



REGENERATE CHRISTCHURCH

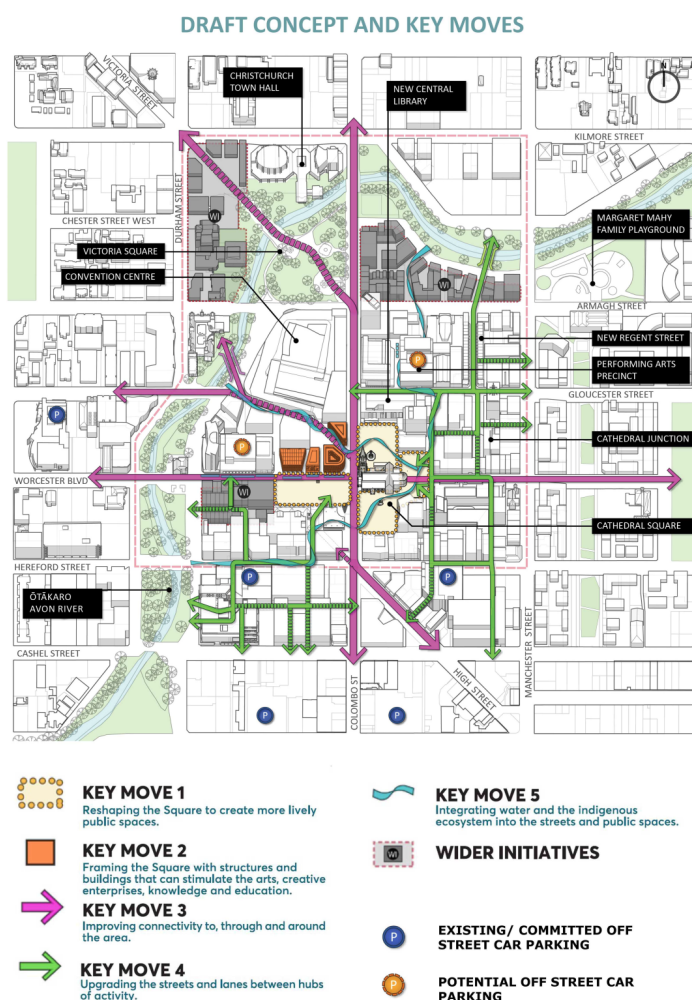
CATHEDRAL SQUARE: DRAFT CONCEPT EVALUATION

RESEARCH REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2017

1 Background

Regenerate Christchurch is the Crown entity established to lead regeneration activities across Greater Christchurch. In conjunction with its partner organisations, Regenerate Christchurch is developing the regeneration strategy and action plan for Cathedral Square and the surrounding area. As part of the plan's development, Regenerate Christchurch released a draft concept, illustrating five 'key moves', with the intention of gathering public feedback (Figure 1):



In the first week of September 2017 Regenerate Christchurch commissioned Research First Ltd to lead the analysis of the collected feedback. The results of that analysis are presented here.

2 Key Messages

- The majority of the feedback is in support of the Cathedral Square draft concept. Overall, 83% of consultation participants stated that they like the idea or like it with reservations.
- Residents who provided positive feedback like that the concept will facilitate:
 - A more dynamic and people-friendly Square;
 - A Square that is more vibrant and attractive to tourists;
 - The Square becoming a destination rather than a thoroughfare;
 - The Square attracting people of all ages; and
 - The Square becoming more attractive through the addition of green spaces and water.
- The feedback identified that the introduction of new buildings on the northern edge of the Square is an area of major concern. The main reservations are the reduction of open space; potential loss of heritage value (due to altering the shape of the Square); blocking of views and sunlight; or creation of wind tunnels.
- Key Move 1 (*Reshaping Cathedral Square to create more lively public spaces*) and Key Move 5 (*Integrating water and the indigenous ecosystem into the streets and public spaces*) attracted the largest number of predominantly positive comments. Residents generally support the proposals that will turn the Square into a series of attractive and people-friendly spaces, but urge Regenerate Christchurch to keep in mind practical considerations such as location of gardens, the types of plants used, and the long-term sustainability of water features.
- Key Move 2 (*Framing the Square with structures and buildings that can stimulate the arts, creative enterprises, knowledge and education*) received the least support. Residents feel that building on the northern edge of the Square could cause a range of potential negative impacts, and are also concerned that new buildings could be commercialised (rather than remain public-oriented) in the long-term.
- Within this general pattern, the feedback varied somewhat depending on the specific background and key interests of individuals or organisations. Feedback from Cathedral groups mainly concerned the rebuild of the Cathedral; business organisations focused on consumer accessibility; architects and planners discussed overall design implications; and heritage groups were concerned about retaining historical features and designs. Young respondents were very supportive of the draft concept overall, however, expressed concerns that the new Square did not encourage enough youth-oriented activity.

3 Support for the Draft Concept

3.1 Overall Impressions

Overall, most of consultation participants (83%) reacted positively to the draft concept for the Cathedral Square. Nearly half (47%) support the concept without reservations, while 36% support the concept but have concerns. Less than one in five (16%) do not support the proposed new concept.

	Proportion of respondents	
Yes, I like the idea	47%	} <i>83% of respondents support the draft concept for the Square.</i>
Yes, I like the idea but have some concerns	36%	
No, I don't like this idea	16%	
Neutral / don't know	1%	
Number of responses	700	

3.2 Why Is the Draft Concept Appealing?

The most attractive features of the draft concept for the Square are:

- **Creation of dynamic people-friendly spaces.** Residents feel the proposed design will bring life to the Square and the city centre, encouraging activity and inviting people to stay for longer.
- **Making the city more vibrant and creating a European feel.** The proposed design for the Square and the surrounding areas remind residents of large pedestrian-friendly spaces in Europe. Having such spaces is seen as being good for the city and as likely to attract tourists.
- **Making the Square a destination rather than a thoroughfare.** Closing the Square to cars and improving pedestrian access will transform the Square and make it into a place where people want to come and stay (rather than simply passing through on the way to other attractions).
- **Creating a gathering place for people of all ages.** Residents like the idea of creating an inclusive space with multiple uses, that can accommodate people of all ages, and is family-friendly.
- **Rejuvenating the Square by adding green space and water.** Adding plants and water features will make the Square more attractive, contrasting with the large grey paved area that currently feels soulless and cold. Adding greenery will also balance out the modern architecture prevalent in the surrounding areas.

"I think the concepts for the revitalisation of the city centre are amazing; their focus on people-focussed designs, which aim to encourage people to stay and use the city spaces, is great as it moves away from car-focussed design which ultimately build unattractive and polluting cities."

"This makes lots of sense and will change the dynamic of the Square from an unwieldy, overwhelming expanse to several much more flexible spaces that operate at a human scale."

3.3 What Are the Main Reservations?

While generally accepting of the draft concept for changing the character of the Cathedral Square and the surrounding areas, many respondents had reservations about **introducing buildings on the northern edge of the Square**. The concerns around the proposed new buildings are because:

- New buildings could block sunlight by creating too much shade, as well as creating a wind tunnel effect. This would mean the Square would be less pleasant to be in.
- New buildings appear to encroach on the Cathedral, blocking the view as well as limiting the available open space. A number of residents referenced the view of the Cathedral from the West while approaching the Square down Worcester Boulevard as an important part of their visiting experience. New buildings would change this experience and would also alter the shape of the Square, removing the symmetry.
- The draft concept is quite vague about the purpose of the new buildings and who will own or control them. Respondents recognise that once the space has

"[T]he buildings added are not specified - what are they for?"

"[T]here will be plenty of shading with this - the area is already a cold windy place and more alleyways provide more wind channels."

"[T]he diamond paved area is offset from the Cathedral so vistas are lost - that will

been built upon it will be difficult to reclaim it for other uses. It is thus important to ensure that the new buildings are meant for public rather than private or commercial use.

- The buildings need to be carefully designed keeping in mind the surrounding heritage style architecture.

Residents' other concerns include:

- Seating destinations need to be available to attract visitors to the Square and encourage activity. Feedback emphasised the importance of introducing cafes, bars and other attractive destinations on the ground floors opening onto the Square, this way enticing visitors to come and enjoy the area.
- The rejuvenated Square should cater to both tourists and locals.
- It is important to maintain vehicle access to local businesses (e.g., hotels) and services available in the area. The new design should also clearly outline the new directional flow of traffic and key access (and parking) points. Some residents are concerned that closing off some streets to car traffic will create congestion on nearby roads.
- There should be a plan for long-term maintenance and cleaning of newly introduced water features. In addition to keeping the water ecosystem clean, the plan needs to address concerns about the safety of children and elderly users.
- Some respondents are concerned about the length of time it will take to execute the project, especially considering the lack of clarity about the future of the Cathedral. There is a sense that there might be a lot of delays.
- Some respondents are unsure if the redesigned Square will have enough to offer for youth. Introduction of free WiFi is recognised as a step in the right direction, but may not be sufficient on its own.
- Access to the new Central Library and other new features (e.g., skate park) is likely to generate a lot of foot traffic, which could carry safety risks.

"Lively public facing businesses (cafes, shops, restaurants NOT banks etc) will be vital to bringing the square back to life."

"Has consideration been given to access to the central city hotels and convention centre (square side) for buses, car and taxi drop offs?"

"[I] thinks it's pretty cool but how long will it take... will [I] even be able to enjoy it properly before [I] go to uni?"

3.4 Why Is the Draft Concept Not Appealing?

Respondents who reject the draft concept (approximately 16% of all submissions) have similar concerns to the supporters, especially regarding new buildings on the northern edge of the Square. However, this group place much stronger emphasis on the importance of preserving heritage and historical values.

These residents feel that because the current cruciform shape of the square was part of the initial Christchurch city design, it should be retained. The new buildings would remove the symmetry from the Square, making it both lopsided and less of a square. The new construction would also block the currently unobstructed view of the Cathedral and the Square when approached from the west down Worcester Boulevard. Given the significance of the Cathedral itself, it is also perhaps inappropriate to build at such proximity (as it may give the appearance of the Cathedral being crowded out).

Residents criticised the location of new buildings on the sunny side of the Square, and highlighted the risk of creating shade and wind tunnels.

In addition, some respondents have concerns that reducing the size of the Square and dividing it up would limit the space available for events. These residents noted that the Square would reach capacity at events held before the earthquakes (e.g., New Year's Eve celebrations).

Some respondents also commented that the draft concept is trying to be too many things at once, catering to everyone rather providing a unique strong vision.

"I do not like the idea of building on any reserve land, especially in Cathedral Square. Its shape was an integral part of the initial design of the City and is itself a Cross. It does not honour the European values and culture on which the City was founded. Buildings on this quadrant will obscure the view of the Cathedral frontage and create shading"

"I think the space is trying to be too many things to please too many people."

4 Support for the Key Moves

4.1 Key Move 1

Reshaping Cathedral Square to create more lively public spaces.

222 respondents (30% of all submissions) commented specifically on Key Move 1. Of these, half (50%) reported generally positive impressions. These respondents support the idea of introducing more intimate multi-purpose spaces that easily flow in and out of one another and are event ready.

One third of those addressing Key Move 1 (33%) like the proposal to create a series of interconnected gardens and green spaces.

Among those articulating concerns and/or criticism, a common theme is the loss of the Square's unique cruciform shape and its historic value. Dividing the Square up is also viewed as potentially reducing its civic importance – because without one cohesive space the area would cease being a square.

While the proposal to create Cathedral Gardens (and other green spaces) was generally well received, some are concerned about it being located in the coldest corner of the Square, especially given the potential of new buildings creating shade. There is also some discussion about whether the green spaces should have native or more exotic plants.

"I love the idea of different spaces instead of one. Especially love the cathedral garden - some greenery is a must as this is what connects people more to this area rather than all hard surfaces."

"I love the concept of family friendly green areas in the square. Making the landscaping child friendly, perhaps even including a sensory area. A very attractive green area will be key to bringing families and customers to the area."

"I am concerned that the green space on the south (cold) side of the square might not be a comfortable place to hang out as suggested in the warm sunny pictures."

	Proportion of respondents
Overall positive	50%
Cathedral Gardens positive	33%
Concerns/ suggestions	19%
Overall negative	6%
Cathedral Gardens negative	6%
The Library Plaza positive	6%
Retain cruciform shape of Square	5%
Post Office Plaza positive	4%
Ensure adequate seating	3%
The Library Plaza negative	2%
Post Office Place negative	1%
Number of responses	222

4.2 Key Move 2

Framing the Square with structures and buildings that can stimulate the arts, creative enterprises, knowledge and education.

Only 11% of respondents (83) commented specifically on Key Move 2. The feedback was predominantly negative.

The main concerns are about the impact the introduction of new buildings will have on the character of the Square. The buildings are seen as limiting the available open space, which in turn would have the effect of diminishing the significance of the Cathedral. If built too high the buildings would also cast shadows on currently sunny spaces and create wind tunnels. Additionally, a number of respondents expressed disappointment about the potential loss of the Square’s heritage value (by losing its cruciform shape) and the loss of the clear uninterrupted vista from the Cathedral all the way down Worcester Boulevard to the Canterbury Museum.

	Proportion of respondents
Overall negative	41%
Losing open space / blocking Cathedral view	29%
Concerns/ suggestions	24%
Overall positive	22%
Number of responses	83

“The addition of buildings “New buildings framing public space” is an appalling idea. They will shade the area by the Post Office making that nice sunny area a funnel for wind and a shady spot. This addition of buildings shows that the designers have no regard for the original square’s plan to be open space, to create a clear vista from the Cathedral, all the way down Worcester St to the Museum.”

“Cathedral Square is a heritage area in its cruciform/Maltese cross form. To change this by adding buildings and separating off various parts is to lose its heritage value. IT MUST NOT HAPPEN.”

“I dislike this idea due to the loss of public space. I don’t see the need to build on public space when there is already plenty of empty land around central Christchurch. It also destroys the symmetry of the square and has the potential to make the square small and pokey.”

4.3 Key Move 3

Improving connectivity to, through and around the area.

123 respondents (16% of all submissions) commented specifically on Key Move 3. Most of the feedback was positive overall (41%). Respondents support proposals to block car access through the Square and focus on making the surrounding areas more pedestrian and cycle friendly. While it may make access to surrounding businesses problematic, ensuring the space is pedestrian friendly is viewed as a key part of making the Square a destination rather than a thoroughfare.

Some respondents noted the lack of clarity about traffic flow around the area. In order to make the area inclusive, it will be important to ensure proper access. This includes public transport, parking, drop off zones as well as clear and consistent signage.

	Proportion of respondents
Overall positive	41%
Block car access through Square	34%
Concerns/ suggestions	32%
Pedestrian and cycle focus - positive	20%
Keep car access through Square	9%
Consideration of disabled access	5%
Ensure adequate parking	5%
Overall negative	3%
Pedestrian and cycle focus - negative	3%
Number of responses	123

"I like the idea of ensuring good pedestrian spaces and reserving options for inclusion of transport modes other than private car in the future."

"I would like to see through traffic removed from the square. Public transport options travelling through the square would be ok as long as they don't dominate the space."

"Very much in favour of restricting most motorised traffic from the Square"

"Like the idea of the pedestrian friendly appearance, but for this to work the surrounding areas must support traffic flow and parking."

4.4 Key Move 4

Upgrading the streets and lanes between hubs of activity.

Only 7% of respondents (51) addressed Key Move 4. The impressions were positive overall (90%).

Creating a good network of pedestrian-friendly lanes linking up to the Square is good for moving people around and encourages exploring. It also reinforces the perception of the city centre as a safe place, making Christchurch an international quality city reminiscent of cities in Europe.

Respondents noted, however, that it is important to ensure network accessibility from outside the area and that there is a certain lack of clarity about how this will be achieved.

	Proportion of respondents
Overall positive	90%
Concerns / suggestions	18%
Overall negative	4%
Number of responses	51

“Support upgrading streets/lanes especially where it promotes walking/cycling/public transport over private vehicles. I would especially like to see Worcester St upgraded to a mainly pedestrian space that connects the square better with the Avon River.”

“I like lanes/arcades/ & courtyards to make different & interesting places to help link-up with the Square in some directions.”

“Please think about parking in the area as well, especially if you want to encourage people to come to the theatre, library, and whatever festivals will happen there. Don't make it a nightmare for families to travel there.”

4.5 Key Move 5

Integrating water and the indigenous ecosystem into the streets and public spaces.

151 respondents (21% of all submissions) commented specifically on Key Move 5.

Most (70%) like the inclusion of water and native plants into the area's streets and open spaces. The majority of positive comments provide no specific feedback other than the general support for the idea. Some, however, expressed excitement about creating beautiful natural spaces with a park-like feel and the possibility of native birds returning to the area. Others like the idea of a stream flowing through the Square, connecting the different aspects.

Sceptics emphasised the importance of using a mixture of native and more exotic plants and flowers rather than focusing solely on native foliage. Native plants tend to be evergreens and are viewed by some as not aesthetically pleasing. Adding more exotic variants would bring in colour and celebrate seasonality. The introduction of deciduous trees, in particular, would not only add vibrant colours in the fall season, but also would allow for more light during colder times of the year. Some respondents feel exotic plants would more appropriately honour the city's heritage.

In terms of water features, the key concerns are about maintenance. A stream could be expensive to maintain and keep clean, and may also pose a safety hazard for children and the elderly. In addition, some respondents feel introducing a stream is unnecessary given the proximity of Avon river.

A number of respondents suggested introducing a smaller water feature in the form of a fountain, as it is more appropriate for an area like a square. Some comments also referenced the exceptional quality of Christchurch's drinking water. This could be celebrated by the introduction of water fountains with interpretative signage.

	Proportion of respondents
Overall positive	70%
Concerns / suggestions	25%
Overall negative	17%
Number of responses	151

"Love the greenness of it, the plantings and water flowing through!"

"Using water and native planting to connect the areas is great."

"I love the idea of reconnecting water to the Square, I'd love it to be flowing streams and native plants. Imagine tui, bellbirds and kereru in the Square one day!"

"I like the idea of green spaces but it needs lots of colourful flower gardens not boring flax bushes and cabbage trees which are already over planted in the inner city."

"I have reservations about the length of the "river". The Avon always has a lot of rubbish in it which makes it look really ugly so how will the new "river" be kept clean? It will end up being very high maintenance as people are lazy and disrespectful with their litter. A water feature would be good but not to the extent as in the plans."

5 Different Perspectives

5.1 Overview

In-depth feedback from organisations and individuals largely depended on their background and key interests. Feedback from Cathedral groups mainly concerned the rebuild of the Cathedral; business organisations focused on consumer accessibility; architects and planners discussed overall design implications; and heritage groups were concerned about retaining historical features and designs.

As a special interest area, the next section summarises the youth perspective.

5.2 Youth Perspective

172 respondents (23% of all submissions) identified they had heard about the draft concept through their school. These responses were reviewed separately to gain a better understanding of the youth perspective.

	Proportion of respondents
Yes, I like the idea	69%
Yes, I like the idea but have some concerns	28%
No, I don't like this idea	2%
Neutral / don't know	1%
Number of responses	172

97% of respondents supported the draft concept for the Square.

The response in this group was overwhelmingly positive with 69% expressing support for the draft concept without reservations and a further 28% expressing support with some concerns (97% supportive of the concept overall).

Most comments provide no specific feedback, instead articulating their support for the concept in general. Among those who specified reasons, the following themes emerged:

- It will be good to have an attractive new space in the city centre. The rejuvenated square will be a drawcard for tourists and bring people back to the city centre.
- A good amount of open space (including green spaces) will provide opportunities to spend time at the Square socialising with friends or having a picnic.
- The new Square will attract people of all ages. Gardens and water features, in particular, will add to the feeling of relaxation and provide a family-friendly vibe.

- The new central library and the introduction of free WiFi are positive contributions.

One of the main concerns this group raised is whether sufficient focus has been placed on youth activities. To attract young residents to the Square, it will be important to ensure that there is enough for them to do in the area. Respondents would like to see the Square featuring events (e.g., concerts, markets, art installations) and various youth activity hubs (e.g., table tennis, chess boards and other gamified systems). The availability of digitally enabled areas with charging stations and large screens is also attractive to some.

A small number of young respondents also commented on the importance of keeping the Square clean or making it smoke-, alcohol- and drug-free.

6 Other Feedback

6.1 Suggestions

In addition to providing feedback on the draft concept in general and individual key moves, respondents offered suggestions and alternatives that would make the concept more appealing. Some of these suggestions are listed below.

- Consider temporary structures rather than permanent buildings on the Square's northern edge. Not only would this make available space more transitory and flexible, but also it would alleviate concerns about the potential loss of heritage value.
- For a water feature, consider a fountain rather than a stream. This would reduce maintenance costs and improve safety.
- To provide variety and to add colour, consider introducing a mix of native and more exotic plants in the designated green spaces.
- Make sure the Square provides sufficient protection from the elements in the form of covered areas, awnings, pavilions or similar.
- Ensure easy access to the area, by providing innovative public transport alternatives and parking options, and clarifying the directional traffic flow around the area. This could include expanding the tram network, transforming it into a more functional transport alternative rather than a tourist attraction.
- Consider making the area smoke-, alcohol- and drug-free. This will increase safety and help prevent antisocial behaviours.

6.2 Additional Considerations

When asked about the one thing that could be done to make the most positive difference to the area, most submissions (59%) discussed various features that could be introduced or retained. The most commonly mentioned ideas cited the importance of events and maintaining activity in the area, the introduction of green spaces, and more food and beverage outlets.

One third of submissions (33%) discussed various Square design elements and 17% focused on accessibility issues (e.g., traffic management, parking, better pedestrian and cycling access). One in five respondents (19%) cited wider considerations, such as cleaning up the area or providing more residential living.

	Proportion of respondents
Features to include / retain	59%
Design concerns / suggestions	33%
Wider considerations	19%
Accessibility	17%
Other	2%
Don't know / nothing	1%
Number of responses	616