



Checking the health of our town centres

A spot check of the health of our town centres is the focus of Council's 'Marlborough Town Centre Health Check', the findings from which were presented at this month's Economic, Finance and Community committee meeting.

Every two years since 2011, Council has produced a report on the health of the Blenheim and Picton town centres. Statistics such as the composition of the town centre, state of the environment and the results of a pedestrian survey are all included.

Economic Development manager Neil Henry says there is now a reliable body of evidence that provides a comparative study to identify trends and changes over

time. "This is one of the benefits of doing this survey regularly so we can see how our CBDs have changed."

"Since 2011 there has been a noticeable change with a lot more cafes and restaurants and less retail in Blenheim. This shows the changing nature of how people are spending, with more online shopping and leisure activities in town centres," Mr Henry said.

Data for the new study was collected in December from 297 people. Some of the key findings were:

Blenheim

- Spend in the Central Business District: \$296.8M (\$10M more than in 2022)
- Fewer vacancies in Queen Street
- Reduction in retail shops from 92 to 84
- Increase in vacancies from 20 to 27
- Sixty four per cent visit the CBD for cafés and restaurants

Mr Henry said the reduction in retail shops likely showed the impact of online shopping and e-commerce.

"This is an international trend. However, the town centre continues to perform well across most measured categories including transport, pedestrian route quality, state of the environment and street vitality."

Picton

- CBD spend: \$94.3M (\$15M more than in 2022)
- Strong return of visitors, both domestic and international
- Vacancies similar to 2022 at 7 per cent
- Food and entertainment the most common drawcard (23 per cent)
- Seventy five per cent visit the CBD for cafés/restaurants

"Overall, Picton CBD is performing well. The state of the environment, street vitality, pedestrian routes and transport options all continue to be maintained at a desirable level. We've seen a strong return of international visitors and transaction rates have gone up," Mr Henry said.

The report will be published on Council's website.



Seniors' Expo next month

Are you interested in activities or advice targeting the over 65s?

The Marlborough Seniors' Expo, on Tuesday 5 March, is a day designed for the whole community to help create awareness of services and activities available for older people.

While aimed at the over 65s, the Expo is open to everyone. It's a perfect opportunity to get vital information for whānau and family members. Whether it's helping them to maintain an active lifestyle or meeting other people in a bid to reduce loneliness, the Expo can help. Even if it's just wanting to

know where to access advice and support, the Expo is a valuable starting point.

There will be health information available, plus mini health checks and representatives from support and health organisations will be on hand.

The Expo runs from 9am to 1pm at the Marlborough Events Centre, next



📷 Learn more about what's on offer for older people - Marlborough Library (Blenheim) Community Learning and Engagement Coordinator Duncan Mackenzie at the last Seniors' Expo

to the ASB Theatre, and is free to all. More than 50 stallholders will attend and refreshments will be provided.

For more information, contact Council Ph: 03 520 7400.

A welcome drink for street trees

It's been a hot summer which is great for holidaying, but it can make life hard for our street trees.

While watering of younger trees is carried out regularly by contractors, the trees also appreciate a helping hand from residents over the hot summer months.

Please keep an eye on the tree outside your home - if it's looking dry then feel free to give it a drink with a hand-held hose or a watering can, either early in the morning or in the evening. We - and the tree - appreciate this help!

You can help care for our street trees by:

- Keeping lawn mowers and grass clippings away from the trunk to prevent bark damage
- Not spraying, but weeding around the base of the tree
- Not parking over the tree's roots
- Reporting any vandalism or wind damage to Council

Council plants smaller, drought tolerant street trees, maintained by professional arborists who are responsible for their care. Please contact Council on Ph: 03 520 7400 if you notice a problem with a street tree.



Energy efficiency funding scheme suspended

Council's energy efficiency and clean heating loan scheme will be suspended for any new loans from 29 February.

Council's loan scheme was set up in 2010 to assist Marlborough ratepayers to take advantage of government subsidies for insulation and clean heating. It meant ratepayers could take out loans to insulate or heat their homes, to a maximum of \$15,000, which was added to their rates.

A changing regulatory environment is the impetus for the change, Council's

Chief Financial Officer Geoff Blake says. "There are now other options available to ratepayers with the large banks providing top up mortgages for energy efficiency upgrades at a better rate than Council offers," Mr Blake said.

"The suspension of the scheme will not affect ratepayers who have an existing loan with us - it will only

apply to new loans."

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority has had various schemes to provide grants for insulation and heating - the current one is called Warmer Kiwi Homes.

For more information go to: www.eeca.govt.nz/co-funding-and-support/products/warmer-kiwi-homes-programme/