

Hospo Brain Storming Session (4 March 2024) Notes

Representatives of the Mt Eden Village Business Association (MEVBA) – Frances Loo (Chair) and Ken Choe (BID Manager) met with several hospitality members for a brain storming session on 4 March at the Chapter Book & Tea Shop and via zoom.

The reason for the meeting is that business for the hospo/food sector in Mt Eden is down considerably in real terms since Covid, particularly during the evening trade. This reflects the recession/cost of living/higher mortgage rates crisis, competition from new dining precincts/online deliveries, different dining habits and less international students.

The MEVBA has been actively promoting shopping and dining in the Village via its annual Mother's Day, Father's Day and Christmas promotions (sourcing the prizes from our village members), and supporting various events such as Halloween, free Friday lunch time live music, Artists in Eden, Mt Eden Chamber Music Festival, and other initiatives. We have also part-sponsored the installation of the neon LED "angels" at the Mt Eden Village Centre to create a focal point for the Village at night. Post COVID, we have also changed to a more responsive web site provider (and we have been actively updating the directory listing) and we have also contracted a part-time social media manager to promote our local businesses on facebook and now instagram.

Part of the discussion revolved around how our hospo businesses could take better advantage of the MEVBA's existing activity; part of the discussion looked at new ideas to promote the village's hospo businesses.

The following ideas came up. We think items 1-9 can be done relatively quickly and easily if we all put a bit of coordinated effort into them; and then items 10-13 will take a bit more time and planning.

1. Light Up campaign part 1. We urge our business owners to leave their inside lighting and verandah lighting on at night. This will not only improve security/deter crime, but it will also brighten up the Village at night and it will advertise the businesses.
2. Light Up campaign part 2. The MEVBA selectively installed some lighting around the village in 2023 in order to improve security; we will consider more lighting projects (eg, verandah lights/fairy lights) to provide a more welcoming atmosphere at night.
3. Improve perception of car parking in the village. There are approx 300 parking spaces in and around the Village, including the public car park at Essex Rd which offers parking at a very cheap rate (\$0.50/hr for up to two hours). The MEVBA will improve the design of its <https://www.mounteden.co.nz/getting-here> page and our members are encouraged to publicise the parking options available on their own social media posts and websites (eg, via link to our page which will be kept up-to-date).
4. Promote using public transport to get to the village. Now that more bus drivers have been employed and the bus service is more reliable, Mt Eden Village is well served by both the 27 and Outer Link bus services. Also, while the Mt Eden train station is closed, there is also the 64 rail replacement bus service (\$0.01 or free) which links us to Kingsland, Boston Rd, Khyber Pass and Newmarket. <https://www.cityrailink.co.nz/mt-eden-train-station-closure> The MEVBA will improve the design of its <https://www.mounteden.co.nz/getting-here> page and our members are encouraged to publicise the public transport options on their own social media posts and websites (eg, via link to our page).

5. Alert customers to the clear ways in operation along Mt Eden Rd heading north (7-10am) and south (4-7pm). Also the clear ways in Stokes Rd (7-9am and 4.30-5.30pm). If someone is towed from Mt Eden Village, then they are unlikely to come back any time soon.
6. Leverage off the activities held at both the Mt Eden Village Centre (check out calendar <https://mteedenvillagecentre.co.nz/calendar/> or sign up for its newsletter <https://mteedenvillagecentre.co.nz/newsletter/>) and at Eden Park (<https://edenpark.co.nz/whats-on/>). Perhaps promote some pre- or post-event quick menus or group booking options?
7. Take advantage of the MEVBA's Shopping and Dining competitions as an opportunity to reward your customers and connect with them. The first prizes are attractive (worth >\$1,000 for the Mother's Day/Father's Day competitions and worth \$5,000 for the Christmas competition), the odds are good and customers appreciate the thought. There is little effort required from the business – just have the competition QR code displayed and available to scan. Encourage customers to enter and wish them good luck!
8. Encourage our businesses to create special menu offers (food and/or drink) to reward loyal customers and promote these offers on our MEVBA facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/MtEdenVillage>
9. Create a QR code to make it easy for village customers to follow the MEVBA facebook page so that they can see the offers in one place.
10. Plans are well advanced for the MEVBA to launch a monthly Friday Date Night for people who dine in the Village and, on production of a receipt, will be able to take advantage of free babysitting services at the Mt Eden Village Centre. Contractors and T's and C's to be finalised. Approx start date 24 May 2024.
11. Explore implementing a Mt Eden Food Group Loyalty Discount Card scheme to encourage repeat business at participating businesses. And/Or explore implementing a Hospo Loyalty Discount Card scheme to encourage hospo staff to come to Mt Eden Village on their nights off (typically Mon/Tue)?
12. Look at ways to broaden the reach of our promotions beyond our local community by selective advertising about the village and some of the businesses within it, eg, Ponsonby News, Verve, Viva, Canvas, billboards, bus shelters, buses, advertising on/near Maungawhau, etc.
13. Look at re-installing the MEVBA banner (or a new one) across Mt Eden Road in order to promote the Village; and/or look at digital signage or light display(s).
14. Think about how the Village could take advantage of the reopening of the Mt Eden train station (in 2026?).

Please let us know if you have any feedback on these ideas, and whether your business would like to be actively involved in implementing any of them, particularly items 10 and 11. Please also feel very welcome to suggest other initiatives that could be undertaken by the MEVBA in order to promote hospo business in the village.

We plan to hold a similar brainstorming session with our retailers, most likely at night via zoom, in order to see if there are other ideas that could be helpful for the village's business activity and profile.

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