

Friday 4 October 2013

New Aranui youth and community facility planned

Christchurch City Council is to build a new facility for youth and community groups in Aranui – its first new community centre since the earthquakes – with the support of the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust and Lion's Club International Foundation.

Investigations will continue into where the 976 square metre community centre should be built but the preferred site is that of the closed Wainoni Aranui Community Centre, 31 Hampshire Street. A preliminary concept of the proposed new facility has been completed. Community consultation will be carried out later this year and construction will begin next year.

The facility, which will include activity, meeting and office space, will cost an estimated \$5.9 million to build. It will replace the Wainoni Aranui Family Centre, which is currently closed and earthquake-prone, and the nearby demolished Aranui Community Hall in Breezes Road. The Council is still in discussions with its insurers over both buildings.

The Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust has granted \$1 million towards the new facility, which includes a \$500,000 donation from an anonymous donor.¹ Lions Club International will contribute \$450,000.

Mayor Bob Parker says partnering with the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust and Lions – means the Council will be able to bring plans for a new community centre to fruition more quickly.

“Residents in this suburb, both young and the not-so-young, have been sorely missing somewhere they can come together for cultural, recreational and educational activities and events since the February 2011 earthquake.

“The Council had already identified the need for more facilities in Aranui where residents and young people could congregate. We are very grateful to Lions and the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal for supporting this exciting new venture, which will be the first new community centre to be built by the Council since the earthquakes.”

Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trustee Dr Rod Carr says, “Trustees and the anonymous donor were very interested in funding a permanent community centre that particularly offers a place for Aranui youth where their activities such as rugby league and kapa haka practice can get back to normal. We look forward to building starting as soon as possible.”

Lions Project Manager Digby Prosser says Lions are pleased to work with the Council again to support the development of another community facility in the city. “Last year, we helped to fund a successful transitional community facility in St Albans after the loss of the St Albans Community Centre, and we’re also supporting a transitional facility in South Brighton due to open later this month.

“We are committed to the east and this project offers us the opportunity to help fund a permanent facility in the hard-hit eastern suburbs that will contribute to residents’ wellbeing by providing a place for them to gather and take part in a range of activities.”

Unit Manager Community Support Carolyn Gallagher says conversations with community development organisation Aranui Community Trust (ACTIS) and other groups in the area have indicated residents and youth need a larger facility that will meet their needs. The Hampshire Street site is the preferred site because of its proximity to sports fields, Aranui Library and key local organisations.

“Today’s decision means we can now proceed to the next stage. We’ll be talking in more detail to residents about what they need in the community centre and progressing design plans.”

An image of the Wainoni Aranui Community Centre is available at
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/aranuicommunity/8442230591/>

¹ The anonymous donor gave the Appeal \$5 million to help fund projects for children in Christchurch’s eastern suburbs. With the inclusion of this project, the \$5 million donation is fully allocated.

