

Neighbourhood Conversation Walk

Central City South

A group of 22 people participated in the 'Central City South' neighbourhood walk on 1 February 2020. This neighbourhood has had significant redevelopment post-earthquakes and is emerging as one of Christchurch's most interesting and urban neighbourhoods. A mix of current residents and people interested in Central City living participated in the walk. The main purpose of the walk was for Council staff to hear people's thoughts and experiences of the neighbourhood and discuss opportunities to enhance neighbourhood elements and character. Informally the walk also served as an opportunity for people to discover new spaces, talk with each other about Central City living and to make connections with like-minded people. Key spaces and observations are outlined below:



Neighbourhood Strengths

- Neighbourhood is highly accessible and has a variety of interesting hospitality and retail businesses.
- Wide footpaths, new open spaces and new laneways are 'people-friendly', safe and convenient. Those with planting, seating, landscaping, murals and other artwork make a positive contribution to neighbourhood identity and character.
- Bus Interchange is an appealing facility, and makes it easy to travel around the city and easy for friends and families to visit. Justice precinct mural, green space and Kakahu artwork are also well-liked.
- Large grocery stores are within walking distance of the neighbourhood.
- The history of the area as a manufacturing hub has been incorporated into the identity of the neighbourhood. A number of character and heritage buildings remain, and contribute positively to sense of place and identity.
- A number of small and interesting businesses are located in this neighbourhood, which has a distinct urban and student 'vibe'.

Opportunities

- Assist residents to make neighbourhood level connections to existing resources and community groups (e.g. access to workshops and gardening allotments).
- Enhance appearance of temporary car parks and vacant sites with landscaped planters, seating, colourful artworks/murals, and interesting fencing and signage (e.g. about what's coming in the future).
- Enliven 'inactive' building facades with interesting interpretation, artwork, window displays or short-term 'pop-up' tenancies.
- Reduce the number of footpath detours and pedestrian barriers by focusing energy on sites and buildings that are still waiting redevelopment or repair.
- Use maps, signage, interpretation and events to help people discover new places and find their way around the neighbourhood and entertain, educate and inform people along the journeys. Employ City Wardens/Ambassadors.

Residents Points of Interest

The following spaces were some of the main points of interest on the walk led by a local resident of Atlas Quarter.



Art and Culture

1

SALT Mural

2

Rifleman Mural

3

Elephant Mural

Key Businesses

4

Welder Collective

5

Boxed Quarter

6

Ao Tawhiti School

Notable Places

7

Vanguard Square

8

Bus Interchange

9

Matai Common

Summarised comments from participants

Insights gained

- “Nice to stand back and get a perspective of the city from different angles. Enjoyed talking to local residents and hearing the views and insights from the tour leader”
- “I did not realise how many apartments there actually were. I learned more about laneways and walking access around town. Shortcuts! It brought to my attention how complicated parking issues are”.
- “What there actually was in the area that I had no knowledge of. The improvements that are being made to make the area a welcoming one.”

Likes

- “Nice to see buildings being restored.”
- “I liked the way the laneways all linked up, the repurposing of old buildings, car parking availability, and the street art.”
- “I like having students on this street – I can sometimes hear them playing jazz”.
- “Short walking distance between home and work allows me to observe an ‘ever evolving’ Central City.”
- “Can’t wait for the multi-use arena development.”
- “Once the walkways from Manchester Street through to the hospital are completed the walk will link up and they will flow better”.

Dislikes

- “There has been a lot of progress made already but there are still a lot of eye sores”.
- “Would love to see less parking areas and more buildings”.
- “Manchester, High and Lichfield Street area is my least favourite part of the walk - vacant sites, buildings still in limbo and footpath access is compromised.”
- “Get rid of the rubble and building remains and the awful wire fences! It makes a huge difference when they are safe to walk on and somewhat attractive with planters and street art. Manchester Street and the parts of Mollett Street that are really bad looking come to mind. Also the corner of Colombo St opposite Peaches & Cream. Dangerous to walk through yet not even a car park! Just a waste of space.”
- “South City is looking tired. Moorhouse Ave is not pedestrian friendly and is very 1960s.”

Other

- “Plan for more communal facilities. Workroom, toolshed, hobby spaces, community barbeques, bread/pizza ovens. The Atlas Quarter has a very cold non-neighbourly feel to it.”
- “Nice to see the new green spaces but think some will be developed over”.
- “I’m concerned about the number of Airbnb’s. They affect the sense of community.”
- “There need to be more spaces and places for dogs.”
- “The city needs to be accessible and affordable for all people. Some spaces feel exclusive to particular groups. The city is about more than just spending money.”

How will the information be used?

Insights and experiences shared by participants on the Conversation Walk will help inform neighbourhood level planning. The walk was a great way to hear from people about the neighbourhood and build relationships. The list of strengths shows the Council what the advantages of this neighbourhood are, and the list of opportunities provides a good starting point to identify elements that could be enhanced. This information may also help shape Council webpages about Central City living.