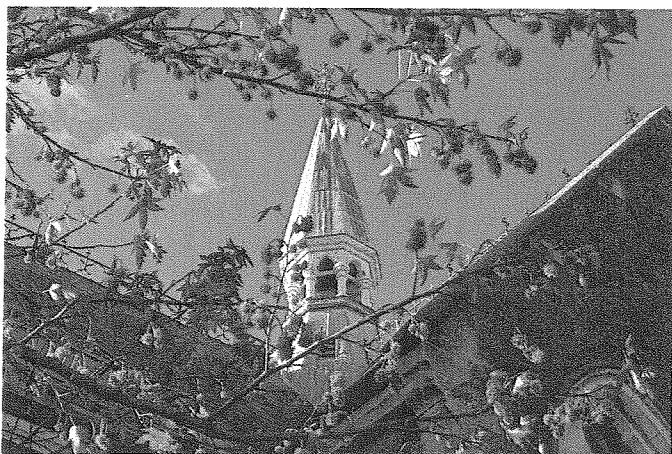


Submission to Christchurch City Council 'Our Community Plan'


From The Arts Centre of Christchurch Trust

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Signed



I wish to talk to the main points in this submission at the hearings to be held
Thursday 25 May and Wednesday 7 June.

1.0 The Arts Centre

The Arts Centre is home to hundreds of local creative industries, projects and events (see Appendix One for a definition of 'creative industries' and Appendix Two for a list of creative industries at The Arts Centre). Located in the heart of the city's Cultural Precinct The Arts Centre is a creative cluster that makes a major contributor to the quality of life in Christchurch. Our contributions to the people of Christchurch and to the success of the city include:

- Supporting economic development (an estimated 400 FTE jobs are based at The Arts Centre, working in businesses with an estimated combined turnover of \$40 million per annum)
- Acting as a catalyst for Christchurch becoming a more creative city (home to, and venue for, many of the inspiring and important creative industries, projects and events that contribute to Christchurch being a creative city)
- Supporting inner city revitalization (a major site of energy, entertainment and activity in the inner city, attractive to locals and visitors alike)
- Strengthening the cultural precinct (The Arts Centre plays a leading role in the joint development of the precinct)
- A major draw card for the visitor industry (over 1.5 million visitors each year)
- A place where the creative industries can develop and where creative people can turn their talents and passions into profitable businesses (home to over 100 small to medium creative industries, providing these businesses with the advantages of co-location, high visitor foot traffic, subsidized rentals, and a prime inner city location close to their audiences, customers and other cultural institutions and venues)
- Viable re-use of heritage buildings (The Arts Centre is a world-class example of the adaptive re-use of a cluster of heritage buildings that is, with the exception of major building conservation work, largely self-funded)

Because of these features and successes The Arts Centre is a significant contributor to the City Vision, Community Outcomes and Strategic Directions named in the Council's draft Community Plan.

These contributions include making Christchurch a more enjoyable place to live, a more attractive city, and a must-see city. Our support and development of the creative industries in Christchurch provides work and employment opportunities, recognizes the contribution of creativity to innovation and economic success and contributes to a quality of life in the city that will attract investment and re-location of businesses to this part of the world.

Our contributions to the City Vision also mean that we are contributing to the achievement of the Community Outcomes and Strategic Directions named in the Plan – we help make Christchurch more prosperous, fun and creative.

Through our conservation and site development programmes we make our part of the city more attractive and well designed. We deliver outcomes that support the plan's Strategic Directions by providing "welcoming public buildings, spaces and facilities", support for "cultural groups and organisations" and "arts, festivals and events", as well as being a major site that "protects and promotes the heritage character and history of the city" (Our Community Plan p. 50)¹.

By providing a venue for over 600 community arts and cultural events each year we promote strong communities. Our artistic and public arts programmes promote the "integration of the arts into...urban surroundings" (p. 54) and our use and animation of public spaces contributes to "high quality urban design" that "improves people's sense of community identity" (p. 54).

We contribute to the city's economic prosperity through providing space and support for over 100 creative industries ranging from the very large (e.g. The Court Theatre, Untouched World, The Academy Cinema) to single practitioners working in a range of disciplines and at a range of places across the commercial spectrum. Many of these businesses have national and international links, ventures and perspectives. Our plans for the next 5 years are to significantly increase the number of FTE jobs directly based at The Arts Centre and to double to combined annual turnover of all businesses based on site.

Because of the very close alignment between The Arts Centre's vision, goals and objectives with the parts of the Community Plan outlined above, and our contributions to the city's success in a number of the key areas elaborated in the plan, we wish to comment both on the overall intentions and direction of the plan as well as specific parts of the vision, outcomes, strategic directions, capital works and council activities.

2.0 Arts Centre Submission on the Plan

The Arts Centre congratulates the CCC on the production of an excellent draft plan. The quality of thinking and the strategic framework in the plan are generally of a very high quality. While some of our comments about the plan are critical we do not wish to be overly negative and we endorse the way the plan identifies and builds on Christchurch's existing strengths and opportunities.

As the plan notes, achieving the overall community outcomes requires the successful efforts of a very wide range of organisations and individuals throughout the city. It is within the spirit of a strong desire to contribute to this process that The Arts Centre makes the following comments.

2.1 Overall Direction, Leadership and Vision

The Arts Centre suggests that while the strategic directions section of the plan (pp 49 – 57) is a good start there is a gap between these very important (and well described) goals and objectives and the more detailed 'business as usual' council activities and services section of the plan. *In our view this gap relates to the opportunity for a clear exposition of the Council's role as a civic leader and driver of city progress and development.* The Council may wish to

¹ All subsequent page references are to the draft Community Plan.

consider the advantages of saying in the plan how it intends to continue and develop its leadership role in ensuring that the things that need to happen to create a successful city, happen, and how the obstacles to these things happening will be overcome.

The need for leadership in a successful city is self evident and by no means contradictory to the need to consult and engage communities of interest. The value, however, of signaling such an approach in documents like the Community Plan is in supporting the development of a climate and city-wide culture that values 'can-do' 'lets-get-on-with-it' approaches. The Council can use this very significant document as a way of publicly committing to:

- Its primary interest in the success of the city and a desire to get things done. This needs to include a willingness to disappoint some stakeholders if necessary. In our view a desire to appease all stakeholders has led to stagnation and prevented progress on key projects such as inner city revitalisation and the implementation of a coherent events strategy. It may be that the type of approach typified by the risk mitigation strategy on p. 94: "ongoing consultation with stakeholders" would be more effective if it was accompanied by a willingness on the part of the Council to signal that it wishes to lead change in a proactive rather than simply responsive or consultative fashion.
- A commitment to progressive change management rather than risk aversion. This plan is a great opportunity for the Council to say how committed they are to the progressive change and development of Christchurch and to reinforce both within the Council organisation and the wider city the wisdom of an orientation towards progress and change that relies on a "lets work together to make this happen" approach rather than a "sorry here are five reasons why you can't do that" approach which seems to have infused an attitude to change both within parts of city hall and the wider city.
- A clear will to work to counter the patch protection, narrow self-interest and parochialism that would seem to characterize much of Christchurch's reflexive allergy to change.

The implementation of the very clear and positive vision and strategic directions in the plan requires leadership of this nature. If the Council agrees, it should explicitly say so in the plan and develop strategies and outcomes for monitoring how both the Council and Council staff exercise civic leadership roles.

Part of the Council's role in exercising this kind of leadership (and in describing this in the plan) is to facilitate a lifting of the quality of civic debates and to champion a more visionary approach to key issues in the life and success of the city. For example, the current public approach to heritage in Christchurch can be characterized as an intractable and unedifying stand-off between proponents of never altering heritage buildings and those who see buildings in strictly economic terms. Obviously a more enlightened vision emerges from the grey area between these two extremes. The Arts Centre, for example, would not have survived had either of these positions been rigorously adhered to. In order to re-animate this site our founders in the 1970s had to both significantly alter buildings and stave off those who would have demolished some buildings on the basis of a perceived economic

imperative. Had the current visionless and rather pedantic approach to heritage prevailed in the early years of The Arts Centre's development it is unlikely that the precinct as we know it today would have got off the ground.

The Council, therefore, has a role in ensuring that debates and decisions around complex and ambiguous issues like heritage management in the city are moved towards a more enlightened place where the spirit of the law becomes more important than the letter. This role needs to be signaled and elaborated in the Community Plan. As we note later in this submission the lack of specific, concrete and meaningful indicators of achievement around issues like heritage would seem to indicate that in practical terms the City either does not want to or is not capable of providing leadership in these key areas.

The second strategic issue that the Council may wish to include in a more meaningful and central way in the plan relates to the almost universal role of creativity and innovation in contributing to the success of a city. The Arts Centre advocates for an understanding of the creative industries (see Appendix One) that sees their potential not just to contribute to our social quality of life, but also to economic prosperity. While this is recognised in the community outcomes section (p. 46) for "a city of recreation, fun and creativity" it is not reflected in the related headline indicators which seem to view the arts solely as vehicles for social cohesion and recreation and the only valid expression of creativity. Similarly the strategic direction section notes the contribution of the arts to identity, diversity and fun (p. 50) but in doing so effectively sidelines the potential for creativity to contribute to economic development, inner city revitalisation and to our goals for attracting investment.

A "world-class boutique city" (p. 9) will be a creative city in the widest sense of the word. It will be a city that has recognised both the infrastructure needs of the creative industries, the significant local, national and international consumer demand for unique, innovative, creative product and the potential for international partnerships, exchanges and linkages that exists within the local creative industries. These trends should be noted in the strategic directions sections on creating a liveable and prosperous city and responded to by ensuring that those charged with the economic development of the region increase their focus on the creative industries.

2.2 Outcomes, Strategic Direction

While The Arts Centre understands that the current Community Outcomes are not being reviewed as part of this plan, it is disappointing to see how weak and limited the headline indicators are. To assess the success of a goal towards lifelong learning with measures that all relate to schooling and academic achievement seems as problematic as it is short-sighted. Similarly the headline indicators for monitoring the success of Christchurch becoming a city for recreation, fun and creativity (p. 46) seem constrained, difficult to measure and ignore significant parts of the outcome – particularly the contribution of the arts, sports and recreation to economic development.

2.3 Capital Works

This section of the plan (pp71 – 87) needs to be strengthened by demonstrating much more clearly how the list of essential and discretionary projects relate to the achievement of the City Vision (p. 9), the Community

Outcomes (pp 43 – 46) and the Strategic Directions (pp 49 – 57). The logic behind the current list of priorities is far from clear. It is not possible in the present iteration of the Plan to find out, for example, which of the four strategic directions or nine community outcomes the Civic Office fitout is contributing too, or, if that particular project does not directly contribute to the key strategic outcomes in the plan, why it was of higher priority than other projects that might seem more likely to contribute to the higher level goals in the plan.

The only coherent and robust way of assessing which of these capital projects are a priority is to clearly and carefully say how they will (and how much they will) contribute to the achievement of the Plan's over-arching vision and strategic goals. Only then will it be possible to say with any certainty that, for example, air conditioning in the Art Gallery is 'more important' than water re-use feasibility studies.

The reverse is also an issue. The Arts Centre is disappointed that capital projects that would seem to make a clear contribution to the Plan's higher level goals have been given a lower priority. In particular we would argue that making provision for the earthquake strengthening of heritage buildings, public art in the city and, perhaps most importantly central-city revitalisation are all key contributors to economic prosperity, a fun creative city, an attractive well designed city and the strong communities theme that weaves through the community outcomes and strategic direction of the plan. It seems anomalous, for example, that in a plan that has a clear vision of being a city that is a showcase for world class urban design, where the Council champions "high quality urban design" and seeks to create a city where the arts are integrated into "their urban surroundings" (p. 54) that funding for public art has not been included. It is impossible to think of a well-designed city where public art is not a significant feature of the urban landscape.

The Arts Centre understands that the Council cannot fund every capital project on the city's agenda. That means that it is crucial that those projects that are funded are as strategic as possible, that they are projects which provide the greatest movement towards the city vision. Whether that is the case in the current plan is far from clear. That clarity is required before the city can confidently sign-off on the capital projects list.

2.4 Council Activities and Programmes

The Arts Centre strongly endorses the following activities and services provided by the Council:

- The need to create and implement a cohesive events strategy (p. 130) – although it is disappointing that the development of this strategy is timetabled for out-years 1-3 with implementation not planned until years 4 – 10!
- Funding for heritage conservation, particularly for key public heritage assets like the Arts Centre.
- Support for central-city revitalisation and a commitment to a "business retention and development programme" (p. 92) to support increased growth of business and pedestrian numbers in the central city. The Arts Centre suggests that central city revitalisation requires three things: one: a commitment to leading

the establishment of strong, unique precincts that have clear points of difference from each other and from the offer provided by suburban malls; two: a willingness to fearlessly market the inner city by specifically naming and promoting key attractions (even if this means not naming others) and moving beyond the bland, ineffective, lowest-common denominator approach to central city marketing currently in use; and three: to see the animation of the central city as the result of the interaction between increasing numbers of inner-city residents and a wide range of events, attractions and businesses. While this might involve retail renewal this is only part of the solution. The Council should view their role in the inner city as analogous to a 'mall manager' seeking to attract anchor tenants across a range of sectors including retail, residential, commercial, cultural and entertainment. Each central city precinct needs enough strong, unique anchor tenants – who become both a destination for people and a reason to re-locate for other businesses. To this end The Arts Centre strongly advocates that the plan needs to explicitly provide resources for the development and operation of a series of central-city precincts – this activity currently appears as a non-priority capital project (p. 74) and should be elevated as it contributes significantly to key community outcomes and strategic directions. A world-class boutique city will, in fact, be a series of world-class precincts. If funding is not available for this activity the Council still needs to commit more explicitly to a facilitation role in precinct development – including finding ways of supporting and smoothing the planning process of each precinct and ensuring that bureaucratic red-tape and Council 'silos' don't hamstring the emergence of co-operative precincts such as the Cultural Precinct, the High Street precinct, the Strip, Victoria Street etc.

- Funding for community grants – these do make a difference to our work and quite small sums of money can provide significant leverage for not-for-profit groups like The Arts Centre Trust to create projects, events, and community services that contribute much to the quality of life in the City.

The Arts Centre suggests that the planned activities and services could be significantly improved by:

- Including more robust, specific, measurable indicators for achieving heritage objectives. The overarching activity the Council provides in heritage protection includes "leadership" (p. 91). This is a very important role for the Council as we note in section 2.1 above. It is entirely absent from the list of what the Council is already doing in this area (p. 92) and with the only indicator of achievement being the ill-defined and unhelpful "increase in heritage awareness" (p. 92) it appears as if the Council either does not understand or is not serious about a leadership role in heritage protection. If the Council does wish to play a leadership role in this area – and The Arts Centre strongly advocates for such an involvement – then the measures set against the objective need to include robust and meaningful ways of monitoring the success of this leadership. They could include numbers of threatened buildings retained, the economic impact of viable adaptive re-use

and the number of public/private partnerships created around heritage conservation.

- Acknowledging that the desired growth in visitor numbers signaled on page 117 will require more than the trade shows and joint ventures proposed on page 116. The Greater Christchurch Visitor Strategy will require a full implementation that includes an increased financial commitment on the part of the Council to domestic marketing.

The Arts Centre appreciates this opportunity to contribute to the Community Plan

Tony Paine
Director
May 2006

Appendix One:

The Creative Industries

The Arts Centre's priority in leasing space is with the best and most unique examples of local Creative Industries. We define Creative Industries as:

Activities that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent *and* have the potential for wealth and job creation through generation of intellectual property, where creative expression is at the heart of the business (as opposed to the creative processes that drive all business innovation).

This currently means individuals and businesses involved in the development, retail, export and commercialization of the following sectors:

- Visual arts
- Music
- Performing arts
- Creative writing
- Craft
- Film, TV & radio production
- Advertising & publishing
- Design: graphic-, industrial-, landscape-, interior-, urban-, screen-based (web, games)
- Fashion
- Architecture
- Includes practitioners *and* brokers, curators, educators, funders, administrators, advocates
- Includes education, mentoring and business support for all of above

Appendix Two:

Creative Industries, Projects & Major Events at the Arts Centre

Category	Company/Organisation
Visual arts	<p>Te Toi Mana Visually Maori Campbell Gallery Cloisters Gallery Gallery O Salamander Art Gallery SOFA Gallery Art Works Christchurch Tapestry Workshop Ross Coombes Photography Art on the railings weekend art market</p> <p>Heartland The Artists Palette Felolini Maria Ifopo Serena McWilliam Tahan Art Classes Ria Van Rooyen art tuition Campbell Conservation Marianne Hargreaves Robert McDowell art tuition Zander Imaging</p>
Music	<p>Margo Askin – flute tuition Bevan Chignall – viola tuition Jenny Davey – cello tuition Mark Hobson – clarinet & saxophone tuition Noeline Hobson – piano & violin tuition Christchurch International Jazz Festival</p> <p>Lyn Malakou – piano tuition Marina Manning – piano tuition Annelies Pikelharing – voice tuition Helen Webby – harp tuition Friday Lunchtime Concerts Christopher's Classics World Buskers Festival</p>
Performing arts	<p>The Court Theatre Southern Ballet Company University Theatre Act Now casting agency Festival City Trust Just Quietly Productions New Pacific Underground</p>
Creative writing	<p>Anna Rogers</p>
Craft	<p>Anne Field Weavers Artisan Fibre Centre Arts Centre Leather Shop Arts Centre Jeweller Beadz Unlimited Candle Shop Bone Carving Studio Pot Shop Upstairs Art Wool, Yarn & Fibres Cave Rock Gallery Sue Spigel Quilts + 30 – 50 Weekend Market Craft stalls</p> <p>Connexion Jewellery Cottage Corner Fabric Art Forget-me-knots Hardee Toys Kiwi Heritage NZ Jade & Opal Wood Turning Studio Wool Studio Woodcraft Gallery Canta Clay Maori Handcrafts</p>
Film, TV & radio production	<p>Academy Cinema Cloisters Cinema Te Puna Toi & VACCESS moving image library Raconteur International Ltd Raynbird Productions Ltd</p>
Design: screen-based (web, games)	<p>Boulevard Web Systems</p>
Fashion	<p>C – Shells Untouched World + 5 – 10 Weekend Market Clothing stalls</p>
Architecture	<p>Clare Kelly Architect Stewart Ross Team Architecture</p>
Creative Industry brokers, curators, educators, funders, administrators, and advocates	<p>Chrysalis Seed Trust Art & Industry Biennial Trust Arts Canterbury Creative NZ Southern Regional Office Arts Centre Spring and Autumn art, craft and writing workshops Arts Centre artist in residence programme Arts on Tour</p>