

We can create a better CITY:

by building SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is the glue that holds us together and enables us to work together to achieve common goals and to solve problems

The facts about social capital

“...amongst the challenges of post-quake life in Christchurch, one thing stands out as a beacon of hope: our sense of community. We are all in this together, and we need to work together to rebuild our lives, homes and businesses.”

(BAB website)

- the most popular leisure pursuits are individual activities such as watching TV or videos;
- 15% of residents sometimes feel lonely or isolated;
- people in low incomes are more likely to feel lonely and isolated.

The earthquakes helped people come together, sparking a new sense of community. Throughout Christchurch grassroots initiatives sprung up and local residents helped each other.

There was a shared commitment among people to act in a collective and co-operative way for the common good and mutual benefit.

As our city rebuilds we need to retain and grow this sense of community.

However, surveys indicate:

- Less than 50% of residents feel a sense of community in their neighbourhood;
- only about 13% of residents engage in some form of voluntary work;

“...too great a gap between the haves and the have-nots hollows out civic life. It diminishes the possibility that we can share and live a common life, sufficient to foster shared values, sufficient to the kind of life and the kind of citizenship wherein we can deliberate about common purposes and ends.” (SANDEL 1997)

Social capital is the glue that holds us together



Rebuilding Christchurch

To build social capital we can...

Promote social connection

Social isolation and lack of participation in community life impact negatively on wellbeing. Supporting organisations and activities which encourage participation and inclusion is vital.

Engage people in decisions

Residents clearly wish to have a meaningful say in the future of our city. We need to create opportunities for residents to contribute to decision-making, and broaden the range of people who participate.

Participate politically

Including running for office, attending public meetings, serving on committees, campaigning and even voting. Organisations could put children and young people on their Boards and Advisory Committees.

Provide civic education

People need to know the basics of democratic political systems to be able to participate.

Volunteering in one's youth is the biggest predictor of adult volunteering and community spirit. Community service programmes, which are meaningful, regular and woven into a school's curriculum builds social capital. Episodic service has little effect.

Address poverty

Access to an adequate standard of living is a fundamental precondition for people to be able to participate and feel like they belong to their community and wider society.

Support art activism

Art is a tool to help cross age, socio-economic and culture divides, by bringing people together. Community-based art and artistic productions that address community problems act as a catalyst to civic dialog.

Support NGO organisations

Non-government organisations represent a large proportion of the city's total stock of social capital. Partnerships between NGO, government and private sector organisations will further strengthen social capital

Promote full employment

Work provides people with an opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, the city's wellbeing. It provides social contact and social connectedness.

Affordable housing

Poor or unaffordable housing can lead people to move more frequently, and live in neighbourhoods for shorter periods of time. This can discourage familiarity and connections with people and places.

Design communities

We can design communities so they encourage more socialising with friends and neighbours, including mix-use zoning and pedestrian friendly street grids. Public parks and informal meeting places can promote general conversation and a forum for citizens to interact and discuss issues of mutual concern.

Methodism was initially formed as a social movement which sought to build social connections between people and address poverty so all could fully participate in society.

www.mmsi.org.nz/our-views.html

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