

## 12. GARDEN CITY EXHIBITION 2003

<b>Officer responsible</b> Parks and Waterways Manager	<b>Author</b> Anne Greenup, DDI 941-8701
---	---

The purpose of this report is to review the Garden City Exhibition held in "Our City" O-Tautahi in the Spring and Summer of 2002 and gauge its level of success.

### BACKGROUND

Though Christchurch is referred to as a Garden City in many of our official documents, the term means different things to different people and there has never been any agreed and signed-off vision to give a framework to decision-making. To celebrate the many and varied ways that clubs and individuals contribute in their own way to enhancing Christchurch as a Garden City, the exhibition was held to give people a chance to participate in a subject that is close to their hearts. The exhibition was endorsed by the Council and funded by the Parks and Waterways Unit to approximately \$28,000. Key sponsors were Athol McCully, Parthenon Pavers and City Care, who together funded a private garden makeover won through a competition for attendees of the exhibition.

### PROCESS

As this was to be a small but high profile event, Tenth Dot Management were brought in as professional organisers. The objectives and programme evolved through a number of meetings with Tenth Dot to clarify the key requirements of the exhibition and agree a programme.

#### ❖ Objectives

- To communicate to Christchurch residents and to visitors the many facets that go to make up the city's status as a premier Garden City
- To provide the Chairperson of the Garden City Advisory Subcommittee with an opportunity to gain support and interest in her endeavours to lift the standard and reputation of the Garden City
- To act as a forum for dialogue, feedback, interaction and new ideas
- To entertain, stimulate and generate interest and commitment
- To celebrate our past, present and future
- To keep planning and strategies on track and modify these in the light of changing priorities
- To gather information to help plan financial commitments through the Annual Plan process

#### ❖ Main events and Productions

- Breakfast opening ceremony with 80 key stakeholders and guests (23 September 2002)
- Seminars and workshops ("What makes Christchurch a Garden City"; "Why do trees die?"; "Bio-security")
- Garden Makeover Competition: 180 entries. The entry forms were also a way of gathering feedback on what entrants thought was important in a garden city
- Garden City Guide: a pocket sized information package containing the names and contact numbers of Garden Clubs, Community Gardens, Kids' Edible Gardens, websites and main gardening events throughout the year
- Garden City icon for use by any group which contributes effort to the Garden City
- Parks and Waterways Unit displays on planning for green corridors, securing open space and the role of design: our ageing tree infrastructure: landscape heritage with clocks fountains and statues: bio-security issues with weed species identified and sustainable practices for control explored

#### ❖ Static displays in "Our City"

- Two computer terminals linked into the CCC website
- Flip book showing winning gardens in garden and street competitions held in Christchurch
- Data presentation and video
- Numerous brochures to take away
- Trophies in glass case marking Christchurch's success as a Garden City
- Displays by clubs of their activities over the years and opportunity to join a club
- Early history photographic display, celebrating our past and present heritage
- Slice of a tree showing growth rings and structure to illustrate the subject of ageing trees and the significance to the city

## **WHAT WORKED WELL**

In spite of its limited hours, "Our City" was a quality venue and showed the displays to great advantage. Its central city location made it very accessible to people who came into the city for work or recreation.

Between 23 September and 30 November 2002, 3,875 people viewed the exhibition. The manager of "Our City" said there was so much interest in the displays that she requested they remain there for until the end of January 2003. The graphics and text of the displays were of a very high standard and are a re-usable resource. The Garden City Guide was widely distributed and was very popular. Many requests came in and we eventually ran out. It is on disc and so can be updated and re-printed. The breakfast opening was very well done and popular, with an above average acceptance rate. Interest groups such as the Christchurch Beautifying Association, Canterbury Horticultural Society and Friends of the Botanic Gardens could network, meet and share ideas. The Garden City icon is attractive and easy to add to documents. It is being used by the Royal New Zealand Horticultural Society for its national conference here in Christchurch in October 2003. The children's resource material was very well received and the Council's websites were constantly being accessed from the terminals provided, especially by children. The quality and enthusiasm of the presenters at the talks made a significant contribution to the success of the event. Everything except the garden makeover ran smoothly to the timetable.

The topics of the displays were of ongoing relevance to the Parks and Waterways Unit so the exhibition provided staff with a good opportunity to concentrate and communicate on some of these important issues. The makeover competition forms gave people an opportunity to record what they liked best and the display on the ageing tree infrastructure was a clear favourite, followed by early history of Christchurch as a Garden City.

## **WHAT DIDN'T WORK SO WELL**

The exhibition would have had more impact if it had started on 1 September, the first day of Spring. Unfortunately, "Our City" was not fully operational until later that month. "Our City" was not open at the weekends and this was a missed opportunity to tap into the hundreds of inner city weekend visitors. Their opening hours were also shorter than the exhibition required for maximum effect. There were also restrictions on what could be exhibited and as gardens are alive, the ban on using living plants etc was incompatible with the needs of the exhibition. There was a perceived lack of publicity to build momentum and ensure maximum participation, although there was considerable media coverage. This highlights the difficulty of getting a message across in a world which is deluged in messages. The talks and seminars were poorly attended as glitches in the advertising meant there was insufficient notice given. (Note: those who did attend really enjoyed the topics). The drought meant the implementation of the Garden Makeover could not take place in the summer and the designer's difficulties co-ordinating the sponsors and the actual work on site resulted in a very late start. This resulted in the event losing much of its significance and connection to the exhibition.

## **CONCLUSION**

The exhibition was a new event and so there were some things that could have been done better. On the whole, the positive aspects outweighed the shortcomings. It was the first attempt to give a concentrated effort to explore the many aspects of the Garden City through an exhibition format. The interest shown by the public and key stakeholders indicates that it could easily be a biennial event, but a budget would need to set aside specifically.

### **Staff**

**Recommendation:** For discussion.

### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That consideration be given to holding the Garden City exhibition biennially.