

Neighbourhood Conversation Walk

Avon Loop & Chester East

Two walks were held around the 'Avon Chester' area of the Central City led by local resident Gerard Smyth. On 20 June, 7 people participated and on 27 June, 13 people attended the walk. This historic neighbourhood follows the Ōtākaro Avon River to the north and is divided by busy one-way streets. Land in the loop of the river was once home to a vibrant community but many sites are red-zoned and lie vacant. 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

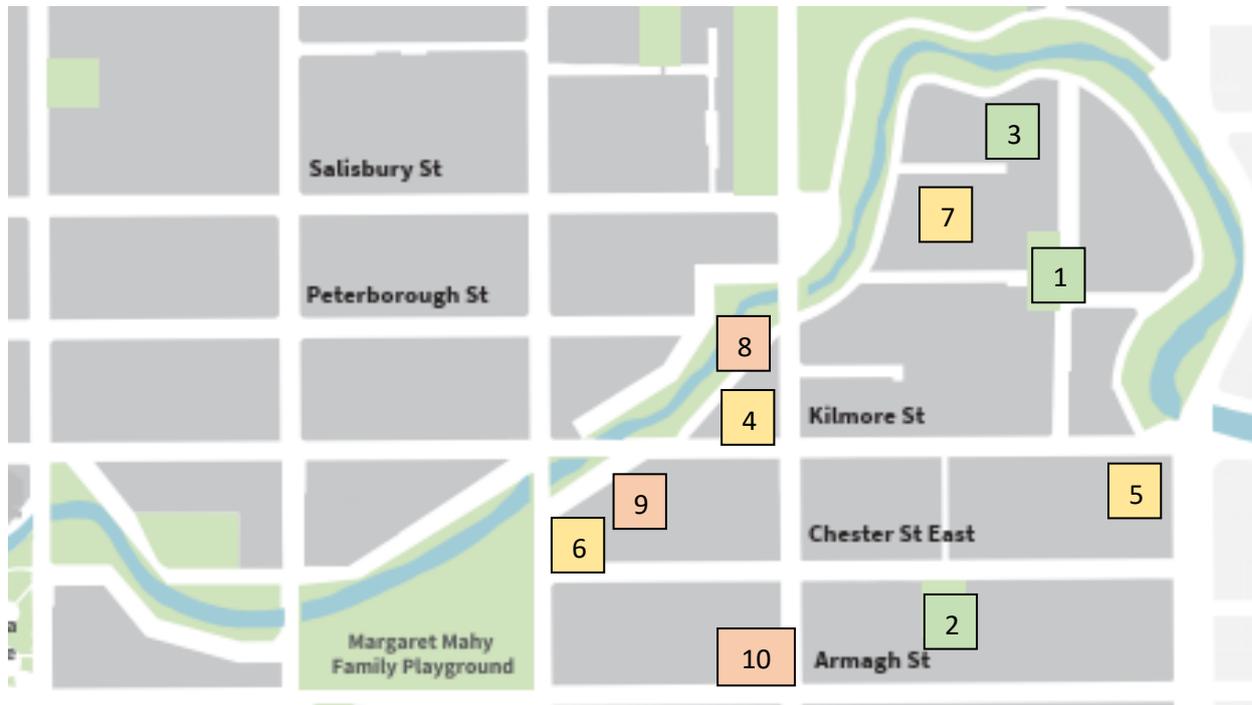
- The red-zoned land in the loop of the Ōtākaro Avon River provides an abundance of green-space for the neighbourhood. Many trees have been retained and provide for foraging opportunities. The river has recently been landscaped with native plantings.
- The Avon Loop pathway has recently been completed and is well-used by residents for recreation and connects the neighbourhood with the red-zone to the east and city to the west. The river is described as a 'treasure' for the community.
- The community has had a number of very proactive neighbourhood champions who advocated for improved outcomes for the community e.g. Hurley Street changed into a no-exit street to create a park and a planning association developed.
- Piko Wholefoods is located in the neighbourhood and is a community focal point.
- Chesterfields is described as the heart of the neighbourhood. Many residents have little to no outdoor area so the shared community space is well-used and maintained.

Opportunities

- There is a number of large vacant sites in the neighbourhood. The future of the red-zoned land is yet to be decided. A former hotel site and two intersections are still vacant and have great potential to be redeveloped with neighbourhood services and/or other community-oriented facilities.
- Oxford Terrace and Cambridge Terrace could be closed off or narrowed and turned into a recreation reserve.
- The appearance of the former Holiday Inn site could be greatly enhanced, either by enlivening fence hoardings or a temporary activation. The longer-term redevelopment of the site could create significant benefits and opportunities for the area.
- Roadside garden beds are empty. Neighbourhood champions could be supported to plant and maintain these assets.
- The Avon Loop and the quiet streets surrounding the river provide strong opportunities for community events (e.g. street parties) and activations. Residents expressed interest in a café or ice-cream shop within the Avon Loop.

Residents Points of Interest

The following spaces were some of the main points of interest on the walk led by a local resident of the Avon Loop neighbourhood.



Green Spaces

1

Walnut Park

2

Chesterfields

3

Avon Loop

Key Businesses

4

Piko Wholefoods

5

Pomeroy's

6

Baptist Church

7

Former Holiday Inn

Notable Places

8

Brick Cairn

9

Fire Station

10

Neighbourhood Shops

Summarised comments from participants

Insights gained

- “Chester Street is a good example of density in the Central City. It has a variety of housing types and attracts a mix of people.”
- “The neighbourhoods are made up of the people that live there just as much as the businesses.”
- “Neighbourhoods need a good mix of owners and tenants, mix of ethnicities and ages.”
- “Loneliness happens in homogenous neighbourhoods.”

Likes

- “The church has undergone a redevelopment and refresh to make it relevant to inner city dwellers.”
- “Dawson Street is a small lane which is unique to the Central City. Lots of workers cottages and bungalows.”
- “There is a good mix of quiet and intimate streets.”
- “There is a strong sense of community in the local area. The locals were involved in creating some of the spaces and amenity.”
- “Quiet spaces in the middle of the city where people live and interact as a community.”

Dislikes

- “Trees are removed from the neighbourhood without any engagement.”
- “The one-way system is like a motorway running past our homes.”
- “There is a lack of everyday services in the neighbourhood.”
- “The roadside garden beds are empty.”
- “We are missing takeaways, a fish monger, bakery and green grocer.”

Other

- “The Avon Loop was redeveloped at a high cost – how will this be maintained through the rest of the red-zone?”
- “10-20% of the Residential Red Zone should be redeveloped with leasehold land to create more affordable housing.”
- “I wanted to live close to the city as commuting is a waste of time.”
- “Living in the city allows you to be spontaneous. You can walk around the city and work out what’s happening and bump into people.”
- “We have lost a number of facilities for residents after the Earthquakes.”
- “Chesterfields is the heart of my neighbourhood.”
- “Need more spaces for small local businesses that are for residents.”
- “Thoroughfare traffic should be redirected to the four avenues.”

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.