retail NZ's public affairs GM.

"In the first instance, you have to make it easy for customers to find you at any time of day no matter where they are, and that means having a decent online presence." Greg stresses that he is not necessarily advocating full e-commerce, but rather showcasing products and service, and therefore enticing customers to visit the actual store. This raises another important point. "Customers need to find your physical location as well as your digital one. Taking the necessary steps to be listed on Google Maps and Apple Maps should be every retailer's priority; the things don't happen automatically."

Exactly what constitutes a fantastic customer experience will vary from store to store, but certain key factors remain true. "Certainly it's about offering the right product at the right price, but also about creating a pleasant and attractive environment to encourage customers to come back, making them feel valued, and giving them 'the wow factor' that can't be duplicated online," Greg comments. This could include offering complementary add-on services, such as toys for youngsters, or refreshments. "I'm aware of some clothiers who offer a coffee if a customer's trying on several outfits."

He encourages business owners to think about how they can boost their involvement with the local community. "A shop that sells board games might like to host regular gaming nights. This is an opportunity to get people who aren't already regular customers into your store, so that they can get to know you and your brand."

Greg mentions the rise in popularity of *gamification*.

GAMIFICATION: the process of adding games or gamelike elements to something (such as a task) so as to encourage participation. Merriam-Webster dictionary

He highlights New World's Easter Hunt as a great example of this, since it ran physically and digitally. "It was fun for the kids, and it distracted them while their parents got the shopping done."

While Amazon is generally regarded by traditional stores as an enemy rather than a friend, Greg speculates that it could be an

asset to those retailers who have ownership of a distinct brand. "If you offer something exclusive then the power of being listed on Marketplace raises your potential customer reach from tens of thousands locally to maybe 30 million across Australia. Don't dismiss that potential."

* Source: Retail Radar, a quarterly Retail NZ Report, 30 June 2018

THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to put all this into context for the East Coast Bays, it is first necessary to ask and answer a couple more questions...

What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

BID programmes are partnerships between Auckland Council and local business associations. Together they share responsibility for carrying out the goals of BID programmes, which are broadly to strengthen and improve a region's business environment and economy.

There are currently 48 BIDs in Auckland representing more than 25,000 businesses with a combined capital value estimated at \$24 billion. Browns Bay, Mairangi Bay and Torbay each have their own BID and, therefore, business association.

BROWNS BAY

Notice of AGM

of the Browns Bay Business Association

Date: Tuesday 16th October, 2018

Venue: The Browns Bay Rackets Club, Freyberg Park, Browns Bay

Time: 5.30pm Networking & nibbles
6.00pm AGM starts

Guest Speaker: **Ben Sheeran**
Ben will speak briefly on a Social & Environmental Innovation Hub he is setting up in Browns Bay.

Other Topics of Interest:

- New 5 Yr Strategic Plan
- Business Plan 2018/19
- Freyberg Park Sports Hub
- Draft Centre Plan

Run a business from home? We have associate memberships available!

To register your interest, please email admin@brownsbay.org.nz

What is a business association?

Any business that operates from premises within a BID's designated area is eligible for membership of that business association, and a portion of its business rates are used to fund the association's function. Businesses outside a BID (for example: Northcross, Rothesay Bay or Oteha Valley) may also apply to join the business association if they have a valid commercial reason for doing so. There is usually a charge for this "associate membership".

A business association is run by an executive committee (the board), which is elected by members. Effectively, the board steers the ship, taking responsibility for the governance, compliance and strategic decision making of its BID. The board also appoints the BID manager, who is responsible for ensuring that the strategic and business plans are implemented effectively. The manager performs the day-to-day duties of the BID programme and reports to the board.

To find out more about the roles, responsibilities, policies and procedures of a BID, visit bid.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

To view BID maps, visit bid.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/bid-rating-maps

"Why should any of this matter to me?"

If you own or run a business in the Browns Bay, Mairangi Bay or Torbay BIDs and you're not actively involved in your business association then you are missing out on a potentially invaluable support service. A crucial part of a business association's role is to give its members a voice. As a local business owner you are integral to the success of the community in which you operate. Your business association needs your input and feedback on local issues that interest, involve and concern you. Your business association cannot lobby effectively on your behalf if you're not interacting with it – which is why it's important that you have your say!

Consider also that your marketing activities could enjoy a significant boost too by tapping into your business association's online and offline promotional channels.

Even if you don't own a local business, you may have a family member or friend who relies on one (or more) for their job. Wouldn't you like to support them and do what you can to ensure their long-term employment? And isn't it great to be part of a thriving community with a bustling village centre at its heart?

"YES! I want to have a say. I want to get more involved. What do I do next?"

Read on...

WHAT'S OCCURRING IN... BROWNS BAY

Since November 2012, Murray Hill has been the town centre manager for Browns Bay Business Association and Milford Business Association. Why would anyone choose to be a town centre manager? "To most it would seem like a pretty dead end job, but I wouldn't do it if I didn't enjoy it," says Murray.

He views the job as not just running the business association but acting as a conduit and connecting the dots between all

interested parties (such as Rotary, sports clubs and the local board) for the benefit of the community at large. "If you can get people working together, they feel like it's 'their place'."

An exciting mix

There are 283 businesses within Browns Bay's BID, which includes the town centre and the more industrial /commercial area of Beach Road. Murray explains that this presents attractive opportunities for customers not offered by the likes of Takapuna. "You can drop off your car for a service and then either get a lift or enjoy a stroll into the town centre to shop or have a coffee."

Opening up opportunities

Browns Bay's draft Town Centre Plan was drawn up in 2016. Amongst other things, it proposes paving Inverness Road so that it has no kerbs, essentially extending the village green and providing a larger space for events when required.

The development of a sports hub at Freyberg Park and better connections between it and the town centre, improving the water quality of local streams and better "Welcome" signage are other projects in the plan that could provide great benefits to the whole community.

Murray believes there are many other opportunities which have yet to be realised, and particularly favours the idea of clusters of smaller retailers. "Imagine having half a dozen suppliers of dried spices or non-perishable foods from around the globe in one retail space. Not only do you get a 'taste of the world' food hub, but you're spreading the risk for both landlords and tenants. A 'fashion central' concept could work too."

The importance of data collection and analysis

Murray uses data from 20 of Auckland's 48 BIDs to monitor overall trends, and is bullish about Browns Bay's performance. "The town centre has just under four million transactions annually and is the highest sales town centre on the North Shore," he reports. "If a business can't make a go of it with over 75,000 transactions a week, there's probably a problem with the business model!"

He urges business owners to pay attention to what the data is saying. For example: close to 30% of business sales are conducted over the weekend. Therefore, shops should be look at how they can open at these times. "Weigh up the turnover you're potentially losing versus the cost of employing and training someone to work those hours."

Every time the business association runs a campaign, customer information is gathered and added (with due permissions) to the marketing database. This offers numerous potential benefits because publicity for large all-inclusive events or individual businesses can reach a larger audience. Which is why Murray encourages members to actively participate in promotions such as the recent Helloworld \$4000 travel promotion. Those who are involved can reap the greatest rewards.

Information about visitor numbers and demographics are also useful tool for attracting new businesses to the area. Murray can show the stats to land agents and property

managers in order to help ensure an appropriate type of tenant. It is hoped that this approach should help to assuage members' concerns about the mix of businesses in the area.

Speaking of members' concerns...

Local businesses frequently voice their frustrations about car parking. "The association has been at the forefront to save the car park at 19 Anzac Road," assures Murray. "We're also looking to get co-operation from landlords of vacant land at Christmas for staff parking to free up space closer to the town centre for customers."

To find out more about Browns Bay Business Association and to apply for associate membership:
brownsbay.org.nz/webpages/our-business-association

WHAT'S OCCURRING IN... MAIRANGI BAY AND TORBAY

Connecting with customers

Joanne Martin has been the BID manager for Mairangi Bay for four years and the BID co-ordinator for Torbay for one year.

She says that communication is a huge part of her role, and is quick to acknowledge the importance of online channels between her members and their customers. "Torbay's website was pretty archaic; we knew we had to make a lot of changes to move into the digital age," she says. "The new website is pretty basic, but easy to read and easy to update which means I can keep it current."

To find out more about local news and events:
torbay.co.nz
mairangibayvillage.co.nz

"These days so many people like to use their phone instead of a computer which is why we've developed apps for Mairangi Bay Village and Torbay Village," explains Joanne. "Our members can link up their own apps or websites to these and reach more customers, more easily. The apps weren't actually budgeted for, but we recognised they were something

we needed to prioritise, so we skimmed a bit off the overall marketing budget. They didn't cost a huge amount, and are proving to be very worthwhile."

For events such as the Food & Wine Show, Facebook has proven to be the most effective method of engagement. "We start getting enquiries in August so we have to get the date set, and then it's useful to be able to track the increase in 'likes' the closer we get to February."

Joanne further observes, "You have to know your community and recognise their preferences. The Torbay magazine is 40 pages every month and it's still a sought after publication."

Events and campaigns

In order to have broad appeal, Mairangi Bay and Torbay have several events throughout the year. This approach also mitigates risk, just in case any one of the events is disrupted, for example, by poor weather. (Incidentally, this is a method also favoured by Orewa business association when planning their events.)

Joanne regards Mairangi Bay's Food & Wine Festival as an opportunity to showcase the whole village, and talks about the "flow on effect" when visitors meander back to their cars and notice a nice outfit, piece of jewellery or vase in one of the boutique shops. "It's encouraging them to return, and I know we have regular visitors from St Heliers because of this."

"We run the Buy Local campaign once a year," says Joanne. "I think that definitely helps to focus people's minds on the great range of small stores and suppliers we have on our doorstep."

Finding the niche, protecting identity

Joanne believes that defining and promoting each village's individual niche is critical. Mairangi Bay is "a destination"; visitors are likely to come for a particular shop. Torbay offers a more functional village centre, which is why the business association has opted for a distinct message: that of a plastic-free shopping environment.

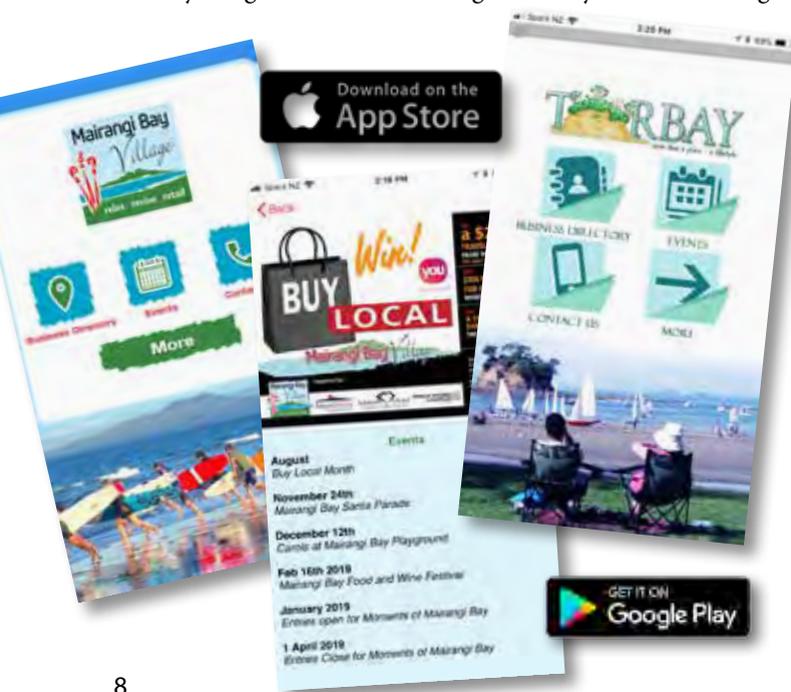
Branded reusable bags are distributed, the green grocer offers boxes, and "refuse a straw" is running at cafés. Furthermore, if people collect a bucket of rubbish from the beach, they will be rewarded with a free coffee from Four Square. "The buckets feature the Four Square logo, which is a nice bit of promotion too," comments Joanne.

It is worth noting that a similar pick-up-rubbish scheme does operate in Mairangi Bay – this time sponsored by Montrose – but it is not promoted as the key marketing message.

Working together for everyone's benefit

If Browns Bay, Mairangi Bay and Torbay are to continue to survive and thrive, collaboration between the business associations will be a key to success. This can be as simple as ensuring that events and campaigns do not clash or overlap, and are cross-promoted in the areas. Energised involvement from businesses and the wider community will be critical too.

**After all, everyone has the same goal:
buy local, stay local, support local.**



East Coast Bays

ShoreLines

M A G A Z I N E

October/November 2018

It's
a Shore
thing!

In this issue...

The future of our village centres

Torbay's long, long, long distance runner

Route 66 legendary road trip

Dining review: à la carte on the Beachfront

Keeping pets happy during fireworks season

...and much more

Cover Photo:
Stephanie Daniell

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- Torbay • Waiake • Mairangi Bay • Murrays Bay • Long Bay & Okura •

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