

Auckland Inner City Connectedness Project

Auckland's inner city has undergone a transformation as a result of significant increase in high density, affordable housing. Vertical 'neighbourhoods' are being created by people both out of choice and necessity – in particular, migrants, older people, young families and youth/students. Very little is known about the community resources needed to thrive in the unique circumstances of inner city living – the services they require, the activities they want to participate in, and the ways in which they want to connect with each other.

Demographics and social trends suggest that the evolution of an inner city community is unlike suburban communities and we expect that traditional community development and involvement assumptions are not valid. There is a need to talk directly with the people who make their homes in this environment to hear firsthand about their experiences, their needs and their ideas. It is only by surveying inner city residents directly will we gain the best possible understanding of how they view their community and their connectedness to it.

Parnell Community Trust has commenced a research project to explore Auckland's inner city connectedness, to determine how organisations and agencies working in the CBD, can deliver more relevant, focussed and appropriate community services and activities, so as to foster the emergence of a true community.

Seed funding from Auckland Council's Strategic Relationship Fund has allowed an audit of the inner city to identify the existing organisations, groups and facilities already in place for the residents. We have already met with over 60 groups, from Police to Plunket, business associations to churches, university and migrant support groups, and many more in between. On its own, this process has allowed the overlay of observations about inner city residents from the perspective of those working with them – identifying new trends, and changing demographics (e.g. increasing number of new babies, apartment dwelling 'migrant' grandparents, hot-bedding for shift workers).

The second stage of research will see us partnering with Auckland University of Technology's Institute of Public Policy to talk to the residents themselves, to investigate how 'residents experience connectedness, factors that impact on connectedness and establish markers and consequences of connectedness' with the objective of recommending potential methods for accessing residents and enhancing connectedness in Auckland's inner city.

The resident surveys are the crux of the project, and one that the research expertise of the Institute of Public Policy will ensure is completed accurately, ethically and with credibility. The results will be statistically managed so that the findings can be extrapolated to provide accurate, representative and informed decisions around implementation of service delivery, barrier minimisation, resident communication and involvement for all those working in this community.

The resident survey has been costed at between \$42,000 and \$90,000, depending on the number of surveys to be completed. This is a sum beyond the reach of Parnell Community Trust's resources and one that we continue to seek support for, from a number of organisations.

All of the groups we have spoken with to date will be assisting in the provision of resident contacts, volunteer support in the delivery of surveys, and all agencies will be given access to the results of the final research to assist them in their own work and collaborative work in the inner city.

We all believe that Auckland as a whole will benefit from an engaged and thriving inner city community. We need to be clear and focussed about what it is that the residents need to feel connected to their community.

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July 2010

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