



Submission on Hutt City Council Draft Annual Plan 2014-2015

Prepared by Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce & Industry Incorporated

OVERVIEW

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce is an active supporter of growth and development plans included in the Annual Plan for the 2014-2015 year.

We believe the ongoing commitment to the business stimulus package and proposals that have the potential to increase investment in Hutt City and create a vigorous and prosperous community.

Plans that have been on the drawing board for some time will now start to come into play particularly developments along the river bank protection scheme under the Wellington Regional Council.

Taken together with the re development of the Hutt city administration centre and upgrade of the proposed city conference and community hub for the city, there is a strong signal that the city is on the move.

Our members are generally more confident about their future here in Lower Hutt and that is supported by the steady improvement in the local business climate.

This submission will deal with the Hutt Valley Chamber aspiration for the future and will compare our hopes with the Hutt City Annual Plan. We will look at the city's investment proposals that form the backbone for growth and the expansion of community facilities which is vital for families of high value staff needed for business growth.

We will also discuss the council's business incentive proposals and explore areas where there is room for council and the city to support new development initiatives.

COMMUNITY HUBS PROVIDE FOCAL POINT

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce believes the evolution of community hubs as proposed under the annual plan is a positive step. We see a growing preference for staff and business owners to stay local for lifestyle and community activities. The existence of locally-based facilities are the key to fulfilling those expectations.

The Taita Community and Sports Centre has now received the financial support it needs to move toward project completion. We believe this will maximise the use of existing resources and provide a regional centre that will attract people into Lower Hutt.

The Fraser Park Sportsville is creative concept that links existing sporting organisations based at Fraser Park and will provide top quality sporting surfaces that will attract competitive events from across the lower half of the North Island. This further reinforces our view that Hutt City Council has a responsibility not only to attract businesses to the city, but to provide plenty of things to do for people once we have got them here.

Creation of Community Hubs will provide a focal point for families and students including access internet and computer services. This is a positive step and is supported by the Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce.

ATTRACTING BUSINESS INVESTMENT

We believe a key role for Hutt City Council is driving projects that benefit the city and the next two to three years is critical to success.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council is engaged with the council in discussing the concept of promenade on the new realigned stop banks facing on to Daly Street. The thinking is that existing property owners will invest capital to turn “their face” to the river with a plethora of cafes and new apartments in line with the projected intensification of the inner city to cater for future growth of Lower Hutt.

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce has long been an advocate for such developments to encourage people back into the central city, but we believe a tougher stance needs to be taken with the regional council. A soft approach could mean Lower Hutt misses the mark in terms of taking advantage of the river which is a dominant feature of our natural environment.

Development and earthquake strengthening of the city council administration centre will create a modern profile while retaining the essence of the existing historic buildings. For the city itself the new building will provide modern, clean and professional offices that will be flexible and able to be modified in the event of any change to local government administration for the region.

We have been a supporter of this project as it will enhance the edge of the city centre, provide new gardens as a special feature of a revamped Riddiford Gardens, and complement the War Memorial Library as a community hub.

The decision by council to operate in competition to local business by opening its own council-run coffee shop adjacent to the library, in the long term, is unlikely to be sustainable without ratepayer support. we do not think that is core council business.

REPLACEMENT FOR HALLS A CHALLENGE

Investment in the revamp of the Horticulture Hall and the Town Hall is still unclear. The concept of developing a convention centre is attractive and there are many businesses that would welcome the move. There are a potential service providers, local retailers who would benefit from additional visitors to the city, along with tour operators and accommodation providers.

There is an element of chance in this scenario and we would like to see a supporting concept for substantial city promotion that would attract people to the area.

Feedback from some Lower Hutt hospitality providers is cynical but with a growing trend being reported of local-based corporate head offices heading into Wellington for their activities, there is a belief that something should be done.

We also believe the functional use of the existing halls has a benefit for the city communities and a number of national events have been held there every year for many years. Every effort should be made to preserve the continuation of these heritage activities which benefit many parts of the city community.



In terms of this submission, Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce believes the commercial edge of a multi-purpose conference centre would provide a focal point for promoting business in the city and have the potential to encourage a wider range of business-centric activities. These would be in addition to the conference market.

PETONE STADIUM PROPOSAL

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce has listened to the views of many of its members about the proposed mini-stadium which would serve as a home-base for the Phoenix soccer team. The lack of defined commercial edges to the proposal makes the commitment of ratepayer-funding a difficult choice.

Jackson Street business interests see a considerable windfall benefit from the co-location of a stadium nearby but there other downsides in terms of constraints on community facilities, congested parking, and concern by nearby residents around noise and nuisance factors from attendees.

We have refrained from taking a position at this early stage and have been encouraging our members to make individual submissions to council

HUTT VALLEY CHAMBER A KEY PARTNER

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce wishes to acknowledge the support it has received from council and we are pleased that the chamber continues to exceed value for money through a wide range of services and activities that encourage business growth.

We are a service provider in that we provide services to our members and, in turn, work with the council in encouraging new initiatives that will have long term benefits for the community.

Significant projects in the year ahead include further development aimed at encouraging science projects, encouraging greater use of the CBD, and working with council to attract new business investment.

We see ourselves as a key partner with Hutt City Council in shaping the future of the city.

CONCLUSION

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce is pleased to support the foundation projects of the Hutt City Council 2014-2015 Annual Plan and acknowledge the significant support for business growth in the city.

The injection of capital by a central local government agency like the Hutt City Council into major infrastructure projects is an investment that is building confidence in the city.

Already there are a number of major private developments contributing more than \$300 million to the local economy and more are in the pipeline. The business rates are providing an incentive by spreading the cost burden for community facilities across the whole community. The stimulus package has now become a major tool in making the difference for developers when deciding on a location for their projects.



Hutt City has already done the hard work in putting in place its urban growth strategy which is designed to ensure families and workers are attracted to the amenities available in the area and provided with jobs that will increase the focus on more intensive central city housing developments.

The aggregation of people is a key contributor to the growth of smaller supporting businesses including restaurants and cafes and larger chains seeking to enhance the growth potential of central city locations.

Hutt Valley Chamber of Commerce has the support of its members - totaling more than 700 business leaders within the community - in supporting the city development plan.

We believe this coming year will lay a bold and solid foundation for future growth of the city over the next 10 to 20 years.

Mark Futter
Chief Executive