

Submission on the Christchurch Draft Community Plan 1004-2014

From **Christchurch Otautahi Agenda 21 Forum Inc.**

We are an independent non-governmental organisation established in 1991, and have made submission in previous years on sustainability and public participation issues.

Our mailing address is c/o PO Box 2657, Christchurch.

Chairman (2004): Roger Buck ph. 326 5676 and 3666888

Minutes Secretary: John Stocks; Treasurer: Joy Burt & committee.

We expect to be able to attend a hearing – with some limitations depending on date and time offered, as most of our members have full-time occupations.

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1. We welcome the rhetoric of the Draft Plan making reference to pursuing sustainability and note the requirements to include this made by the December 2002 Local Government Act. However the Council still has a long way to travel on this road. The Council lacks a coherent framework for decision-making on sustainability. A few years ago the Council adopted the internationally-recognised **Natural Step Framework**, but has failed to implement it yet in many areas of its work. In the few areas where it has been used, such as in the South Christchurch Library project, it has helped produce good – indeed award winning - results. You should have the confidence to train more staff in this way of thinking and to use it more often. Local government in other parts of the world has used TNS to good effect as a strategic tool, and their experience has been documented in a recently published book – would you like us to obtain a copy of this for your Chief Executive?
 2. INVESTMENT: (a) We support the ‘garden city’ image and thus new capital investment in the **Botanic Gardens**, hoping that this will include educational displays about home food production and composting, and about NZ endemic plants that can be grown in Christchurch gardens, as well as information on the interesting exotic collections. (b) On a smaller scale we also support the retention of community gardens in various neighbourhoods around the city and in particular the **Strickland Street Garden**, which currently has the opportunity to use a recently vacated Council owned house, just next door. Please do not sell this site – it has real community value and can surely be used in educational ways that support your policies for waste minimisation, for water efficiency and for healthy Christchurch. (c) We do not support Council spending on Lake Isaac or on alternative lake locations, nor on research into these, and wish to see that \$630,000 re-applied to a more inclusive diversity of community and sporting projects. An example would be a small portion (say 3% or \$20,000 per year) revenue support to the **Christchurch Environment Centre**, which the Council shamefully failed to fund at all last year.

3. WASTE: (d) We prefer **home-based composting** to kerb-side collection of household kitchen scraps. The capital available should be used to subsidise compost boxes, worm-farms and Effective Micro-organism Bokashi bucket systems; not for collection vehicles, a centralised processing plant and then distribution vehicles for the compost. (e) We do however support building a smaller-sized composting plant to tackle large volumes of waste from commercial sources, although we'd prefer to encourage waste minimisation by these businesses in the first place! (f) To respond to the proportion of organic material that reaches the managed landfills, we advocate methane gas collection at both Burwood and Kates Valley sites. (g) We **support the Council's move to reduce free black sacks to a fortnightly supply** (26 instead of 52 per year) as a financial dis-incentive to wastefulness. Now you need to add incentives for home recycling and composting, and also varied educational efforts, not just newspaper adverts exhorting change. (h) One of our members (Rhys Taylor, ph. 337 1662) is involved in the national pilot testing of an **adult education programme called Sustainable Households**, supported by the Ministry for the Environment. We would like to see this programme more widely used in the city to encourage people who are 'ready to change' but need information and group motivation to begin their actions. There must be thousands of people in this category..
4. TRANSPORT: The Metropolitan Christchurch Transport Strategy continues to favour roads above other transport infrastructure, despite welcome proposed increases in capital funding for pedestrians and cyclists, and continuing investment in bus shelters. (I) Because you state that "sustainability should be to the fore" (vol 2, page 115): **We seek a doubling of your proposed levels of capital investment, and consequential maintenance, in bus shelters and interchanges, in pedestrian facilities and in cycle routes, over this plan period.** This could be achieved by canceling or deferring a few road-widenings, some re-kerbings, and projects such as the Blenheim road re-alignment. We believe that the predicted peak-times congestion experienced by car drivers will encourage more serious consideration of car sharing and alternative travel modes, especially if the road widenings they observe are mostly done to speed bus progress – as seen recently in Auckland. (j) We do not support the current priority on car traffic 'smooth flows' when they are at the expense of bus users, cyclists or pedestrians (who have to wait for long periods, noticeably in the central city road junction crossings). We also wish to see **additional pedestrian streets in the central city** within this plan period. (k) We believe that **rail passenger travel into the city from Kaiapoi to the north and Rolleston to the south** should be investigated and supported, and **support 'park and ride'** for other compass points around the city.
5. WATERWAYS: (l) We support continuing emphasis on natural NZ vegetation in wetland and riverside reserves, provided recreational access paths are also maintained. (m) We are concerned at the pumped lowering of water-tables around the city's edge, former greenbelt areas, due to the development of housing estates, combined with the large increases in piped storm-water (collected from roofs and driveways). The Council should require developers to install **permeable paving on new subdivisions and also rainwater collection tanks**, for garden watering or toilet flushing, as used in Australia. Swales or storm-water retention pools are not enough on their own. (n) We support the Council's partnerships with non-

statutory catchment management projects on the Styx and the Estuary, entreat that they will enable continuing citizen involvement and show the trust that allows considerable initiative to the community-based groups. These are welcome examples of inclusive, participatory democracy that were inspired by the ‘7 values’ approach to waterways – where is that policy now, as we hear little of it?

6. AIR QUALITY: The Council needs to **contribute more help for households to switch from smoke producing fuels to clean heating**, in collaboration with ECAN. We are disappointed that the Environmental Health aims (page 16 of vol2) do not include action on clean air other than pressing Central Government for ‘air quality guidelines’, when this is the number one issue of concern in public opinion surveys in the city. The 2002 Act allows the Council to be more active in this area than previously – let’s see more action!
7. SUSTAINABLE HOUSING: We welcome a new commitment (Vol 2, page 15) to “Advocate for sustainable housing which is energy efficient, soundly constructed from sustainable resources and contains no toxins”. We would be happy to help you in this aim, as within our membership are skilled people already active in this field. We wish to see local bylaws and active leadership that will put into practice these aims, whose likely direction has been demonstrated recently by Waitakere City Council’s *Better Building Code* applied initially to its own building projects.
8. The Christchurch Otautahi Agenda 21 Forum has expertise within its membership that can provide informed assistance in all the areas mentioned above.