

DRAFT COMMUNITY PLAN CHRISTCHURCH OTAUTAHU 2004

I introduction

This submission comes from Te Whare Roimata, a community development organisation working with the people of the eastern inner city neighbourhoods. Our contact details are as follows :

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We wish to talk to the main points in our written submission.

II As a grassroots community development organisation working in one of the most marginalised communities of Christchurch, we wish to commend the Council on the vision it has for the City and for the outcomes it wishes to achieve.

We are heartened by

- (i) the Council's array of community services provided
- (ii) the financial investment the Council makes to Community groups that contribute to the Council's policies regarding community development and social wellbeing
- (iii) the support provided to community recreation and to the range of Events and Festivals offered especially those at a suburban / neighbourhood level or targeted at a particular group e.g. youth, and
- (iv) the Council's ongoing commitment to the provision of social housing aimed at providing affordable low-cost housing to people on low incomes.

III Concerns

As stated this organisation is supportive of the Council's vision and outcomes it wishes to pursue to achieve this vision. We are however, deeply concerned at the overall thrust of the City's development plans for urban renewal (Vol. 2 pg 37) continued in the City Plan. The overall emphasis of the City Plan with its focus on urban consolidation and increased density in the inner city permits the renewal of

selected older inner city neighbourhoods such as the inner city east community putting these existing communities at risk of being destroyed.

For many years Te Whare Roimata has advocated to successive Councils the special role the inner city east community occupies in providing vital affordable housing for the city, especially for single adults. Both locally and nationally one person households are increasingly making up the share of total households (Vol 1 : 15).

Despite the socio-economic marginalised position of this community, Community Studies comment on the strong networks of neighbourhood support. Te Whare Roimata's comprehensive report on the Inner City East Community in 2002 noted that many residents identify with this neighbourhood and feel a strong sense of belonging to it. Researchers found a strong core of residents who have lived in this area for some years and actively want to remain here. The diversity and strength of community which exists is also welcomed.

Over and above these features the inner city east neighbourhood is home to a range of social services. Many have been strategically located in the inner-city east area as a response to the high level of social need. A comprehensive range of services exists. Such services include the Christchurch City Mission, 198 Health Centre, Hereford Centre, Step Ahead, Te Whare Roimata and Nouvellus House, and several drop-in Centres. These services are not easily found elsewhere in Christchurch.

The Council's development plans for older inner city neighbourhoods such as the inner city east we believe is in direct conflict with several of the outcomes which the Draft Community Plan seeks to achieve – namely a City that :

- is inclusive and has diverse communities that have a strong sense of place and identify
- has healthy active people
- is safe, and
- is liveable.

The redevelopment experienced in this area during the 1990's saw

- (i) a significant loss of the area's affordable housing (25% of the bedsit housing stock was lost)
- (ii) the development of low income tenants who had lived in the area for many years and the loss of choices for them
- (iii) new developments deliberately targeted at higher income earners. Not one of the 33 private developments which occurred was directed at low income earners
- (iv) the undermining of informal neighbourhood supports and the loss of neighbours and friends
- (v) a rise in social tension and the threat to community cohesion
- (vi) the speculative nature of much of the developments with little feel for the character and traditions of the area, and
- (vii) building designs which were insensitive to the amenity and character of the area.

This community's experience of redevelopment tells us that without a change in the Council's development policies to renew selected older neighbourhoods the outcomes sought in the Draft Community Plan cannot be achieved for older inner city communities.

As identified, the inner city east community has traditionally been a vibrant, diverse, supportive neighbourhood where people are able to contribute, identify strongly with the neighbourhood, and have a strong sense of belonging and place. People in this area have been able to gain access to affordable housing and have enjoyed the security of an environment that has enabled them to access a range of services and utilities which enables them to enjoy an acceptable quality of life and a healthy lifestyle (Vol 2 : 4).

The redevelopment of the 1990's seriously undermined these qualities. Further unchecked development will destroy these qualities – qualities, ironically advanced as being outcomes actively sought by the Council in this Community Plan.

IV *Actions Sought*

It is the view of Te Whare Roimata that if the outcomes sought by the Council are to be achieved the Council needs to :

- (i) give recognition to the special housing role the inner city east community plays in providing essential affordable housing in particular for single adults
- (ii) acknowledge the need for local and central government to work in partnership to preserve and protect the remaining housing stock. Such a partnership could be similar to that which exists in the Aranui Community Renewal project and would include the local inner city east community as active participants
- (iii) develop planning controls in the City Plan to ensure affordable housing is retained, or that such housing is replaced with like housing. Such measures could include ensuring a percentage of new developments is set aside for affordable housing, imposing tighter regulations on setbacks, building / land ratios and landscaping requirements so as to restrict the number of developments available, and establishing a financial contribution fund that developers have to contribute to when an existing building is bowled, use is altered, or a subdivision is to occur. Conversely a raft of incentives could be provided for developers to build affordable housing complexes. These measures could include rate rebates, loan money being made available for energy efficient housing
- (iv) consider offering financial assistance or a rent rebate scheme to approved landlords providing bedsit or essential affordable housing to enable them to upgrade their premises to meet essential compliance costs
- (v) consider using some of its social housing money for the establishment of seed capital funding for not for profit Community Housing Trusts to purchase affordable housing in the inner city east area
- (vi) monitor the housing changes occurring in the inner city east area and establish a bedsit register so as to track the level of displacement that occurs
- (vii) designate the inner city east community as a special amenity area as a means of preserving the character, heritage and amenity of the area.

V Conclusion

This submission has commended the Council on its vision and outcomes sought in the Draft Community Plan. We have highlighted that the policy being pursued in the Council's development strategy for selective, older inner city neighbourhoods as outlined in the City Plan however, jeopardise and contradict the outcomes sought in the Draft Community Plan. We have indicated that the inner city east community has traditionally been a vibrant, supportive, diverse community where people have a strong sense of place and actively identify with the area.

We have demonstrated how unchecked development permitted by the City Plan in the 1990's impacted heavily on this community. We have argued that further rapid development will destroy the sense of community and quality of life experienced by many. Such qualities are features advanced in the Council's vision for the City and the outcomes sought.

We have advanced a range of actions the Council could undertake to ensure that the inner city east community is protected while allowing for development to occur. These actions would go some way to ensuring the outcomes pursued in the Community Plan also occur for the people of the older inner city neighbourhoods.

Jenny Smith
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