

3. OUR CITY

Officer responsible Our City Director	Author Jenny May, Our City Director, DDI 365-7489
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The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on progress related to the Our City Project. Included within the report is a brief report, as requested, on the seminar held at Our City on 20 February 2002 with Elaine Gurian from Arlington, Virginia, USA, a Consultant /Advisor to Museums that are beginning, building or reinventing themselves.

DISCUSSION

My first month as Director of Our City has been an incredibly diverse and varied one but never-the-less exciting and positive for the future of this project. Currently the main focus of the project, inter-dispersed with establishing telephone and computer links with the “outer world”, has concentrated on two main areas; establishing relationships with potential partners in the project and developing the exhibition and potential seminar programme for the opening to the public at the end of July.

An exhibition designer and researcher have been engaged on a contract basis for the duration of this period. Opening exhibitions will focus on the theme of Our City showcasing the past, present and future of the environment of Our City as outlined in the information circulated to you at the Riccarton House seminar in February.

The Resource Consent for Stage II of the project, including signage, has been lodged with Council This consent is to upgrade the entrance from Worcester Boulevard.

Though not officially open yet considerable use has been made of the meeting spaces which have included a seminar for 100 in conjunction with the Canterbury Museum, McDougall Art Gallery and National Services (Te Papa), with Elaine Gurian, a debate as part of the recent Adventure Festival, a public meeting to discuss the future use of the McDougall Art Gallery building, a Civic Trust Committee meeting, Keep Christchurch Beautiful meeting, Mayoral Forum Communications Sub-Committee meeting, Personal Guiding Service talk and tour of the building and project and an Arts Culture and Heritage Committee Seminar.

Negotiations are currently taking place with a prospective tenant to lease the second floor of the building and lease arrangements with the tenancy to the Central City Revitalisation Project Team will commence July 2002.

Heritage Week 2002, the 10th anniversary of this festival, is to be run by Our City and will be managed by the Our City Project Manager. An initial meeting has been held to draft a programme outline.

ELAINE GURIAN SEMINAR

On 20 February 2002, we were fortunate to be able to host at Our City in conjunction with the Canterbury Museum, McDougall Art Gallery and National Services (Te Papa), a one day seminar with noted International Museum Consultant/Advisor Elaine Gurian from Arlington Virginia. The topic for the morning was based around issues for Museums 2002. This paper examined the critical areas of mission, vision and direction, for museums and looked at how museums defined content and presentation, discussed the systems of administration and management, research and collections, the visibility of museum facilities and museology and education. Following Elaine’s presentation around these themes, a panel discussion was held with Elaine and the audience on the issues raised. Of particular interest in relation to Our City was her analysis of the community museum/exhibition space in which she discussed spaces relating community issues but not necessarily housing a collection.

This theme related closely to the afternoon’s paper, “Function Follows Form: How Mixed-use Spaces in Museums Help Build Community”. The paper began with the quotation: “Civic Life is what goes on in the public realm. Civic life refers to our relations with our fellow human beings – in short, our roles as citizens.” (James Howard Kunstler **Home from Nowhere: remaking our everyday world for the Twenty-first Century** 1996). The paper concentrated on three elements, that in Elaine’s opinion, have been overlooked in the museum world: space, space mix and unexpected uses. The paper argued that if museums paid overt attention to these areas they might enhance the museum’s role in community building. The paper also examined issues of urban planning relating to museums and exhibition spaces. In both papers Elaine noted that buildings to house the museum/art gallery/exhibition space, are the buildings that are the most coveted of all architectural contracts resulting in world-class architects competing for these contracts which often result in a conflict between the needs of the programme of the space and aesthetic considerations.

The papers were extremely well received and sparked, particularly in the morning session, good debate between the panel, Elaine and the audience. Should members of the committee wish for more detailed coverage of the programme I will make these available.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the information be received.