

12. A CITY FOR PEOPLE – ACTION PLAN

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To report on the Public Space Public Life Study of Christchurch undertaken by Gehl Architects.
2. To recommend Council adopt the vision and attached action plan entitled “A City for People - Action Plan” for the central city. This vision and action plan is based on the report entitled “Public Space Public Life Study” prepared by Gehl Architects in 2009.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. The success of the Central City is integral to the success of Christchurch as a whole. The Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (UDS) identifies the Central City as the main cultural, economic and social hub for the city, Greater Christchurch and much of the South Island. The UDS proposed that the central city is developed with a ‘distinct urban sense.’ The Central City Revitalisation Strategy Stage II identifies that the central city is the heart of Christchurch and ‘the enhancement of public spaces’ as a priority. The Public Space Public Life Study is the direct outcome of these strategies.
4. In August 2008 the Council commissioned Gehl Architects to undertake a Public Space Public Life Study of Christchurch in partnership with the Council. The study was commissioned to assess public spaces in the Central City in an integrated fashion, looking at streets, public spaces and buildings, as well as pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and vehicles. In doing so it puts people back at the centre of a successful and vibrant Central City. The study area was defined as the city centre with the boundaries being Kilmore Street (north), St Asaph Street (south), Rolleston Avenue (west) and Madras Street (east).
5. Jan Gehl is a Professor of Architecture at the University of Copenhagen and principal of Gehl Architects. He is widely regarded as one of the world’s pre-eminent experts in urban design and human behaviour. His philosophy is that priority order of city planning should be People-Space-Buildings rather than the traditional Buildings-Space-People. Gehl Architects have developed a methodology for measuring the way people use public spaces that has now been applied around the world, including studies in Melbourne, Sydney, New York, London, Wellington and Perth.
6. The objectives of the Public Space Public Life Study were:
 - (a) To assess the quality and use of public spaces and to review planned projects in the Central City, and to recommend areas and priorities for improvement.
 - (b) To provide a baseline measure of public life in the Central City against which the success of the Central City Revitalisation Strategy and public space upgrades can be reviewed.
 - (c) To provide a comparative measure of Christchurch’s public life with other international cities including cities with a similar size and population.
 - (d) To draw on international examples and best practice to suggest how the Council might want to address identified issues and improve the quality of Christchurch’s public spaces.
 - (e) To provide a model for the kinds of public open spaces that would be appropriate in Christchurch to provide a high quality living environment for medium density residential development to meet the needs of existing and future inner city residents.

7. The survey was carried out over two weeks in October/November 2008 and, using the Gehl methodology, comprised counting where people were in the central city and what they were doing. The study also assessed the quality and condition of the public spaces, for example paving and street furniture condition. Over the following three months analysis was completed and the study was presented to the Council in March 2009.
8. In summary, Gehl Architects found Christchurch to be “a beautiful planned city” with a number of positive attributes including:
 - Good human scale.
 - Great recreational assets including the Avon River and surrounding parks.
 - Large number of heritage buildings.
 - Some vibrant city lanes.
 - Strong outdoor café culture.
 - Lots of potential.
9. In terms of issues they found that:
 - The city centre is generally dominated by vehicles with relatively low numbers of pedestrians and cyclists.
 - Christchurch has a large number of car parks compared with other similar sized cities internationally and these tend to dominate the central city streets.
 - The environment provided for people who choose ‘sustainable’ options of walking, cycling or using public transport is generally ‘quite poor’ and they are given low priority.
 - The main public spaces and attractions are generally poorly connected by pedestrian networks (with the exception of Worcester Boulevard).
 - The existing cycle lanes are a ‘half-hearted gesture’ – they are discontinuous and do not address intersections or provide any signage.
 - There are relatively few children and elderly people in public spaces in the central city reflecting the poor environment and lack of facilities.
 - There are a number of under-utilised public spaces in the Central City.
10. The Public Space Public Life Study contains 110 recommendations ranging from small business-as-usual improvements to major new initiatives. Following the completion of the study in June 2009 and three Councillor workshops an action plan entitled A City for People has been developed which prioritises the key recommendations over a twelve year programme linked to the three yearly reviews of the Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP).
11. A number of the recommendations in the Public Space Public Life Study require further investigation including identification of options and evaluation of costs and benefits, as well as public consultation. Funding for new projects will need to be approved through future LTCCPs. Developing a Council action plan enables appropriate investigation, funding and decision-making processes to occur prior to Council approving any particular capital works.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. All funding for investigations and projects proposed between 2009-12 fit within the approved 2009-19 LTCCP budgets. Funding for new initiatives will be considered as part of the 2012-22 LTCCP process and any investigations to inform that LTCCP will be undertaken from existing budgets.

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2009-19 LTCCP budgets?

13. Yes.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

14. There are no legal implications arising from the adoption of the staff recommendations. New projects developed as a result of the action plan will be investigated, and consulted upon, as appropriate and decisions regarding funding will be part of an LTCCP or Annual Plan process.

Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?

15. As above.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

16. Yes – see below.

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2009-19 LTCCP?

17. The proposed Action Plan supports the City Development Activity and Central City Revitalisation levels of service. It also integrates a number of other existing projects into a coherent vision for public spaces in the Central City including:
- Inner City Transport.
 - Urban Renewal.
 - Cycleways Improvement Programme.
 - New Bus Shelters/New Seats at Bus Stops.
 - Bus Priority Routes.
 - Tram Extension.
 - Christchurch Transport Interchange.
 - Real Time Information Bus Finder Installations.
 - Public Art in the City.
 - Heritage Protection.
 - Events and Festivals.
 - Neighbourhood Parks Growth.

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

18. The Action Plan is aligned with the:
- Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy which identifies the Central City as the first intensification area and urban design as a priority action;
 - Central City Revitalisation Strategy Stage II which identifies 'the enhancement of public spaces' as a key objective; and
 - Draft Open Space Strategy which outlines a plan for proposed open spaces in the Central City.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

19. Extensive consultation has taken place as part of the Central City Revitalisation Strategy Stage II in 2006. Public consultation will be carried out as part of individual projects proposed in the Action Plan as appropriate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Endorses the Christchurch 2009 Public Space Public Life Study by Gehl Architects.
- (b) Adopts the vision for the central city from the Christchurch 2009 Public Space Public Life Study and contained in "A City for People – Action Plan".
- (c) Adopts the attached "A City for People – Action Plan" as the Council's implementation plan for upgrading the central city public spaces and places.

BACKGROUND

20. Jan Gehl is a Professor of Architecture at the University of Copenhagen and principal of Gehl Architects. He is widely regarded as one of the world's pre-eminent experts in urban design and human behaviour. His influential 1971 book, *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Spaces*, now in its sixth edition, was based on his observations of how people behaved in the streets of Copenhagen. Gehl's ideas have proved to be relevant in public space public life studies around the world including Melbourne, Sydney, New York, London, Wellington and Perth.
21. Broadly, the Study report is divided into three sections. The City section analyses the actual physical public spaces in the Central City, the People section surveys how people behave and what they do in public spaces around the Central City, and the Recommendations section makes recommendations for improving the public spaces in the Central City based on the analysis and user surveys in the preceding two sections.
22. At the heart of the public space public life studies is a quantitative methodology for measuring the way that people use public spaces. The method uses pedestrian and stationary activity counts throughout the day and evening to create a snapshot of how people behave in public spaces. The studies also include age and gender counts, and an analysis of public spaces based on human perception and ergonomics. Using a standardised method for measuring public life enables not only comparisons with other cities but also by repeating measurements over time it provides a way to monitor the effectiveness of public space interventions.
23. While a number of cities have commissioned Public Space Public Life Studies they have used the studies in different ways. Most cities have used the studies as a baseline for how well their public spaces are being used, and as a source of new ideas for improving public spaces. New York City maximised the benefit of the work carried out by Gehl Architects by developing a plan showing how they will remake their public realm into 'world class streets'. The intention of preparing an action plan for Christchurch is that the Council can maximise the benefits from the Christchurch 2009 Public Space Public Life Study by identifying which recommendations they wish to progress as part of a planned programme.