

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Dear Members and Executive Board,

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting for 2024. It is both an honour and a privilege to present the annual report and financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2024. Serving as the Chairperson for the Otara Business Association (OBA) over since last year has been a deeply rewarding experience, and I am grateful to share our journey and achievements with you.

I would like to extend my gratitude to our dedicated committee members, local businesses, and key stakeholders, including the Otara-Papatoetoe Local Board, local police, and community groups. My heartfelt thanks also go to our Manager, Rana Judge, whose support has made this role both enjoyable and impactful.

Economic Challenges and Resilience

The recent economic recession has impacted our town centre, with businesses experiencing a decline in sales since early this year. However, our position remains strong compared to other centres in Auckland, and it's worth noting that business declines have been widespread across New Zealand. Despite these challenges, we remain confident in our ability to recover, especially with continued funding through targeted rates. We aim to reinvigorate our program of promotions, events, and initiatives to support and strengthen the Otara Business Community.

This year, we received \$99,456 in funding from targeted rates, which has been sufficient to cover the manager's salary and partially fund the CCTV operator. Due to inflation and BID policy requirements, we plan to increase our targeted rate by 10% to reach a minimum of \$120,000 by 2027, ensuring full compliance with policy guidelines. This additional funding will primarily be allocated to enhanced security measures, ensuring our retailers and community members feel safe and can fully enjoy the Otara Town Centre.

Business Growth Through Strategic Marketing

Thanks to our effective social media and marketing strategy, we've seen a notable increase in sales across all businesses in the past year, resulting in the highest overall turnover growth for the town centre to date. We've amplified our social media presence over recent years, providing valuable exposure to our town centre members and keeping our business listings updated on our website. Monthly, we receive significant traffic from Google, showcasing the community's interest and engagement with the centre.

Our "Shop Local, Spend Local, Eat Local" campaign has resonated strongly throughout the town centre since the onset of COVID-19, reflecting the community's dedication to supporting local businesses. It's inspiring to see this shared commitment to keeping our businesses thriving.

Addressing Challenges in the Town Centre

The Otara Town Centre faces several ongoing challenges that affect the overall safety and comfort of our community. These include:

Beggars in the Town Centre

Individuals, many struggling financially, are often present in the town centre seeking assistance. While some are in genuine need, the persistent presence of begging can create an unwelcoming atmosphere. We are working closely with social services to support these individuals, aiming to create a balanced environment for all.

Antisocial Behaviour

Disruptive actions, ranging from altercations to vandalism, pose challenges for both community safety and visitor experience. Antisocial behaviour can deter visitors, impacting our businesses and the broader sense of community. We are coordinating with local authorities to establish patrols, increase visibility, and encourage community cooperation to reduce these incidents.

Illegal Trade in the Town Centre

Unauthorized vendors occasionally operate within the town centre, selling unregulated goods. This activity undermines legitimate businesses and poses potential risks to consumers. Our team is working closely with regulatory bodies to ensure that only licensed businesses operate in the town centre, creating a safer, more reliable shopping environment.

Drug Dealing

Instances of drug-related activities present serious threats to our community. The presence of illegal substances often correlates with further criminal activity, jeopardizing safety. Through increased surveillance and collaboration with law enforcement, we are taking proactive steps to prevent these activities, ensuring that Otara remains a secure and welcoming place for families, residents, and visitors.

Our Approach and Moving Forward

We are committed to working hand-in-hand with law enforcement, local authorities, and community members to address these challenges comprehensively. By expanding our security measures and focusing on community outreach, we aim to create a town centre that is as safe as it is welcoming.

OBA remains dedicated to collaborating closely with retailers and community groups to make the Otara Town Centre a place where everyone can come and enjoy. Moving forward, we are also focused on increasing funding to support family-oriented events regularly, aligning with our Business Plan for 2025-2026.

Acknowledgments

I extend my sincerest gratitude to all of you for your unwavering support and commitment to OBA. We could not have achieved our current successes without your loyalty, trust, and confidence. Together, we are stronger, and we look forward to serving you even better in the coming year.

OBA will continue setting meaningful, achievable goals that bring positive outcomes for all stakeholders. Our gratitude also goes to our business partners, stakeholders, and regulatory bodies whose invaluable support has been instrumental in our progress.

A special thanks to our Manager, Rana Judge, for diligently contributing to a productive year. Finally, I thank my fellow board members for their dedication, hard work, and shared vision for the future of this organization.

I wish you all a prosperous 2024.
May this year be one of growth and success.

Warm regards,
Amit Narchal
Chairperson