Christchurch City Council

Central City Report

Research Report | June 2020

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1 Key Insights

The Central City is a complicated issue for the Christchurch City Council and its partners to overcome. There are many policy and communication levers that will need to be set correctly to achieve the goal of rapid habitation. It is clear from this research that a gap currently exists between the level of demand, the level of supply and the contextual issues that wrap around these two drivers.

Perhaps the biggest issue, but possibly one of the easiest to solve, is the creation of a vision or a story for the Central City that residents and developers alike can engage with. Residents want to know what their community will look like and how it will feel living in the city. Will it be noisy? Can someone build a multi-storey dwelling next to me? How do I park my car? What's going to happen to all the vacant space? These are all questions that can be reasonably answered, and lessons most definitely can be learned from the master planning that many suburban developers utilise in their marketing campaigns.

Addressing the uncertain elements of the Central City immediately, coupled with providing firm dates for the development of key city assets will give more confidence to residents and developers. Developers are waiting for projects such as the Stadium, the Metro Sports facility and the Cathedral to progress in order that they can get their projects underway. This interdependency is critical to the success of the city and the large projects will have the knock-on impact of speeding up or slowing down the rate of the residential builds.

Ensuring the partners are all on the same page is also highly important; developers reported being put off from building in the Central City because of the application of different organisations rules, with Christchurch City Council and Otakaro were most cited. Clarity needs to be provided, specifically to developers, but also to the wider community, on who is ultimately accountable. The lead agency driving this work will need to be fully supported by all the other partners and be accountable for delivering what it says it will. This will help overcome the mistrust and lack of confidence we have seen from residents and developers alike.

Developers liked the big targets for population growth and many reported that this is how they operate their businesses. However, there was wide spread feedback that the existing targets were too ambitious and without a market changing initiative, it was simply not realistic to expect 20,000 people to be living in the Central City by 2028. Further modelling is suggested to explore the capacity of the economy to absorb these additional dwellings. This needs to consider the other residential developments in the Greater Christchurch area. If the Council wants to continue with its current targets it may need to look at restraining developments outside the Central City, increasing the incentivisation of building in the inner city. However, this would need the support of Waimakariri District Council and Selwyn District Council to be successful.

It is unclear how much financial incentives would help drive the levels of growth, but developers did report that the current relief on Development Contributions gave them an ability to reduce the price of housing, making it slightly more affordable for their clients. They would like to see the scheme extended for the Central City only, as a strong signal of intent from the Council. Policy settings around AirBnB's were strongly contended also. Some developers saw the scheme as a way for Mum and Dad investors to grow the wealth in the community, whilst others saw the AirBnB process as being completely destructive to communities. What is clear from the research is the policy position needs to be decided and strongly communicated and, if necessary enforced.

Many of the participants liked the approach of making the Central City a special zone. As previously discussed this may be for something relatively minor such as the continuation of Development Contribution relief or alternatively for something like a special economic zone that may have a reduced business tax rate of 10%, as an example. This could help drive business attraction and locate more businesses in the Central City, in turn creating more jobs and more pressure on commutes. The net effect would be a focus on the Central City and a little more pain for residents living outside the Central City to commute. National and international research clearly shows a tipping point where it becomes easier to live in the Central City than commute into it. It is this tipping point that the Council need to understand and utilise in the growth of the Central City. Central Government would need to be a key part of the creation of such an economic zone and such a zone would need to be competitive with international cities, such as Singapore, to be successful. As well as business advantages there may be an opportunity to partner with a large bank to lower the barriers or cost of borrowing money to purchase in the Central City.

Whilst the Central City is neatly bound by the four avenues, there is a clear view from residents that they do not consider it in that broad geographic frame. Rather they see areas within the Central City, some being highly desirable and others quite undesirable. The river areas and the area where the city abuts Hagley Park are highly desirable; in comparison the eastern side of the Central City is not at all desirable. When considering the story of the Central City some of these less prized areas may need further investment to lift them, or a re-think on city planning requirements to ensure the right developments are consented.

Finally, as a city we need to develop a culture of positivity. Developers asked for Council to become enablers of future growth. Rather than declining applications developers want Council to start out with a mantra of 'how do I make this project happen' and work hand in hand with developers. There is widespread agreement that the city has some amazing post earthquake infrastructure, Margaret Mahy Playground, Tūranga, Te Pae and the River Precinct were all celebrated. Keeping the momentum with the Stadium, Cathedral and Metro Sports developments will undoubtedly help attract future residents to the Central City, making it a vibrant and exciting place to live.

2 Background

Project 8011 is a residential programme for the Central City, its purpose is to encourage more people to make the Central City their home.

This purpose is underpinned by the philosophy that by making the Central City a compelling place to live, work and play, and by drawing in thousands of people from all walks of life, the central city will become a more vibrant place. International research shows that thriving neighbourhoods and strong communities are at the heart of some of the world's greatest cities and that strong inner cities drive strong growth across the wider city.

The Central City in Christchurch already has an effective infrastructure network and there are plenty of compelling reasons to live there. In fact, around 8000 people call the Central City home. What is needed is a scaling in demand for Central City living, and a greater understanding of the barriers and drivers that leads to more people calling the central city home.

Christchurch City Council are working together with many partners, developers, landowners and public agencies across a range of activities to make this happen. This report will help inform those partners about the requirements of the public to move to the Central City, the needs of developers to supply that need and the inhibitors that are preventing more rapid habitation of the Central City.

The Council believe that to achieve a strong and vibrant central city several factors contained below will need to intersect:

- Public and private investment.
- Feasibility of development.
- Improving the potential of local areas for housing purposes.
- Developers connecting with buyers to generate housing projects and create sales.
- Creation of jobs, services, facilities and attractions in the Central City to give people reasons to consider living here.

The Council has six key goals, these goals are designed to be inter-related, and overlap and support each other:

1. More people - increasing the number and demographic of people living in the Central City.
2. Housing choice - creating a range of housing choices that meet the needs of a diverse range of people.
3. Highly liveable neighbourhoods - developing local communities that attract and retain residents.
4. Encourage delivery - reducing the risks of development and improving feasibility.
5. Support delivery - ensuring effective support and advice is provided to and used by Central City housing developers.
6. Accelerate delivery - ensuring the delivery of Central City housing is accelerated and sustained.

Method

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Stage 1 – Super Group

The Super Group was a large group exercise including around 24 participants who were actively considering living in the Central City. Whilst investigating the people interested in living in the Central City, it was also important to consider the counterfactual to our presumption that people wanted to live in the Central City. A subgroup in the super group included existing residents who already lived in the Central City, this group tested the hypothesis that those people living in the Central City were happy with Central City life and living and not looking at moving into the suburbs.

The objective of the super groups workshop was

> *'to understand what drives a Christchurch resident to want to live "within the four avenues" along with the motivations & barriers to making that choice'.*

The workshop was made up of a number of mini-groups that discussed inner city living in Christchurch, in particular financial impediments.

There were six participants for each mini- group within the workshop as follows

a) Inner city residents: x 6 people who have bought dwellings in the city and were currently residing in the city; and
b) Considerers: x 18 people who are considering buying an inner city dwelling in the next 5 years.

The participants worked through discussion topics together, and moved through different topic stations three times, to be exposed to different motivations or impediments to discuss what are the most important drivers.

Stage 2 - In depth interviews with Developers

Stakeholder feedback was gathered in the form of face to face qualitative interviews. 8 developers were selected randomly from a list of Central City developers supplied by Christchurch City Council (CCC) and invited to take part in the research.

The interviews were conducted in February and March 2020. The developers spoken to had all built within the previous two years

The interviews involved an hour long semi-structured conversation and provided a comprehensive insight into developers perceptions of the barriers and enablers of inner city living. Confidentiality was assured in the beginning of each interview to encourage honest feedback.

FINDINGS

Super Groups

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Barriers

The Concept of Central City Living

The group of potential Central City residents that formed part of this research were all screened to ensure they were potential house buyers and that the central city was firmly in their consideration set. They all lived in Christchurch, so understood the context and history of the Central City.

When discussing Central City options though much of the framing was grounded in suburban living paradigms, that is to say that many of the respondents who shared their views and opinions were considering or trading off their life in suburbia with their potential life in the Central City, it became obvious that often the trade offs fell short of what they had or could have in suburbia.

That is not to say that people will not take what, on paper is a lesser option. They may for example buy a property in the Central City that is smaller, with less section and pay more for it. The point here is that the value proposition may not lead to numbers of people actually making the move into the Central City. As much as such a move may be attractive, the composition and the offering would create too great a loss in the minds of the homeowners. The supergroup demonstrated clearly that residents valued parking, affordability, sections with space, large bedrooms and living spaces. Much of the current Central City offering does not provide these features and in the instances where these are available, the price is significantly higher.

Parking

Parking was the number one issue for potential residents and investors when considering living in the Central City. The group reported dissatisfaction with the current properties available in the Central City due to their lacking garages and driveways for off street parking. This demonstrated quite a traditional view of parking solutions which the participants had in their current homes in the suburbs. Further concern was raised about on street parking in residential areas. Existing Central City residents describing a difficulty in parking near their properties. One existing resident who had an off-street parking space described being constantly blocked in due to other residents parking too close to her driveway and the narrowness of the streets makin git difficult to be able to effectively manoeuvre.

The groups highlighted a disconnect between the perceived potential benefits of living in a Central City and having less reliance on a motor vehicle, and their current life in the suburbs. This is a big issue for people and one which will need careful consideration when addressing how to change peoples behaviour, if this issue is to be overcome as a barrier.

Drawing on themes suggested by some of the developers there could be community parking buildings which are close (less than five minute walk) to residents properties that could accommodate vehicles when not being used. Couple these with an increase of short term parking spaces for loading and unloading vehicles and some concerns may be addressed. In addition, this may free up additional on street parking spaces. Automatic car loading car parks were suggested as an option to maximise space and improve convenience and safety for users.

There will be a reluctance for residents to lose the convenience of cars parked immediately outside their properties. In the short term this is a barrier to existing City residents moving into the Central City.

Uncertainty

There was widespread uncertainty regarding the Central City and the promise, or story of living there. This is completely different in Christchurch when comparing to other cities due to the post-earthquake rebuild and a large number of areas still waiting to be developed.

Investors were very uncertain about the financial return that they might be able to realise, citing a lack of affordable options. There was much discussion about AirBnB and whether that would remain an option. Some investors wanting to explore that option, whilst others were opposed to AirBnB options being located next to full time residents, questioning the impact on prices and the overall community feeling.

Group participants were scathing about some of the “affordable” options; one describing them as rabbit hutches and others questioning whether the Central City would turn into a ghetto in the years to come.

Some participants were concerned about multi-storey residences being built in the future on adjoining properties and the loss of privacy and potential increasing noise volumes they would bring. Realistically this uncertainty should not exist as the city plan and zoning controls would enable residents to understand the environment they are buying into or building in. It does highlight the lack of understanding that many potential residents have about property rules in the Central City. This could be a potential solution for the Council to consider addressing.

Price

For many participants the driving issue was affordability, with city centre property seen as being more expensive for comparable housing features. The group participants expected it to be more, however expressed surprise at the extent of the difference in price from the suburban prices.

Participants pointed at some of the Fletcher Developments as being massively overpriced but missing the market at the higher end. A number of participants pointing out that they could get more for their money just outside the Central City and still being able to walk in and have the same type of lifestyle,

The difficulty for the city is that people are trying to compare suburban life with life in the Central City and unfortunately this comparison is unhelpful. It could be that the people expressing an interest are not the group who will put their money ultimately into a CBD property and the target group are the younger and older couples without children. To answer this question a larger quantitative study would be required to test affordability and trade offs and determine accurately which segments of the community are the target group.

Geography

There are clear preferences from the respondents as to where in the Central City they would consider living. The group participants were asked to identify areas they would consider living and areas they would not live in, the results are discussed in more detail in the Drivers section of this report, however the East of the Central City is seen as undesirable and more work is going to need to take place here by the Council and its partners to revitalise the area and then communicate the value of living here. The East of the Central City presents a different challenge to other parts of the Central City in that there are fewer bare land sites and more properties in need of regeneration. In some ways the work undertaken to create 'villages' such as Westside and South of St Asaph could be applied to the residential areas in the East.

Please refer to the Drivers section of this report for a more complete analysis of geographic choice.

Drivers

The primary driver was a level of excitement that participants feel about the Central City, most of the activity that was currently underway and the opportunities that had emerged as a result of them. Residents constantly referenced 'cool' initiatives such as:

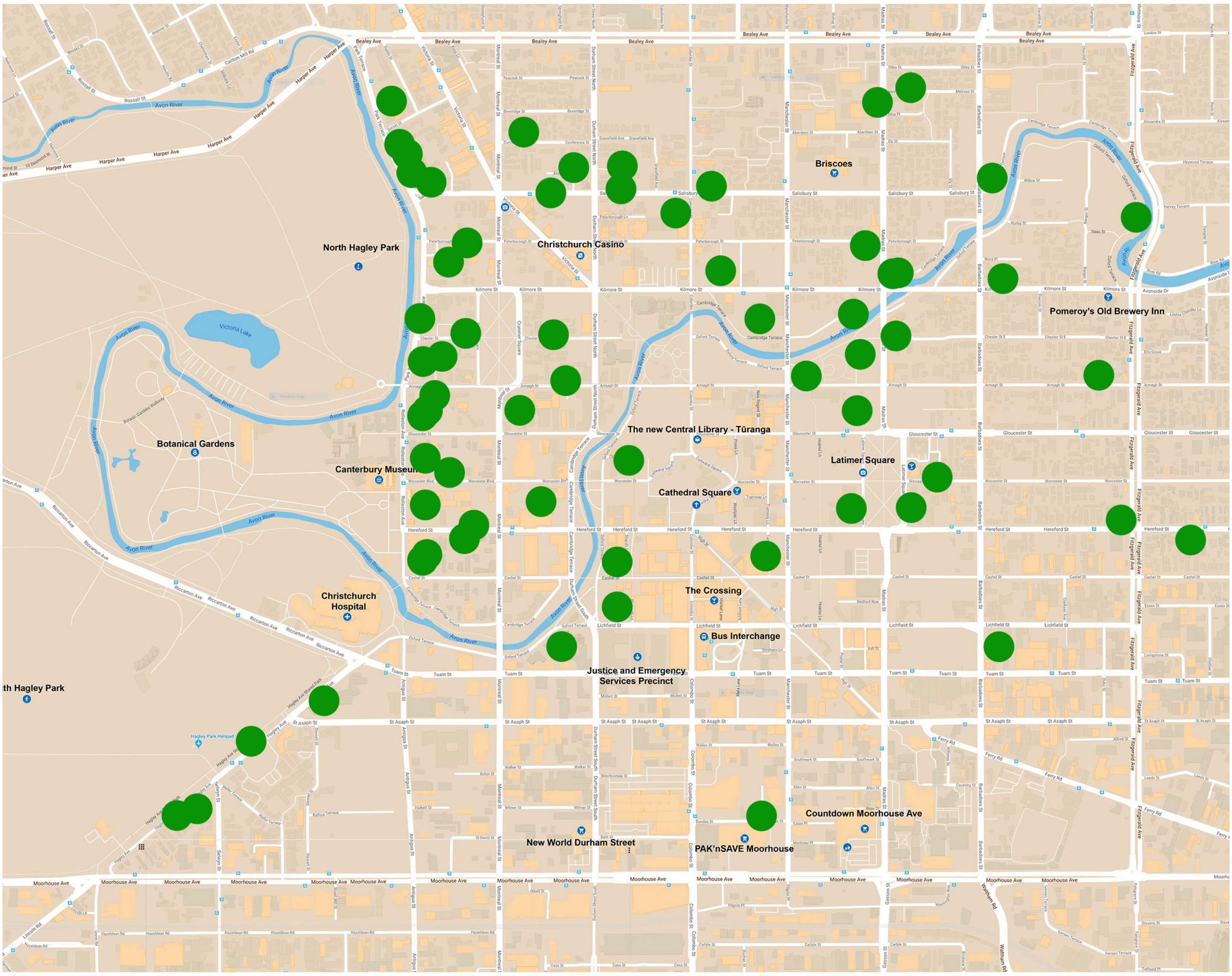
- Margaret Mahy Playground
- River Precinct
- Turanga
- Bus Interchange
- Shopping
- Cafés
- Nightlife
- Cultural elements, art galleries and theatres

There was also genuine excitement about future projects such as the Stadium and Metro Sports facility, and with some participants looking forward to the cathedral being rebuilt. The faster these elements can be progressed and current 'blank spaces' can be infilled the more compelling the Central City becomes as a place to live.

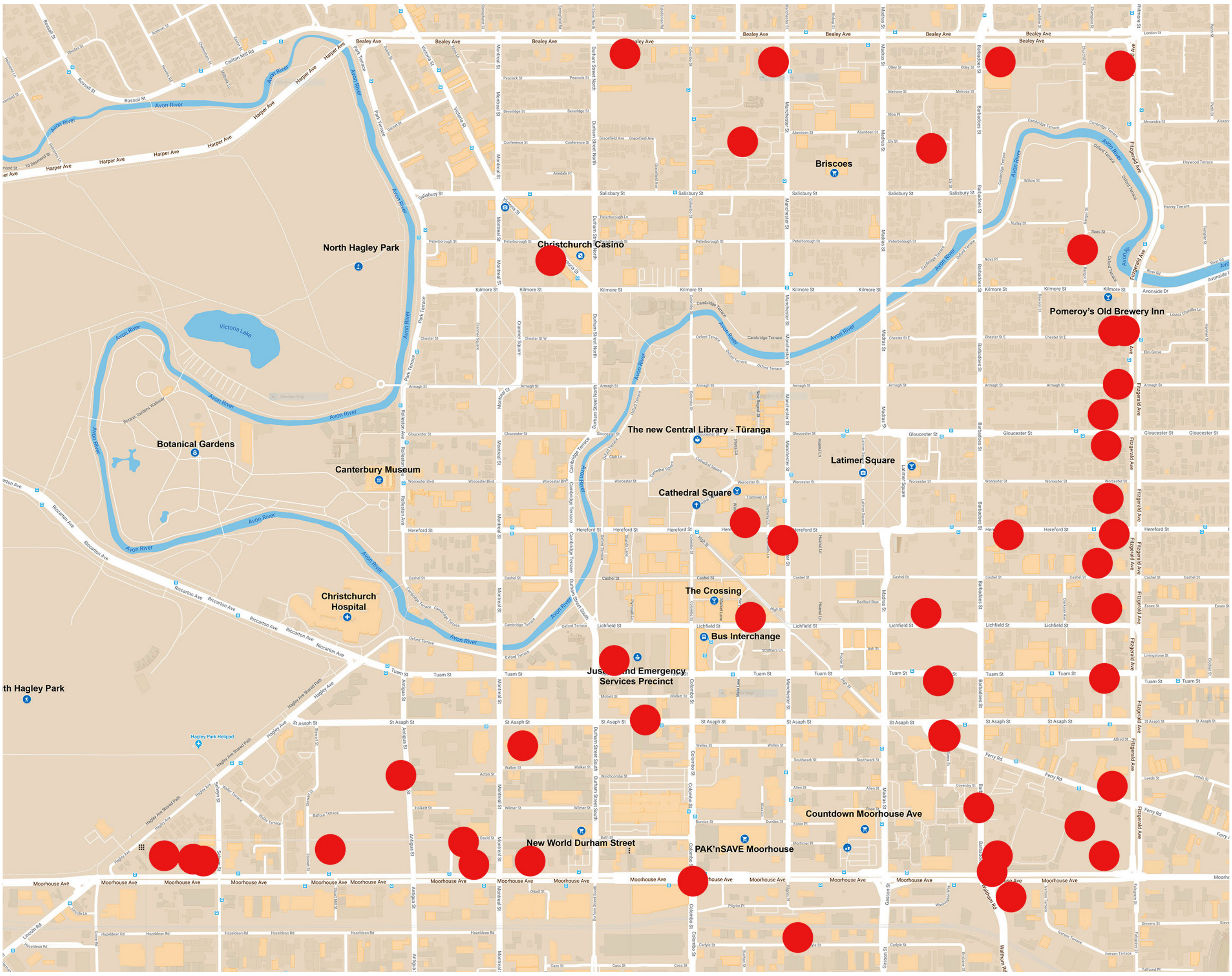
Geography

Participants were asked where they currently lived if they were existing Central City residents, and then all participants were asked where they would prefer to live and where they would not consider living.

Would Consider Living



Would <u>not</u> Consider Living



There was a strong concordance between the groups. Participants preferred the areas abutting the park or the rivers. The core of the Central City was seen as being commercial and not attractive. The eastern side of the city, east of the East Frame, was quite undesirable due to some of the condition and appearance of the existing housing stock, the narrowness of some roads and a perceived lack of on-street and off-street parking.

The perceptions of the East of the Central City also appear to be driven by an overall perception of the East of the City being a poorer, less desirable area. This kind of community attitude to areas of the city is not uncommon and can be readily observed in many cities around the globe. There are many examples of how cities, through urban regeneration have completely refreshed entrenched views and how neighbourhoods have turned from slums to desirable locales.

Investment potential

Some participants were also considering the investment potential of the central city. Whilst many could identify numerous opportunities, they were uneasy about the return they might expect to derive and indeed whether they were buying into the right market at the right price.

AirBnB was seen as an easy vehicle to connect with, however some investors were aware of the rules and were sceptical about this as an investment vehicle. Other participants were more bullish and had bought into some developers marketing that the rules would not be enforced. Regardless there is a broader debate needed about AirBnb and the value to the economy and the community which sits outside the scope of this research.

Developers

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The developers who were interviewed came from a cross section of businesses in the city; some niche and high end, some focussed on the more affordable housing solutions, some large-scale developers and some small. The selection criteria specified that they had undertaken or attempted to undertake a residential development within the Central City.

Despite the differences, a number of similar themes emerged during the conversations. Unsurprisingly no one developer had a silver bullet to fix the complexity of rapidly growing the number of people living in the Central City, but all offered a range of suggestions and solutions that they felt would remove some of the barriers they faced when considering whether to undertake a development.

Target Groups

There was a mixed perception of who would be an active considerer of moving to and living in the Central City, everyone agreed that singles and couples of all ages were prime targets. There was some disagreement when it came to families, with some developers quite vocal that this group were not likely to consider the inner city as a location of choice.

> *Yeah, that's one of the demographics. It's always waved about the importance of attracting families but that's a nonsense in my opinion. I don't see them, they don't want to come in here, so I don't know why we keep hitting our heads into a brick wall trying to track them? They don't want to come so we should give up on them and work on the existing demographics that do.*

Their primary concerns centred on the current infrastructure; the Margaret Mahy Playground was excellent for families, but some developers felt the other offerings of the Central City did not reflect the needs of younger families. Therefore, many do not consider families when building new developments. This is clearly an issue for Christchurch City Council to consider, whilst developers do not see a market opportunity, there may be initiatives that could make the Central City a more attractive as a place to bring up families. It seems clear though that the 'low hanging fruit' are the singles and couples' markets both as home buyers and as renters for investors.

Developers believe the current targets are too high

> *So, we are doing a lot of building right now and I like aggressive targets, you're talking to someone that always sets aggressive targets, but also you're talking to someone who is building projects with majority of our capital coming from investors, whether it be the bank, whether it be private investors for our customers. I've never seen a business case where it would be responsible for me to go and build 600 houses a year because I think I would be relying on to large a percentage of the total houses built each year. This would mean 600 houses a year with 300 being built in the city. I would require 20% of the total houses built to be built by my company. I haven't seen a business case where I think that's responsible.*

8,000 People lived in the CBD prior to the earthquakes → **5,000** people lived in the CBD in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes → **8,000** currently live in the CBD → GAP → Council's goal is **20,000** people living in the CBD

Developers were all in agreement that the current aim of 20,000 people in the Central City by 2028 is very unrealistic with even the most bullish developer thinking that the timeframes were much too compressed for the current level of demand. All the developers felt there needed to be other factors addressed if the city wanted to speed up the numbers of people living in the Central City. The most common suggestion was that more effort needed to be put into economic development initiatives such as business and people attraction.

The mechanisms suggested to achieve this were varied and included advertising and city promotion campaigns and the creation of a special economic zone (discussed in a later chapter). Most felt that unless the population flow was increased the flow of people living in the CBD would continue at current rates and take up to 20 years to achieve the Council's objective.

> *I still mean you can make to 20,000, I don't necessarily think that number was actually that unrealistic, the date most certainly is.*

> *I think with our current trajectory, we're on track to achieve that 20,000 people in 15 years, and I think with some changes like what we've discussed in this meeting you could easily cut it down to ten, but I can't see happening in five.*

Vision (or lack thereof)

A common theme for everyone interviewed as part of this research was the feedback of a lack of vision or indeed a common story about the Central City that enabled a shared understanding and approach.

> “ *I don’t even know what the story is behind the why, or the vision for Christchurch. That’s the part I don’t think, is this pushed enough because if you don’t have that storyline that you’re sticking to, and that you’re trying to grow, it’s almost as though you’ll be pushed around by the wind and go wherever that leads and you don’t want to do that as a city.*

Developers talked about the different entities from both central and local government including Christchurch City Council, Otakaro, Regenerate Christchurch, Development Christchurch and ChristchurchNZ. They question who was ultimately responsible and cite differences in the delivery expectations of these different organisations.

> “ *They (CCC) argued over the type of footpath that we’re building, which is on our land but is a public right of way. We’re paying right and they tell us they don’t like it and that we can’t build it. We had copied their footpath further down the river, we show them their own footpath down further underneath the trees and they say no, that’s not a good footpath. Well, hang on you designed the path down the river further. Their response was well, that was a different department and we don’t like it.*

The net result for developers is one of confusion. This confusion presents as a tension between demand and supply. Developers reported that they often faced questions from potential residents about what their community will look like and consequently are often guessing what developments they should be building.

Council have a clear role here in articulating the broader master plan for the Central City. It is clear from the research that confusion is a common feature for both developers and the potential residents alike. Much of this confusion stems from an inability to imagine what life may be like in the central city when the building is complete. This is where the council could take a lead role. The creation of a physical exhibition, or even one using virtual reality technology, that enables people to walk around the city and ‘explore’ the types of properties, their potential neighbourhood to visualise what they are buying into would be a massive step forward in reducing the levels of uncertainty that we have seen in this research.

The Large Projects Must Happen to Provide More Certainty and Confidence

> *I think there are key projects that we've talked about the need to be up and running. I think they need just need to be done, we are a first world city supposedly, yet we don't have a sports stadium. Now granted it's horrendously expensive stadium but unfortunately, the Colosseum in Rome wasn't that cheap when they built it either.*

> *"These are things that cities just have to invest in and if you look at business cases they may not stack up but as a city, and as a first world city these are things you just need".*

Developers talked extensively about the plan for the Central City and a need for greater local context, an understanding of the broader vision and then a detailed plan at a sub Central City level for larger scale developments and infrastructure spend, complete with timings that they could rely on. Such a plan would mean they could begin to plan more thoroughly the infill around the local and central government projects

There was genuine excitement about the work that had been completed or was about to finish; the library, bus exchange, riverside market and convention centre to name a few. This was tempered with a frustration with timeframes being constantly missed or moving; specifically mentioned were projects such as the stadium, metro sports facility and cathedral.

Some developers talked about a tipping point of development where once there was enough going on demand would increase that that would further increase the pace of development. When pushed respondents found it difficult to describe what would need to happen or indeed what the composition of the city looked like to achieve this tipping point.

> *It doesn't mean that it won't, be sorted forever. You just got to get on with it and do it and they will get to a certain point, when the convention centre is open, the stadium's almost complete and you know, things like a Riverside's open and then there's bit of a thriving going on, then. You'll see that critical mass where everyone will start to say jeez this is actually pretty cool.*

Financial Models

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A number of financial initiatives were discussed by the developers, these initiatives were part of a discussion and should not be read as a key recommendation for how to proceed, rather ideas that could be explored further as to their viability for increasing the take up of inner city living.

Special Economic Zone

One of the 'big' ideas to emerge from the interviews from a number of developers was the creation of a special economic zone. The thinking that led to this suggestion centred around the notion that if you want to do something big and different when thinking about larger numbers of people moving to the Central City, there was a requirement to think larger and differently to the way we are currently approaching the issue.

> *You could impose a special economic zone of the four avenues. You could have a flat income tax rate of 10% for any business that has the headquarters, with more than 10 employees in the Christchurch CBD, and they have an income rate of 10% to 15%. You have got to remember we are competing against Singapore, so Singapore is business tax rate is 10%, so we'd have to match their business tax rate. So you would need to reduce the income tax rate to 10% for any business operating within the four avenues to start having discussions about attracting companies like Google, Kia, or Facebook. It's possible, that's what governments have done previously, for example Ireland.*

The sense of a special economic zone was multifunctional. Such a zone would enable special conditions to be placed around housing, possibly allowing housing options that weren't available in other areas of the city or region. The zone could also be created to attract large multinationals to the city which is in line with the cities economic development strategy. The employment opportunities created would also create increased demand for housing and this could be offered as a 'live, work, play' opportunity to further build on the business reasons for locating in the Central City.

Foreign Investment and Ownership

A number of developers discussed whether there is an option for have different ownership models for overseas investors and buyers in the Central City, this would go hand in hand with the creation of a special economic zone.

> *"I think we should revisit the foreign investment, I think, foreign capital may be a key point where we could actually talk about a 30% or 40% sales increase. Yeah, if we created a special economic zone of any new house and Christchurch City Centre, because then also it's then increasing the rental stock because these people won't be living here."*

There was a feeling among developers that there would not be enough capital in the local economy, but there was a strong level of interest from offshore to invest in New Zealand. Christchurch was a city that naturally attracted investors on the back of the earthquakes.

Continued Development Contributions Relief in the Central City

All the developers interviewed praised the relief on development contributions and lobbied strongly for the continuation of this policy for the Central City area.

Developers cited that the relief could be passed onto homeowners making housing more affordable. Whether this happens in reality would need more investigation. However, the ability to remove compliance cost in the Central City would be a positive way that the Council could contribute to more affordable housing options.

Focussed Development

Developers highlighted the choices that residents had in the wider City and its hinterlands, pointing to the rapid growth in Waimakariri and Selwyn Districts. With so many opportunities to live in the suburbs and have a relatively easy commute into the Central City compared with Auckland and Wellington, was identified by developers as one of the reasons that there was no real imperative to live in the central city.

Some developers felt that the aims of the different councils, particularly the growth of Waimakariri and Selwyn Districts we counterproductive to the goals that Christchurch City Council had for the Central City. In the discussions all the developers felt that there needed to be alignment between the three Councils to ensure that the goals of urban development could be achieved.

Some developers went further and suggested that three Councils was an oversupply of bureaucracy and the region would be better served by a Super Council, similar to the Super City arrangement in Auckland. They discussed the ability to create a single vision, have consistent rules and be able to stop the urban sprawl by focussing on brownfields developments.

AirBnb in the Central City

The debate of whether there should be AirBnb in the city brought out polar views from the developers. The majority were not in favour of this at all, citing the disruption that the AirBnB developments created, particularly in multi tenanted properties where peoples sense of security can be adversely impacted with unknown residents constantly coming through the building. This was reinforced by developers who saw AirBnb impacting negatively on communities, or at least the sense of community between residents. The view being that communities did not work well when there were empty houses or high rates of transient residents.

> *a lot of people feel they're an intrusion and into their way of life they don't want the transient population*

> *if you were living in one of those apartments and you had Airbnb beside you, above you and below you that's not the same as living in a local community*

Other developers did not subscribe to this thinking, seeing AirBnB as a model for investors and a way of fast-tracking development in the Central City. These developers did not have the same view of community degradation as other developers, instead seeing the opportunity to drive wealth into Mum and Dad investors instead of large overseas companies who own hotel chains.

Overall, the majority of developers spoken to in this study were against the development of AirBnb in the residential developments they were undertaking and felt that the current policies needed to be enforced more stringently.

Culture

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The culture of Christchurch City staff (and other organisations staff including Otakaro, Development Christchurch, Regenerate Christchurch and ChristchurchNZ), particularly those in the consents and planning departments was referenced by the majority of developers. The feedback was mixed and depended on the developers interactions and the interactions of others in their peer group.

> *you speak to the architects and they'll tell you the processes are difficult to get through and they've got to go back and check things with them. They don't even know for sure whether they can get something through.*

One sense was that staff were working in an impossible situation, trying really hard to do their best but being constrained by process and legislation. Developers reported that individuals were helpful and great to deal with.

On the other side of the debate developers discussed an environment of ticking boxes and being extremely removed from the complexities and challenges of the 'real world' that the developers lived in. It was suggested that many follow an approach that is combative and designed around saying no, instead of how we can help you get this project across the line.

> *I would suggest that the planning either their mandate changes to how do we help get every project across the line, they must show how they help to get those projects across the line or they lose their jobs and the whole planning and resource consenting gets shuffled out to a different business sector or something.*

The majority of developers felt that there were much better ways of working together to ensure the success of the Central City. Having a 'how can we', rather than a 'why we can't' attitude would go a long way to achieving a better future. This does need to be put in the context of there being few developments that the Council actually rejects. Often the developer is the one to withdraw. There is clearly an issue here that needs more in-depth analysis as some developers reported being unsure as to whether they would undertake further developments due to the difficulties they faced.

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