

Survey

Are you entertained?

by Jocelyn Rein

“More, more, more” seems to be the cry of many Aucklanders when it comes to the city’s entertainment.

A survey conducted by AUT University communication studies students last week showed about 65 per cent of people are satisfied with entertainment in the CBD, but there is still room for improvement.

Out of 341 people who were surveyed in the CBD, 120 had suggestions, including longer opening hours for shops during weekdays, a greater number and variety of shops and bars, and more free entertainment.

Of those who were dissatisfied, nine per cent said shops should stay open later on weekday evenings.

Chief executive of Heart of the City Alex Swney says it is an issue that is on retailers’ radar.

He says retailers in most large cities overseas are opening later in the morning and closing later at night. It looks like Auckland will follow suit.

“There is quite a movement towards that at the moment. It’s happening right in front of us,” he says.

While Swney says retail trading hours are hard to mandate, some of the “big players” such as Smith and Caughey’s and Whitcoulls are already staying open later and it is only a matter of time before others follow.

While he recognises the need to change our “core retail trading period”, Swney thinks Auckland rates well in comparison with many international cities he visits regularly.

“People think New York and London are these 24-hour party cities but they’re not. Our hours aren’t that limited.”

But the demand for a 24-hour party city certainly seems to be there, with 17 per cent of respon-

Survey results

- 65% satisfied with CBD entertainment.
- Of the 35% who aren’t:**
- 9% want shop hours extended.
- 17% want increases in number and variety of clubs and bars.
- 17% want more live music venues and events.
- 7% want more free gigs.

dents saying they want an increase in the number and variety of nightclubs and bars.

Hanna Buckleigh, 23, a student who goes out in the city, says there is a need for a wider range of clubs.

“There is a lack of diversity in clubs at the moment. They’re all very market driven. We need more clubs with class like in Europe.”

Sarah Hull, of Bluewater Management, the company developing the new downtown Britomart precinct, says the area will definitely include new entertainment venues.

Hull says the Britomart precinct will have a cross-section of entertainment and retail outlets.

She says the company has agreed with the council that although shops may not be open 24 hours, the area will have a “24/7 vibe to it” and longer opening hours for shops is possible.

Free entertainment was on people’s wish lists, with seven per cent wanting more events similar to the free concerts held in Aotea Square.

While people are always going to want something for nothing, Swney says providing free entertainment can fulfil much more than just a market need.



PHOTO: VICKI KING

MORE PLEASE: Aucklanders love their entertainment, but want better variety and longer opening hours.

“There are huge economic spin-offs.”

He acknowledges there is a lack of funding for such events and stresses their economic importance “especially to tourism”.

“It’s certainly an area that we need to work on. We need to go a lot further.”

Already, wheels seem to be in motion. Swney says planning more free entertainment is “undoubtedly a priority”.

“There’s a huge amount of

work going into a much better funded events strategy.”

Hull says Bluewater’s events strategy also includes “an extensive free public programme”, and the Britomart Arts Foundation was set up with the specific objective of “bringing living arts such as sculpture, music and events to the people”.

Seventeen per cent of respondents asked for more live music venues and events.

Seven per cent said they would like more theatres.

Swney thinks it is unrealistic for Aucklanders to compare themselves with entertainment meccas in large cities like London and Paris.

He is often “staggered” at how much is on offer for a city with a population of just 1.3 million people.

“I think we’d all like bigger and better entertainment.”

“The important thing is that we realise our own unique advantages and benefits and show our points of difference.”

“



Bainbridge Neville:

More live bands would help a lot. I prefer to see live music, rather than djs. Maybe it’s just an age thing, but I think it means you can support New Zealand music more with the live bands. It’s just a bit more personal, a bit better atmosphere.



Hayden McIntyre:

An inner city sports stadium would help a lot, just get more people in here. And better public transport would save all the hassles with parking. It’d make me come in more often, spend more money in the bars.



Leonardo Turez:

I really like to come in and get some fast food with the guys, just hang around, you know. I like the restaurants, especially the Japanese ones — all the seafood and stuff.



Shonna Bearsley:

I think the entertainment in the CBD is pretty good, I mean there’s heaps on. And everyone is really friendly. But getting in here is actually the issue, I find it really is very congested, which can be quite a hassle.



Tahlya Rakau:

The entertainment in here is good, it’s enough to keep me busy. It’s a great place to come and have lunch and stuff. I really like the bars — good music, the people are good. There could be a few more, I guess, but otherwise it’s great.

”