

**WCC Strategy and Policy Committee, 22 November 2012, Committee Room 1.**

Christine McCarthy, President, Architectural Centre

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa

I am Christine McCarthy, the President of the Architectural Centre, a group first established in Wellington in 1946 who advocate for good design. Our members include people interested in design and the built environment as both individuals, and as design and architectural firms.

I am here to convey the Centre's appreciation for Wellington's waterfront, and our support for the City Council's proposal to continue its development in the area of North Kumutoto through well-designed and high-quality spaces and buildings.

It is no doubt universally agreed among Wellington's citizens that the waterfront is a wonderful place, and that it is fully appreciated as a public asset to the city. It is vibrant, idiosyncratic and joyful. It accommodates a huge range of community activities from markets to cafes and restaurants, public meetings, exhibitions, and, of course, fireworks. That is to say that the waterfront south of North Kumutoto, rather than the waterfront as a whole, supports these diverse and important civic and community functions.

The Architectural Centre considers that the area of North Kumutoto is deficient in terms of community, civic and social function. It is an area of unrealised potential. It is a huge gap in what could be a sustained length of public amenity, and activity.

North Kumutoto lacks the built infrastructure to support human activity. As a climatically harsh environment for much of the year, North Kumutoto needs to provide good shelter from the cold, from the rain, and from the wind. Currently this area creates a horrid gap in the pedestrian shelter from Shed 21 to Site 7, the Meridian Building. Ask anyone trying to cross town along this route with any degree of wind or rain. This significantly limits the viability of public engagement with the waterfront, outside of sunny, summer weather.

The lack of infrastructure at this key connecting point in the waterfront reduces the potential for many of the public to access Harbour Quay. While this is technically a private development, Lambton Harbour have committed to working with Wellington Waterfront to support public amenity in this most northern quarter of the harbour precinct. Currently Harbour Quay's public infrastructure is underutilised, and this is largely because the critical point in the waterfront, North Kumutoto, is a large barren carpark. As Wellington's

recreational playground, the waterfront is let down by North Kumutoto's barren asphalt - our very own little bit of inner-city Detroit; not a welcoming space, nor a well utilised one.

The Architectural Centre hence sees the need for a better built environment in North Kumutoto and we see this as requiring buildings as well as open public spaces. Buildings will provide the much needed shelter, maximising public engagement with the waterfront. In addition they will supplement the current reasons for people to come to the waterfront. As such we support commercial functions being accommodated by these buildings. Commercial offices, for example, will increase the waterfront population across the whole of the year, providing natural surveillance, and hence ensuring that the waterfront is a safe place for all Wellingtonians.

Commercial functions, such as restaurants, and cafes, are important infrastructure, and provide other amenities, such as toilets. They have the potential to supplement other community functions such as galleries and meeting rooms.

Our support for such development though is conditional. We strongly support maximum ground level transparency, but also understand that it is not necessary for such ground floors to be exclusively public in a narrow sense of the word. We believe that publicly accessible spaces can also successfully accommodate commercial functions, such as cafes etc. We also strongly advocate for public access to rooftop spaces, and challenge the council to improve their record on this - the Herd St Post Office conversion, for example, has demonstrated what can go wrong, despite Resource Consent promises to provide a generous public rooftop space. We support the development of buildings on Sites 9 and 10, but will always remind the council that, regardless of commercial developers, ALL waterfront buildings must be cognisant of their public obligations in terms of their need to provide and increase public access to new vantage points to engage with our harbour, and an obligation to demonstrate excellence in design.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.

Kia ora.