

Mt Pleasant Community Building Workshop

1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of the gathering held on Saturday the 19th of September were briefly outlined as follows:

- To create a dialogue between different members of the community around what is happening in their areas, and to encourage collaboration between these different areas.
- To provide information around the historical and current context of the community.
- To identify Mt Pleasant's community assets and vulnerabilities, and how to both utilise these and protect them.
- To update the community on the new activities and spaces appearing in the community.
- To discuss what things individuals or small groups can do to increase community connectedness.

These were achieved though both presentations and group discussions with report backs. The main points of the discussions, the information presented, and the solutions developed will be presented below.

2 PRESENTATIONS

2.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MT PLEASANT'S DEVELOPMENT – JOCELYN PAPPRIILL

Information around Mt Pleasant's cultural significance to the Maori people and Tauhiu Korokio was presented. This was then followed by a timeline of Mt Pleasant's development; from its slow start in the 30's, the acceleration into the 50's and 60's, to its serious development in the 80's. Due to a lack of a village centre – a result of the development around the hill – the importance of the school and the community centre was emphasised as a way of holding the community together. Finally, the importance of communication between people in the community was reiterated.

2.2 DAMAGE MAPPING RECOVERY – TONY ALDRIDGE

The latest mapping report around rebuilds, repairs, and the state of property around the hill was presented. It must be noted that the figures below do not include the red zone or council forfeited land.

- At least 81 repairs are currently underway; following the trend of approximately 80 repairs going on at any one time.
- 600 houses have already been repaired.
- 148 bare sections were recorded (site of a demolished house).
- 71 new houses under construction.
- 80 rebuilds have been completed.
- 299 houses have been demolished to date, with 55 to be demolished.

- This implies approximately 350 – 420 rebuilds (28% of the suburb).
- The rate of rebuilds and demolitions is beginning to plateau (information enough for this to be confirmed will be available after the next mapping report). If the rate stays current at 70 at any one time, then the rebuilds should be completed by 2019. However, if the plateauing trend continues, this completion date could be pushed out until 2020 or 2030.
- As-is-where-is sales are approximately 50% do-ups and 50% developers.
- The prevalence of re-repairs or rebuilds of rebuilds is concerning.

2.3 HARCOURTS – APOLOGISED

2.4 NEW BABIES AND YOUNG PARENTS - PLUNKET

Information around the rate of births, the situations and stressors of new parents, and Plunket's major concerns was presented. The rate of births has remained constant at around 15-16 a year (excluding 2012, which had a birth rate of 4). The main issue was around the waits for repairs, and the stress this creates for new parents; increased power bills (from \$800 to \$1200 was the example given), safety issues in the houses, and increased rents. The lack of community services and integration into the community for young families was also an issue that was discussed. An alternative for Mt Pleasant families is the Twinkle Tots group that meets at the Heathcote centre on Friday mornings.

2.5 ELDERLY SERVICES - CDHB

Information around what services are available for the elderly and how to access them was presented. In order to use the CHDB services, a referral from a GP is required as it is not a self-referral service. The service involves a 30 – 90 minute assessment as to what the person requires. Personal care or housework services can be provided, or they can help connect them with a private company. There is currently no day-care in the Mt Pleasant area, and currently established groups are too far away. This was identified as an area for growth, and elderly care in the new community centre was considered. It was noted that there are a number of elderly people in the community that are isolated, and a communication network that could help identify and help these people is required.

2.6 MT PLEASANT SCHOOL – PRINCIPAL CHRIS NORDT

The principal's presentation centred on communication and connection between the community and the school, especially around how to connect those with needs and those who would be happy to help. It was noted that younger families are returning, revitalizing the area, but emphasis was also placed on how the school can benefit from the knowledge and skills that have been in the area for a long time. The school's roll is currently 375, with an expected growth to 400 by mid-2016. This would increase traffic in the area, in conjunction with the issues from rebuilds, their associated contractors, and the fibre installation. The school is taking steps to increase the number of pupils walking to school, and taking other measures to reduce traffic. The new hall is to be completed, and will be available as a community resource. Discussions around the empty section on Major Hornbrook Road are currently being held, and the school is excited about the opportunities there.

3 THE STATE OF THE HOOD

The groups were asked to reflect on what things they found good in their community (pink), what things they found aggravating about it or detracted from it (orange), and what questions they had and reasons for hope (green). Their responses were then displayed. The major themes, as well as any comments and observations, are below:

- Predominantly pink; a mostly positive response.
- The main positive points included:
 - The increased connectedness between people and groups and the willingness and friendliness of those in the community.
 - The progress on the community centre and the visible progress being made in the rebuild.
 - The environment and relatively low crime rate.
 - Residents returning, as well as new families being introduced.
- The main areas of dissatisfaction were:
 - Contractors and noise; invasive sounds.
 - The uncertainty around some aspects of the rebuild – empty sections, unkempt gardens, as-is-where-is homes, continuing issues with insurance, unrepaired and unmaintained roads, increasing costs.
 - The lack of youth spaces and concerns around community connectedness in some areas.
 - Traffic, speeding, and obstructive parking; this being aggravated both by the school and contractors.
 - The uncertainty around Redcliff's school.
 - The community consultation process for changes in infrastructure.
- The main questions were:
 - How to achieve a strong and unified voice for the community, and how to capture the community spirit?
 - Whether this was an aging community, and if so, how to attract young people?
 - Whether it is becoming too expensive for new residents, and what percentage of homes are owned versus rented?
 - Coastal pathway connections with the Heathcote and Avon rivers, with transport?
 - Focus on the church in the community, and whether this could become a centre for community connectedness and growth?
- The main hopeful points were:
 - The connections between drivers and those needing rides.
 - Maintaining the openness of people.
 - Footpath alterations, and making pavements and crossings safer.
 - The common goals with new neighbours.
 - The development of new and more activities at the new community centre.

4 THE CULTURE OF THE MT PLEASANT COMMUNITY

The groups were asked to discuss the following questions:

- What is special about our community?
- What are our challenges?
- What is important to consider going forward?
- What is the essence we should seek to maintain?

Responses were circulated around the group, and were summarised at the end of the discussion. The group responses were as follows:

4.1 WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY?

- The microclimate, and the peoples' engagement with the environment through the views, tracks, and walking.
- The contemplative nature of the people (hence why noise is a definite issue).
- The people that live there; their resourcefulness and resilience, and how they look after each other, their realness. The neighbourly, yet unintrusive ways of the people.

4.2 WHAT ARE OUR CHALLENGES?

- Mapping and mining the wealth (skills and talents) of the community.
- How to support community driven initiatives.
- Integrating new people into the community, and introducing them to the culture of Mt Pleasant.
- The lack of facilities and resources for the community, the closures of churches.
- The lack of cultural diversity in the community.
- Developing our assets across sectors; weaving the sectors together with networks and communications.

4.3 WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER GOING FORWARD?

- Keeping the community open and unexclusive.
- Having wrap around services.
- Using the community centre for mental health services.
- The community contains lots of social capital, which should be utilised to its full capacity.
- The activities already being run in the community should be maintained.

4.4 WHAT IS THE ESSENCE WE SHOULD SEEK TO MAINTAIN?

- The neighbourliness, friendliness, and caring of the community.
- The care for the environment.
- The safety of the area.

Overall, there was a significant focus on how to connect those in the community with skills and information with those who need those skills and information, as well as maintaining a wider community connection with a unique Mt Pleasant flavour. The questions that came out of this discussion were:

- How can we have a unique flavour and connection?
- How do we gently re-invigorate the community spirit?

- How do we nurture ourselves at this time?
- How can we communicate to the newcomers about the culture of our community?

5 NURTURING THE NEW THINGS IN THE COMMUNITY

5.1 THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The aim of the community centre is to create a community hub, with the kindergarten, the community centre, and the squash courts around a communal area – the ‘Mt Pleasant village centre’. It is expected to be completed by the end of April. The sense of community ownership around the centre is significant, and there is hope for it becoming a good community space.

5.2 THE FARMER’S MARKET

This is the 5th year of the farmer’s market, and it has been hailed as the single biggest improvement in the social community in decades. It is now owned by the community, is increasing community connections, and has potential for a financial boost for the community as it can be run as a social enterprise.

5.3 TIME BANKING

Time banking is a scheme that is being run from Heathcote valley to Sumner. It is a community development tool, enabling people to freely exchange their skills for other things. It also creates a way for the needs of the community to be matched with the resources within the community. It is open to anyone, and is an opportunity to integrate young people into the community, as well as keeping everyone connected.

6 NEW IDEAS

The groups were asked to put forward ideas that could either support what is already there in the community, or introduce new things into the community, as well as events that would promote community.

- Mt Pleasant directory (electronic, perhaps) – a tie in to time banking. *Katherine , Chris, Linda*
- Networking opportunities /forums to build social capital (at no cost for people).
- Hitching post “Giving locals a lift”. Helping people get around, minimising cars and increasing social interaction.
- Connecting schoolchildren with retirees to learn new skills.
- Community pool (publicise the use of the school pool).
- 9th April 2016 - a chauffeured house tour.
- Providing services for young people (secondary to early tertiary).
- Produce swap meet. *Joceyn, Chris and Shirley.*
- Mt Pleasant Drama group – teenagers/adults.
- Things that might appeal across age groups. (Poetry slams, for example).