

Media release **Embargoed until 9.30 am, 22 October 2020**

More than a building—Concept Design for Christ Church Cathedral brings vision and reality

The Concept Design and overarching vision for the reinstatement of Christ Church Cathedral provides the first public glimpse into the future reality of the city’s heritage and community centrepiece.

The Concept Design, being released today, details the plan for the reinstated Anglican Cathedral and its supporting buildings that will make up the ‘Cathedral Quarter’.

The Cathedral remains the hero of the vision, supported by modern buildings that both contrast and complement it in terms of aesthetics and function.

To the north of the Cathedral will be the new Cathedral Visitors’ Centre. On the ground level will be a café, with terraced steps leading down to a lowered, landscaped courtyard and museum and retail. To the south will be the ‘Cathedral Centre’ providing much-needed gathering spaces, offices and amenities. Both are designed to incorporate glass and timber textures to promote light and create a visual connection to the Square.

Anglican Bishop of Christchurch, Rt Rev’d Dr Peter Carrell says the Cathedral will have more flexibility in how it functions, due to planned enhancements internally and from the new supporting buildings.

“This is an investment in the future of the central city, Christchurch and Canterbury. The Anglican Cathedral is an iconic building at the heart of the city and the seat of our Anglican faith.

“The Cathedral, through this Concept Design, will look very similar, retaining many heritage features, is more welcoming and have improved flexibility for worship and events, supported by improved acoustics, and a refurbished and better situated organ.

“I’m excited by the unfurling fern fronds expressed in the paving outside the Cathedral that extends welcome to all, as the fronds symbolise peacefulness of intent.”

Christ Church Cathedral Reinstatement Limited (CCRL) Chair Justin Murray says the vastly improved aesthetics and landscaping of the overall Quarter will be a point of pride for the city and a revitalised New Zealand attraction.

“It is a wonderful piece of design work, by Warren and Mahoney and Snohetta, that is distinctly Kiwi. The new modern buildings serve as a link to the contemporary buildings around the outside of the Square and are complementary to the Cathedral.

“This great looking plan offers a vibrant, attractive, functioning Cathedral Quarter that we are convinced will stimulate social, economic and tourism activity in Cathedral Square and the wider central city.”

Where does the reality come in?

The reality is that this vision comes with a cost, says Bishop Peter.

“We estimate the total project cost now to be just over \$154 million. That’s to deliver the entire Cathedral Quarter—the reinstated and enhanced Cathedral, landscaping and the two new external buildings and associated costs.

“We’ve known for some time that the overall cost would exceed the \$104 million estimate developed by the Cathedral Working Group in 2016. That was based on an early engineering assessment of reinstatement that did not meet the full scope or vision of the project.

“Since then, the project delivery company, CCRL, has been working with us to bring together all the requirements and practicalities of the project to arrive at the current estimate. We have resolved a range of scope and functional matters during the concept design and dealt with many constraints. The original Visitors’ Centre and vestries have to be removed to facilitate the reinstatement,” Bishop Peter says.

“It has been a logical, robust, well-thought-out process and it has taken until now for us to really pin down the look, feel and function of how the Cathedral Quarter will really be – and, as such, get a reasonable cost estimate for this stage of design.

Peter Guthrey, Chair of the Christ Church Cathedral Reinstatement Trust, the trust specifically set up to raise the required funds, says the fundraising target is approximately \$51 million.

“The fundraising target is ambitious yet achievable, and we are confident that a wide range of people here in New Zealand and from around the world will provide support. The good news is with over \$100 million already raised, we are already two thirds of the way to our goal,” says Mr Guthrey.

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