

Investing in our community:

The Council proposes significant community spending over the next 10 years to:

- Support safety in the community
- Continue our Covid-19 response and enhance community outcomes for our economy
- Renew community facilities on a timely basis
- Enhance community outcomes for connectivity and our standard of living
- Enhance the region as a desirable destination for visitors

Quarterly Event Guides:

The seasonal events guides are quality documents that seem to capture most, if not all significant events held across the Region. Well done. As already noted, “Branding” matters. The consistent, clear message, delivered to both the Region’s residents and visitors alike, that Marlborough is open and active, links back to LTP’s proposal to coordinate key economic drives including retail, tourism and hospitality.

Nationally there is a reduction in households receiving hard copy newspaper delivery. Therefore the distribution method of these guides does need care to ensure they remain widely circulated. Information on the Council’s website and various weekly “What’s On” email platforms effectively leverage [and updates] information included in the Event Guides.

The Blenheim Business Association [BBA] made a wonderful job of encouraging residents back into the CBD after Covid lockdown was lifted. I endorse the LTP’s proposal to continue supporting a part-time coordinator. This financial support must happen to secure staff commitment to relationship building and ensure certainty of updating and social media presence. As is often quoted, “you are only as visible as your last post”!

It is frustrating to see the piecemeal approach by businesses in the CBD many of whom don’t participate in efforts to leverage off the major regional events. Multinational outlets appear not to care [know?] if it is Grape Ride, Air Show or Food & Wine Festival weekends, even staff often seem not to know that there will be extra visitors in town.

I interpret the piece meal approach adopted by Blenheim’s CBD retail outlets as portraying a lack of strong retail heart. We have a generally clean, well lit, litter free and increasingly more attractive CBD that is both reconnecting with the riverside and incorporating lovely street art.

Let’s hope a well-supported BBA coordinator can ensure everyone knows when say a cruise ship is again in port [the Picton community certainly do!], when a major nationally promoted event [of any type] is on in the Region. With the opportunity of circular leverage from the LTP’s new support for technology, food and screen sectors, important to ensure that BBA promote these developing sectors across the Region. Word of mouth, and the flow on social media public relations is a powerful force in advertising, both for good and in generating negative publicity. Let there never be another Christmas pass were the media report that visitors came to Blenheim/Marlborough and couldn’t book a meal.

Visitors who enjoy their stays, tell others, come again and once home buy wine and Marlborough’s diverse on-line offerings because they remember their great experience.

So if the Police request Council to install more street cameras in trouble spots, then let's make sure that's done. Safe, clean and attractive street, send a signal to the world that this is a prosperous place to both visit and call home.

CBD Apartment Living:

While there is discussion in the LTP of subdivision and related infrastructure development, there is no specific mention in the LTP document of Council actively facilitating CBD owner occupied accommodation development, specifically the conversion of [empty/underutilised] upper story commercial space into quality apartments, adding to the Region's housing stock. Sure this is happening, but how much more would happen if this conversion activity was actively supported?

For many around the world this living style is a stepping stone on the property ladder. Our CBD has beautiful open spaces such as Seymour Square and Pollard Park, Stadium 2000, and cafes and bars.

The presence of residence committed to "their home patch" assists in reducing anti-social behaviour and adds to the economic scale of retail activities.

Blenheim Event Centre:

The Region has a world class facility in our Event Centre. It is operated by experts [including MDC's oversight] and visiting performers [of all genera] are quick to praise both how well they have been looked after by the team running this venue and the venue itself.

However Blenheim is still overlooked as a touring show venue, for both the Anderson Theatre and the main ASB auditorium. I commend the investment in deferred maintenance expenditure. This EC asset will be truly intergenerational. Fully promoted and protected the venues can become major contributors to the conference and Event market. When the world post-Covid reopens to international visitor travel [including performers] New Zealand will I believe become a destination of choice.

Let's ensure by active promotion and publicity that Marlborough captures those activities travelling to Nelson and/or Christchurch to use our facilities.

Community Facilities:

Regular maintenance [of all kinds] extends the life and serviceability of most assets. Without the proposed investments, gains from developing tourism are not going to be maximised and we risk the environment suffering. The installation of additional toilet blocks in the Region was a practical, positive move, undertaken to address the concerns from actions of freedom campers. Continuing this investment and control approach is supported. Listening to community concerns and responding with changes is the sign Council is responsive to real issues raised.

The earthquake strengthening of Renwick Museum is a positive proposal for protecting an important community facility, and repository for the Region's history.

The Renwick Village Green and Cycle Pause Park are successful examples of the upgrading of facilities and are fantastic additions to the local community via the Small Townships programme.

Maraes around the country played an important community support role during the Covid-19 lockdown and during the Kaikoura earthquake. I am pleased note that the Council values these communities and proposes funding emergency preparedness plans.

There will in due course be more people arriving in Picton once the larger ferries commence service. The Region needs to be prepared to service the increased needs and encourage these visitors to stay longer.

Bypass & Roundabouts:

No we don't need a roading bypass. We need the biggest "Welcome, Stop and Stay" approach possible. The bypass "*solution*" floated to ease congestion on the main highway through Blenheim is too expensive to justify, when weighed against the economic loss to the very business the Region seeks to grow; retail, tourism, hospitality, food. Look to the numerous dead and dying small towns bypassed along length of State Highway 1, for evidence of the folly of this approach.

And in a similar vein, traffic roundabouts have been reported as way more efficient at maintaining traffic flows than are traffic lights**. Studies have shown roundabouts are safer than traffic lights. Drivers need to slow down and think at roundabouts as opposed to trying to beat a red light. Roundabouts are safer, improve traffic flow, are cheaper than traffic lights and can be installed for use in most situations.

** [<https://www.acsengineers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/logo.png>]