



**7<sup>th</sup> August 2016**

**SUBMISSION TO THE CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL DRAFT HOUSING POLICY**

**The Christchurch Youth Council wishes to propose and submit the following recommendations on behalf of the interests of the youth populous of Christchurch in relation to housing concerns, issues and all manner of views on the matter.**

**This submission is being completed on behalf of an organisation, the Christchurch Youth Council Inc, which is a group of 16 young people from a diverse range of backgrounds.**

**The Christchurch Youth Council aims to:**

- Advocate, support and strive for a stronger voice for young people;**
- Engage and promote the ideas of active citizenship and participation in order to encourage young people to contribute to their communities;**
- Create space and a positive environment to allow young people to speak about, and be involved with, issues affecting them; and**
- Foster relationships and build networks with decision-makers in order to influence positive change for young people.**

**This submission represents the views of the Christchurch Youth Council. We make no claim to speak for all young people in this city, but it is with their best interests at heart that we present this submission.**

**The submission was prepared based on the opinions that were expressed at the most recent Slice of Youth event, which focused on the topic of sustainability, held and organised by the Christchurch Youth Council. We have also used our data collected during WeSpeak on the Road in May, where we travelled around Christchurch city to hear the views of young people.**

**For any further questions regarding this submission, please feel free to contact us at [chchyouthcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:chchyouthcouncil@gmail.com)**

**Vinura Abeysekera – Executive Member**

**Sophie Mills – Executive Member**

**Sofie Hampton – Treasurer**

**Kaitlyn White – Co-Chairperson**



## **1. Accessibility of housing in conjunction with the needs of different social groups**

### **Discussion:**

Most socioeconomic groups falling under the category of "low income" wage earners was a predominant concern expressed, in specific relation to low income families as well as low income students.

The latter point also relates to students who work casual jobs as well as those devoid of any form of employment, and belonging to the category of undergraduate students. Such a kind of student, lacking any form of income (or meagre income), experiencing flatting accomodations be it under university premises or otherwise, are a group of concern whose needs for accessible housing needs to be met under the financial circumstances they are privy to. Another sub-group classed under this category are students who are an ethnic minority. Such ethnic minorities would experience difficulties unlike local students, who can gain support from the Ministry of Social Development due to being a de facto citizen in such situations, and hence would encompass another set of needs and requirments when it comes to accessible housing.

Other socioeconomic groups include people with debilitating or chronic conditions, with specific reference to respiratory conditions and disabilities. Access to affordable housing to such a group needs to be approached in a specific manner so that access to major services is in conjunction with the locus of their housing complex.

First home buyers were also a nomenclature that was mentioned as a group with specific needs. Such buyers would require a specific set of needs in terms of accessibility to housing, such as a good location and affordability in relation to their prevailing socioeconomic status.

### **The Christchurch Youth Council recommends:**

**1) The council implement directives in their policy to meed the needs of all the aforementioned groups in relation to the simple aspect of tailored accessibility. Tailored accessibiity, in this context, can be described as access to housing whilst meeting the circumstantial parameters of a given socioeconomic group as different social sects would possess and seek different requirements.**

**2) The council cater to students and youth minorities that do not possess the same external support as other student groups do, as well as those affected and living with chronic conditions.**



## 2. Needs of social groups in conjunction with determining locations for housing

### Discussion:

A particularly poignant concern expressed was the effects high density housing buildings, with one respondent classifying this as "inefficient and environmentally dubious". This is in accordance with the current status quo of the overall NZ housing market in which foreign investors find it profitable to invest in high density housing complexes. Not only does this have a negative impact on the surrounding environment but this would also affect social groups who feel compelled to utilize such complexes at the expense of their own needs and comfort. Cheap housing at the expense of a lack of access to viable services in the given area should not be a point of compromise as a good location encompasses a variety of access as opposed to making simple and fast housing a priority.

In accordance with the sentiments expressed in the above point, environmentally sound practices and the advocacy of preservative mechanisms was predominant in the concerns expressed by numerous respondents.

"Preservation of the native bush and wildlife", "[good] land and not at risk of further damage" and "environmental and community needs" were all major concerns that echoed through much of the feedback that was accrued. The inefficiency of suburban units was a point of concern that was expressed due to its harmful encroachment on surrounding landscapes. The issue of building on swamp/marsh land was brought up as well as the prevailing cheaper rates of such land continuing to be promulgated in certain regions such as Eastern Christchurch. The consequences of building on such landscapes is a primordial issue due to the ramifications of cold and moldy houses arising. Hence ineffectual insulation and the emergence of weakening structural frameworks would be a problematic issue that would arise when such tracts of land are targeted for housing purposes at a cheaper rate.

Given the locus of ones location in terms of housing, accessibility to crucial social services was a pertinent concern. Access to public transport was an exceptionally major point in this instance, as well as in conjunction with access to such regions containing supermarkets, shops, social hubs and educational facilities like schools and universities. The issue of everyday commuting and the rising levels of air pollution was yet another segment expressed in the data gathered; this provisioned even more importance upon the need to have access to public transport due to concerns expressed by respondents on the continued increase of carbon emissions. The need to capitalise on access to public transport was also partnered with centralised housing so as to mitigate the negative externalities of urban sprawl.

Furthermore, certain other aspects of concern expressed included: (1) "gentrification of lower-income areas through post-quake development" and (2) "severity/depth of advertising [of] higher energy houses". When considering (1) this poses several issues for low-income socioeconomic groups due to rising housing prices and displacement of not just families but the presence of social services and local businesses as well. The main concern revolving around (2) would be how such houses are marketed and advertised and to which segments of the populous such campaigns are directed towards. Socioeconomic groups that are unable to cope with such high energy housing should not be a focal point of such campaigns as this will only serve to endanger the misplaced financial culpability that would be inevitably placed upon them.



**The Christchurch Youth Council recommends:**

- 1) The Council to focus upon ease of access to social services and major locations as per the needs of different socioeconomic groups.**
  
- 2) The Council to advocate environmentally sound policies when combatting the effects of urban sprawl and encroachment upon areas possessing native bush and wildlife.**
  
- 3) The Council to inquire into the benefits of high rise buildings as opposed to suburban units which further worsen the effects of urban sprawl.**

### **3. Opinions on Rental WOF's**

#### **Discussion:**

The majority of sentiments expressed on Rental WOF's landed on the positive end of the spectrum as their necessity for assurance of good housing was acknowledged. Such an implementation bringing about a sense of assurance for quality housing was readily adhered to by many respondents. However the risk of the raise of rental prices was mentioned and brought forth as a valid concern. Due to the diverse capacities and financial capabilities of different socioeconomic groups a hike in rental prices and the need to ensure a set of guidelines, in terms of ensuring affordability to all such groups, was a noteworthy suggestion by one of the respondents. In conjunction with catering to the needs of different socioeconomic groups, Rental WOF's and their capacity to affect rental prices would be the crucial point of concern in this regard.

**The Christchurch Youth Council supports:**

- 1) The implementation of guidelines tailored to meet the capacities and requirements of different socioeconomic groups in terms of Rental WOF's and the subsequent effect on rental prices.**



## 4. Youth homelessness in Christchurch and community housing

### Discussion:

There was a vast plethora of opinions, ideas and principles expressed on the topic, all of which centered around different versions and conceptualizations of community housing for the youth populous.

- 1) The concept of a mentoring system was suggested by a respondent in which "valuable role model adults working to look after the youth" was an aspect of such a framework. This would seem to foster a communal relationship between the adult populous and estranged, homeless youth who will have a viable support system to lean on as well as learn from. A framework in which youth are nurtured by these role model adults can ensure a system of guidance prevails in terms of not just reliance on such people, but also learning from these generations that do have experience in terms of what it means to establish oneself in a housing situation and ensure a cycle of inter-dependency slowly graduates to that of independence.
- 2) The idea of active youth employment and engagement in activities such as the construction, upkeep and development of such housing complexes was also expressed. This could be targetted specifically at unemployed youth and it seems to have many benefits including not just simple communal engagement but also increasing the probablility of future employment, such as in the construction industry, due to the scaling up of one's skill set.
- 3) A communal driven set of initiatives was also proposed in accordance in areas in which friendly neighborhood relations could be cultured. The idea of involvement in communal gardening was put forth by a respondent in order to combat the effects of youth homelessness. This has the capacity to create friendly atmospheres where the mental health of youth suffering from homelessness could be combatted by bolstering engagement friendly initiatives.
- 4) An educational approach was recommended in which the furnishing of homeless youths trade qualifications was a primary concern. The usage of educational institutions such as ARA in providing free accommodation and courses was suggested by a respondent. Despite problems with the practical implementation of such a policy there do seem to be long term benefits that could be veritabily directed at homeless youth via such a framework that fosters better trade qualifications in a segment of the youth that have little access to such opportunities.



- 5) The concept of container housing was yet another suggestion directed towards combatting youth homelessness. Compartmentalised and an efficacious form of housing could be implemented to meet the needs of homeless youth via such an implementation.
  
- 6) Breaking the prevailing poverty cycle that homeless youth are enmeshed was a critical concern under the aegis of this topic. Constructing "specialised youth housing with initiatives to create positive habits" was a manner in which a respondent characterised the way in which one could approach this situation. Social and welfare programs aimed at alleviating the cyclic entrenchment of poverty that homeless youth face could be viable forms of integrating such a portion of the youth population with their peers who do have access to such opportunities and services.

**The Christchurch Youth Council supports:**

**1) forms of implementation, guidelines and frameworks aimed at alleviating the concerns expressed from the points 1) to 6) above.**

**The Christchurch Youth Council recommends:**

**1) The Christchurch City Council to inquire into the possibilities of implementing such initiatives as described in 1), 2), 3), 5) & 6) into their framework of the draft policy on housing, so as to alleviate the cyclic problems faced by homeless youth in Christchurch.**