

## A CITY ATTRACTIVE TO PEOPLE AND BUSINESS WORKSHOP – KEY FINDINGS

### CHRISTCHURCH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

May/June 2016

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#### PURPOSE

Canterbury Development Corporation is undertaking a review of the Christchurch Economic Development Strategy, 2013.

The CEDS Attractive City workshop was one of four thematic workshops<sup>1</sup>, the other of which are as follows:

- CEDs Labour Market workshop
- CEDS Innovation workshop
- CEDS Business Environment workshop

The purpose of the CEDS Attractive City workshop was to consider what we need to do to ensure Christchurch is a great place to live, work and play into the future. The workshop involved representatives of Christchurch's business community, local government, tertiaries and other stakeholders.

This document presents the key findings from the discussion. It may be useful to read this along-side the workshop brief<sup>1</sup>, which provided context for the discussion. The summary points from the workshop brief are included in Appendix 1.

#### NEXT STEPS IN THE REVIEW OF CEDS

During June and July 2016, CDC will use the workshop findings and other research to review the CEDS strategic framework and identify potential initiatives with delivery partners. This will be circulated to all workshop participants.

During July and August 2016, CDC will draft the revised strategy.

The strategy will be presented to the Christchurch City Council in late 2016 for endorsement.

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<sup>1</sup> All the workshop key findings papers and the workshop briefs can be found at the [web page](#).

## KEY WORKSHOP FINDINGS

### REALISING THE LONG-TERM VISION – A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY

Christchurch's strengths as a place to live, work and play include:

- Its lifestyle – access to the outdoors, the climate and a good place to raise a family. The region is a huge asset for the city in this regard.
- The size and connectedness of the city – it's easy to get around, it has good international connections and the interconnectedness between businesses is relatively strong.
- Christchurch has a good quality education system across all levels. The rebuild of the education infrastructure is a particular opportunity which we may not be making the most of.
- There is a strong sense of opportunity and entrepreneurial spirit – both in terms of business and community activities. A sense of opportunity and innovation is a particularly important for retaining young people.
- Linked to this, is the feeling of change, greater diversity and connections outside of Christchurch. The organic nature of change is also a strength (risk of being over planned).

Key challenges for Christchurch as a place to live, work and play included:

- Creating a city that is attractive to young people – the city is not attractive to young people now.
- More high-paid jobs – recognises the interdependency between high value business / employers and skilled people attraction.

Regeneration of the central city – particular issues included:

- Attracting people back into the central city as a place to live, but also a place to spend time.
- Ensuring diversity through having affordable / cheaper residential and commercial properties in the central city.
- Having “vibe” in the suburbs is also important. Ensuring the city is inter-connected, between suburbs and the central city, and that investment is made in the suburbs as well as the central city (particularly in the Eastern suburbs) so that it doesn't become a “city of two halves”.
- Ensuring we don't build a city which is “boring” and return to “nice”, “BAU”.
- Immigration is required and we need to value and welcome immigrants.

Particular opportunities for Christchurch included:

- Building on the potential of the health sector – Christchurch is a South Island health hub; the health precinct provides an opportunity to rethink the model and build on stronger alliances.
- Leveraging the strong growth in tourism and interest in the earthquakes.
- Being a gateway to the South Island and Antarctica.
- A focus on the environment and family – cycling, environmentally friendly city, recognising the value of a flat city to enable easy living. The green frame is a good idea.

- Building off the entrepreneurial spirit – “reeving up” the innovation system and providing more opportunities for students to be involved in start-ups.
- Building a creative city – interesting as well as new. Street art is an example of organic, people-led art.

Telling a consistent, positive and honest story about Christchurch is critical and urgent. There are a number of aspects to this:

- Media focuses on the negative and there is a general lack of positivity and a degree of inertia.
- We need to change the language – stop using “re” (rebuild, regenerate).
- We need clarity about Christchurch’s value proposition or vision – now and into the future.
- Recognising that this is an evolving story.
- We need to decide on our vision for Christchurch and who we want to attract to build that city.
- The story needs to be linked – central city / Christchurch / region.
- The story should build from our strengths.
- Need to tell the story in different ways to different cohorts.
- We need to celebrate and sell our success stories more – get people excited about the city.
- The importance of stories having integrity – we need to deliver on new promise; setting the right expectations for tourists and international students; grounded in reality.

Strong leadership and a collaborative approach are key requirements for developing a consistent story. There were different perspectives of who should lead (Council, UDS, others), but synergy and alignment between agencies is critical. Recognition that all agencies have a story to tell and that there are different audiences that need to be managed differently.

In terms of how to communicate a Christchurch story, key points included:

- The importance of using face to face stories; empowering existing story tellers.
- Frequently and repetition to messages is important.

## **MAKING THE MOST OF REGENERATION**

As with realising the long-term vision, in the short-term story telling was seen as critical. Key points included:

- Telling positive stories; celebrating successes
- More communication of what’s happening around the city – development, milestones
- Communicating to residents – not just about what’s happening, but also things to do (residents promote to visitors)
- Changing the language from “re-“
- The importance of agency alignment and consensus
- The importance of regular instalments or updates

- Utilising existing communication platforms
- A centralised place to communicate events

Events and transitional activities are important to create vibrancy in the short-term. This included celebrating openings, attracting people back to central city and utilising empty spaces (inside and outside of buildings), free, cultural and “quirky”.

Making progress and gaining momentum on regeneration is also important. A lack of symbolic growth (e.g. anchor projects) creates uncertainty for developers and the lack of facilities (e.g. conference centre) meant Christchurch is losing business opportunities. We need to “just do it” and that government needs to actively seek to remove barriers.

It is also important to recognise non-anchor projects which could / are significant for the city e.g. bike park.

We need to tidy up the mess around abandoned buildings and cleared sites in the central city.

For recovery Christchurch needs Canterbury.

## **APPENDIX 1 – ATTRACTIVE CITY WORKSHOP BRIEF SUMMARY**

- The key factors that attract people to a place are career / business opportunity and education. Pay and amenity / lifestyle are important factors for retaining and attracting people.
- New Zealand is seen as an attractive place for global talent, because we provide opportunity (work culture, ease of doing business) and quality of life, but we perform poorly in terms of incomes.
- Christchurch's quality of life is high, consistent with other cities in New Zealand.
- Christchurch's incomes are lower and the earthquakes still impact on many aspects of quality of life.
- Christchurch is facing a future working age population gap, which means retaining and attracting working age population is critical to future economic growth.
- A strong visitor economy will support talent and business attraction.
- The earthquake recovery creates an opportunity and challenge for short and long-term city promotion.