CREATIVE CITY INDEX
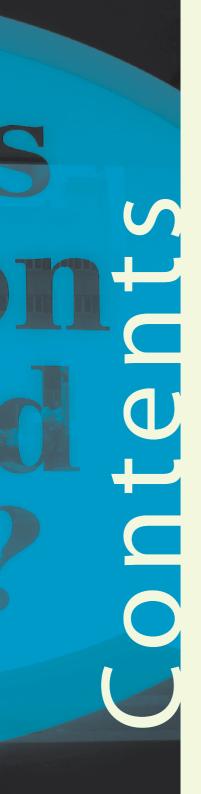## COMFORTABLE OR CAPTIVATING

An Assessment of Palmerston North
by Charles Landry

What's going on around here?

contents

FOREWORD

This short report is intended to be a *living document* resulting from a Creative Cities Index study which included an on-line survey and a week-long residency.

The report's aim is to spark a strategic conversation about Palmerston North's future amongst the key interest groups and communities in the city. Some outcomes confirm what Palmerston North is doing well while others question what the city thinks of itself. There is then a set of recommendations for the City to consider.

The findings, conclusions and recommendations require discussion: those who read and work with the report should continue to develop the debate, and in so doing create a related action plan.

My thanks to Palmerston North for the kind welcome. It was a pleasure to work with you.

Charles Landry

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Palmerston North scores "average", coming 8th (55.41) out of 17 cities assessed so far in the Creative Cities Index. The external assessment scores 53.54. The combined score is 54.47, which would push it down to joint 10th position. The external evaluation gives a different, sometimes lower, sometimes higher, score because it is assessing the City from a wider comparative perspective. The average of all cities is 54.78

The central issue the Index seeks to establish is whether Palmerston North is punching above its expected weight given its location, size, resources and opportunities. In making this assessment Palmerston North needs to understand that there is an older and a newer way of thinking about cities and their assets. Four issues are of special importance:

1   Good governance and integrated problem solving are increasingly regarded as resources worth their weight in gold.

2   Cities are moving from seeing city-making as largely hardware driven and focused on physical infrastructure, to seeing the goal as creating communities and places. This shift requires a new skill set, such as those of urban design, and more collaborative forms of working and recognizing the value of those who understand the software dynamics of cities.

3   A new class of jobs is emerging in city making. These are co-ordinators, connectors, intermediaries and brokers, who glide through organisations joining the dots together and bringing about useful synergies and so adding value.

4   Imagination and creativity are powerful resources in identifying and harnessing potential. Cities which do not encourage these qualities tend to decline.

Key Observations

Palmerston North is a comfortable place, easy to live in and it gains its relative strength from its role as a regional hub, the presence of the university and the defence force.

Yet it can achieve more with its assets and resources especially those in the university and UCOL with its constant inflow of younger people.

It is both missing and not grasping opportunities, which a more entrepreneurial spirit could unleash.

There is a burgeoning awareness of the need for change and for the City to lift its game. Palmerston North feels more comfortable with step-by-step change when perhaps a step change is needed. There definitely needs to be more energy and the city's pulse should beat a bit harder.

Palmerston North stands at the cusp of important choices and a business as usual approach will not get it to where to wants and needs to be.

The City should develop a sense of urgency. This is difficult when things seem fine, with neither boom nor bust pressures. There is a danger of complacency and a result can be imperceptible, yet gentle decline.

We are in a new world situation and some challenges and threats lie on the horizon. There is intense competition between cities and those with talent and ambition have choices. Many of Palmerston North's younger gifted people are leaving and even though some interesting older people are coming to the City, the talent churn is negative.

Massey is firmly anchored into the City especially given its food and agricultural research strengths, yet in time there is a risk that its strategic functions may shift elsewhere and the quality of students coming to study other disciplines may decline.

Palmerston North has a 'university in the city' feel rather than being a 'university city'. Palmerston North needs to assess how it can become more of the latter. Massey with its massive footprint and resources clearly needs to lead the way with UCOL and both should become models in making this happen.

Many in Palmerston North feel being imaginative and creative is an optional extra rather than lying at the heart of great city making. Palmerston North has some catching up to do here and in particular those within the property development world.

Palmerston North also lags behind other cities in terms of design quality and its urban design can improve where positive steps have already begun.

The relative feeling of comfort especially amongst the City's leaderships has created a crisis of ambition - this is a crisis of a special kind. With a normal crisis threats loom sharply, but for Palmerston North it is the 'frog in boiling water' threat. The problem could be addressed too late.

On the positive side some already say a veil is being lifted and that a buzz is emerging within the city and that Palmerston North is opening out, but more still needs to be done.

Questions Emerging

Palmerston North needs to ask itself: Are we punching within or ideally above our expected weight?

Is there a perception in the city that imagination and creativity is largely to do with the arts, whereas in fact it has far broader scope, implications and impact? It helps improve urban life for all; it generates the conditions for making the city wealthier and more resilient.

Palmerston North is a ten minute city and creates more time for its citizens. Does Palmerston North use this additional time well?

On the positive side some already say a veil is being lifted and that a buzz is emerging within the city and that Palmerston North is opening out, but more still needs to be done.

Above: Relaxing in George St. It looks disorganised, but it has its own order and distinctiveness.

The city's character has evolved from its history. It feels itself to be a comfortable place where people are more laid back. What are the implications of these attributes? Is there a danger that it does not challenge itself and therefore becomes mediocre?

Palmerston North has ambitions to be vibrant, sustainable, caring and innovative. Is there sufficient evidence and visibility that these aims are being achieved?

Does Palmerston North believe that its leaderships in various sectors, such as the Council, Massey, UCOL, Vision Manawatu, Destination Manawatu and others have created a forward looking story for the city that engages everyone?

Has the city adequately thought about where its new leaders are going to come from? Has it developed a succession policy?

Recommendations

Six major recommendations emerge from this report and they focus on: Understanding the significance and value of strategic leadership; the need for a city-wide coalition to take the city forward; horizontal and interdisciplinary working; the importance of highlighting the power and potential of good urban design; the crucial role of developing an entrepreneurial spirit and the need to challenge perceptions of the city.

1. Strategic Leadership

Palmerston North needs to become more strategic and to understand the global dynamics of cities and how Palmerston North fits into this overall pattern and how it can make the most of its resources. It needs to appreciate more fully the new conditions and new type of assets required to make the most of its potential. This will help Palmerston North get onto a wider radar screen.

Palmerston North needs to think less like a town and more like a city. This demands a degree of alertness, strategic focus and a deep and wide-spread understanding of global trends.

In reflecting on and responding to this a vision needs to be built that is focused less on words on paper and more on turning ambitions into reality and by stressing implementation. Too often there is a sense that doing the strategy is the work, when it is only the beginning.

The business community needs to be brought on board and they need to understand better that good urbanism and place making is good for enterprise and that creating interesting places requires a measure of creativity.

The combined leaderships of Palmerston North need to be less concerned about individual projects and instead think of how all the individual projects fit together as an integrated

Palmerston North needs to think less like a town and more like a city. This demands a degree of alertness, strategic focus and a deep and wide-spread understanding of global trends.

By engaging more deeply with external stakeholders such as the University and UCOL as well as others the City's vision will become more deeply anchored and more likely to be put into practice.

whole. Developing 'the city' itself is the major project.

This means the rules and incentives regime of all key interests groups in the city need re-assessing in the light of new city-making or Palmerston North's challenges.

Being a councillor or in any other urban leadership role needs professionalising to ensure Palmerston North grasps its opportunities.

2. City Coalition

A broader mixed city-wide leadership should be set up. This alliance should consider dispassionately where the City is going and by bringing these public, private and community forces together it is likely to have positive results. In thinking through the City's future the alliance may draw in outside advisors.

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This collaborative approach is part of a wider movement where policies and implementation are more co-created with citizens. There is a less parental attitude and a more collaborative one.

Right: An amusing sign for sale... it encapsulates well the requirement to act but also to be visionary.

3. Interdisciplinary Working

There are many good initiatives to rethink public management and joined up working is increasingly seen as good practice globally. The horizontal working ethos needs to be embedded throughout the city and especially within the city administration. This is not to decry the virtues of specialist knowledge or multidisciplinary working where each specialism remains independent and within its own frame of reference, standards and codes. This can be productive as it encourages interaction between disciplines and perspectives.

Yet with problems or opportunities increasingly multifaceted and cross-cutting more interdisciplinary ways of decision making, working and implementing projects can be more effective. This looks especially at the issues that fall through the gaps and are often nobody's responsibility, such as urban design or enhancing the networking capacity of poorer people. In this trans-disciplinary working different specialisms intersect and redraw boundaries. It is vital to tackle complex, wicked problems beyond the scope of a particular area.

Crucially by working together mutual learning occurs, competence increases and insight can grow and as a consequence it is possible to create an integrated mindset.

4. Urban Design

The level of design in the city should be lifted and in particular urban design needs to be taken more seriously. More investment in the urban realm and in public space is required. Done well it will help Palmerston North's attractiveness, sense of vibrancy and competitive position. The urban design perspective will help humanise Palmerston North's environment.

An achievable target is for Palmerston North to create five precincts like George Street. The UCOL area could become a

second urban highpoint and along the way black spots like the car park in front of Te Manawa would disappear.

To do urban design well involves multiple skills and knowledge present across many departments in the administration. Lessons from the urban design team can be valuable to other departments in the Council especially citizens taking ownership of spaces in helpful and imaginative ways.

To make this happen has involved extensive discussion and consultation behind the scenes as well as rule changes, flexibility and encouragement.

The urban design perspective will help humanize Palmerston North's environment.

The name of a shop in George St. 'Urban Charm' expresses well what Palmerston North should aim for.

hub central

5. Entrepreneurship

To be entrepreneurial is an antidote to complacency, Palmerston North's greatest threat. This can be harnessed for private gain as well as community and public purposes. With its young population, the second youngest in the country, Palmerston North could work to make the city of place for start-ups, experimentation and even become a thought leader role. One focus for the City could be to become an entrepreneurial nursery - important as the bright ones do not want to be always waiting for the future.

An entrepreneurial strategy for the City will involve establishing ladders of opportunity for more established companies and also those in vocational as well as more academic training. The raft of activities the Palmerston North administration can influence would include mentoring, encouraging soft loans or helping to create incubator spaces. Palmerston North has a relative advantage in that it is relatively cheap. This apparent weakness can be turned into a strength.

Palmerston North has some major opportunities - in a way it is a blank canvas. There is capacity locked up in Massey and UCOL which with greater encouragement of entrepreneurship they could do more for the city. In theory too, if it is open-minded, collaborative and avoids the harmful aspects of provincialism, Palmerston North is small enough to make things happen and big enough to be taken seriously.

Left: UCOL's overall environment contributes well to Palmerston North's quality of life and vitality.

One focus for the City could be to become an entrepreneurial nursery - important as the bright ones do not want to be always waiting for the future.

6. City Perception

For too long the outside world has defined Palmerston North's identity and sense of self. It is in danger of creating psychological damage and turning the City inwards. It struggles with the moniker that it is average, middling or mediocre. Here the city's character is an issue. One of Palmerston North's greatest virtues is its humility, its sense of loyalty and hard work. These fare less well in a shouting and celebrity driven world.

Palmerston North needs a richer description of what it is and what it could be and to develop a new story reflecting its multiple layers and not be a slogan. It should then assess how to communicate these aims. This story should drive a more complex process involved in shifting internal self-perceptions as well as creating external ones. It is less about branding and more about building immediate associations and a reputation for achievements made.

The City therefore needs to find interesting ways to project its achievements and values and to show real achievement. It needs to surprise New Zealanders. Part of this is to work out how the invisible virtues and good things about the City can be made more visible. If Palmerston North really is 'vibrant', 'sustainable', 'caring' and 'innovative' it needs to be clear to residents and visitors alike.

Right: Palmerston North needs to reflect on what it wants to be and how to project that to the outside world.

METHODOLOGY & APPROACH

This study is the result of Palmerston North's participation in The Creative Cities Index, which measures the pulse of creativity in its broadest sense in participating cities and provides some degree of benchmarking between them. It also balances the insider's view of their city with that of the outsider. The insider lives and feels their city, but is perhaps too close to have perspective. The outsider knows far less detail, but can look at things afresh and with a comparison of other places.

The assessment is made across 10 domains:

1 Political and Public Framework

2 Distinctiveness, Diversity, Vitality and Expression

3 Openness, Tolerance, Participation and Accessibility

4 Entrepreneurship, Exploration and Innovation

5 Strategic Leadership, Agility and Vision

6 Talent and Learning

7 Communication, Connectivity and Networking

8 The Place and Place Making

9 Liveability and Well-Being

10 Professionalism and Effectiveness

Left: The Creative City Index explores many things that are below the surface.

This study hopes to spell out to Palmerston North why being imaginative and creative is an important feature in city development and especially today.

So far there have been seventeen Creative City Index assessments. The first was in Bilbao, with whom the whole index was developed in the first place in 2010. Other relevant cities assessed are Oulu, the Finnish high tech centre, whose famous technopolis and university is like Massy some distance from the city, Freiburg, Europe's green city in Germany, again a strong university city; Ghent a creative hub in Belgium as well as Canberra and Perth in Australia; Taipei, San Sebastian and Cardiff amongst others. Helsinki will shortly join the group.

The report itself is an analysis and interpretation of those findings. While it states some things that Palmerston North almost certainly already knows, the report also confirms and validates them from an outside perspective. In doing the work Palmerston North's strategies, detailed plans and on-going initiatives are looked at with open eyes.

In drawing conclusions some recommendations and proposals are made. However, the major conclusion concerns the approach Palmerston North takes in thinking about its future and the dominant character of the City that shapes its own mindset both for good and not so good.

This study hopes to spell out to Palmerston North why being imaginative and creative is an important feature in city development and especially today.

In measuring Palmerston North, 490 citizens from different backgrounds answered one of our two questionnaires – 425 answered the short one and 65 the long one. In addition we consulted in person 51 people, in individual and group interviews across a wide spectrum, including: politicians; the City administration including the main departmental heads and others working in planning, community services and culture such as the museum; promotion agencies with responsibility for Manawatu; the university and UCOL; local traders and businesses; innovation centres; and NGOs.

We also tried to establish a sense of who has left Palmerston

North and why they did so. Here a clear message came through – a lack of opportunities, the inability to fulfil ambition and a somewhat provincial mentality. By contrast those that arrived from outside agree with the easy lifestyle moniker, the convenience and that it is a good place to bring up a young family

Site visits were made to tech and research parks, the university, museums and other cultural centres, the shopping centres, primary and secondary shopping streets, classier areas in the city and those more deprived, the river, parks and the wider surrounds including the wind farms, as well as an extensive trip through the beaches, to Wanganui, to the towns in between and to the rural hinterland. The aim here was to get a feel for the wider context.

The only important missing element was caused by a lack of engagement by the property development world. We have not experienced this before. None answered the

Above: Te Manawa is one of Palmerston North's greatest assets. Why is there a massive car park in front of the entrance?

Soul

Autumn
Colour
Free Professional
Consultations

questionnaires, none attended meetings, none accepted private invitations. Perhaps they have a perception that creativity is only about the arts, whereas in fact they are the principal group that will benefit financially from the improvements in urban life that the creative approach to city making implies.

The scores in the Creative Cities Index are produced by a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. Each of the questions from the questionnaire, using a series of complex algorithms and some weightings, resolve into a percentage score. All cities are asked exactly the same questions. As the external assessor I used fact-finding work, the meetings described above, and desk research to make my own judgement of each domain again as a percentage score. The final overall scoring is based on each of the ten domains having equal weight.

Score ranges in the Creative Cities Index broadly have the following meaning:

90%+   Extraordinary

80%+   Exceptional

70%+   Excellent

60%+   Very Good

50%+   Good but could improve

50%-   Below average, needs improvement

40%-   Poor, needs serious attention

30%-   Very poor

All cities are different and those participating so far in the Index reflect this diversity in terms of size and assets. The key point we wish to establish is whether Palmerston North is punching above its expected weight given its resources and opportunities. This is what we deem to be success.

The scores in the Creative Cities Index are produced by a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Far left: The name of the hairdresser in Coleman Place describes what every city needs.

Whilst the external evaluation in general gives lower scores,... there are some areas where we give a higher score such as the landscape for learning.

Summary Points

In the internal self-assessment and external evaluation the results are elaborated in the accompanying Excel spread sheet and summarised here. There is also summary of the comments made by respondents, some of which are rather interesting. Some scores may seem contradictory at first sight and are interpreted later.

- Palmerston North scores "average", coming 8th (55.41) out of 17, behind Gijón and before Aviles, who are both in Spain and essentially form part of a city-region there. The external assessment scores 53.54. The combined score is 54.47, which would push it down to joint 10th position. Whilst the external evaluation in general gives lower scores, because it is assessing the city from a comparative perspective there are some areas where we give a higher score such as the landscape for learning.

  » The average of all cities is 54.78

- The sample size is very high with 490 surveys completed. The organizers need to be congratulated in getting this feedback.

- Palmerston North scored above average (across all cities) in

  » Political and public framework (53.92) – external 49%

  » Openness tolerance and accessibility (60.80) – external 56%

  » Strategic leadership, agility and vision (53.04) – external 47%

  » Communication, connectivity and networking (66.51) – the highest of all cities – external 58%

  » Liveability and well-being (69.59) – external 66%

  » Professionalism and effectiveness (58.43) – external 58.50

- » The external evaluation gives lower scores than the internal self-assessment.

- Palmerston North scored below average in

  - » Distinctiveness, diversity, vitality (50.26) – external 47%
  - » Entrepreneurship and innovation (44.48) – external 46%
  - » Talent and learning (50.35) – external 59%
  - » The place and placemaking (46.73) – external 49%
  - » In three of these domains the external result is higher.

- At the detailed indicator level the positives are:

  - » Public institutions (64.97)
  - » Design strength (67.2) – a real surprise for the external assessor
  - » Education (68.83)
  - » Universities (71.45)
  - » Getting around (93.33)
  - » Networking (62.59)
  - » Well-being (71.95)

- The less positive indicators are:

  - » Art and culture (44.7)
  - » Openness (47.48) – A possible conflict with the encompassing domain heading
  - » Built environment (34.46)
  - » Reputation (47.9) – which is the lowest of all cities in the Index

- The demographics of the survey respondents are good:

  - » 81 respondents under 35 years old
  - » 129 respondents over 65
  - » The public administration (48 respondents), education (67), arts and culture (61), services (43), ICT (41) and others are reasonably represented

SETTING THE SCENE

The first words I heard about Palmerston North were that it is 'a comfortable city, easy to live in and to get around', and 'here we save time, it is a ten minute city, over the year we have five weeks more free time Aucklanders'. The crucial question is what Palmerstonians do with this gained time. Clearly more can be spent with family and friends – a positive attribute. There is a sense of neighbourliness. Palmerston North is not too big or too small for many. It is convenient.

Yet is that time also used to reflect on Palmerston North's future or to assess any threats to this comfortable living in the longer term? To feel comfortable is a double edged sword. It can veer into complacency and a lack of alertness. The risk of being complacent in a changing world is to move backwards. Interviewees stated that many people operate in a comfort zone with an attitude that 'things are fine, so what's the problem? It's all pretty good, there is no need for urgency, there is nothing bad enough to get wound up about, there is lots of wealth' (even though a substantial percentage live below the average national income). One said: 'there is a bit of an old guard here in town who grew up and made their way together – they run things.'

'Palmy cruises' someone said. 'It is cruising along', said another, 'luck has made Palmerston North lazy'. 'There are a lot of comfortable people who do not want to change the overall environment'. 'You can't point to things being disastrously bad, but equally not to things being very good'. 'The place is not challenging, it needs more controversy'. 'Things are taken from a risk rather than opportunity perspective, let alone from an ethical perspective or a sense of what's right'.

A crisp encapsulation was by an incomer, who enjoys the city: 'Everyone goes home at 5.30 and then they have a beer ... they carve themselves into the sofa and their universe

Left: The free play on the Square attracts people of all ages.

revolves around the house and garden……. whereas in many cities you feel a bit trapped at home and you want to go out…. In Palmerston North you create your own piece of heaven in the garden'.

I tried to understand why Palmerston North is as it is. It has a solidity. Palmerston North has few booms and bust. 'When the economy is suffering - things are OK, but when it is booming we trundle along'. It is relatively protected through three major activities: Massey University; the defence sector; and a regional hospital – all of which anchor its local economy.

These are publicly funded bodies and reasonably protected against outside shocks. As a result there is a higher proportion of public sector workers. This means the city has less urgency in generating a strong entrepreneurial culture (supplying the defence forces with their services is a safe bet). Such a culture usually leads to a loss of energy even though as someone noted: 'We are always saying we've got potential, but do not necessarily follow through'

The second comment I heard about Palmerston North was that it is the butt of jokes for many New Zealanders. They say the city is dull and boring as well as other unkind words. Palmerston North has let the external world define it and its response to these jibes 'is to act a bit like a bullied child'. This can cause defensiveness and an inward focus that is not good. I heard too the phrase 'New Zealand's best kept secret' many times. This can also be interpreted as "let's keep things as they are."

Yet the objective truth is that many people who have come from the outside, especially those working in the wider university context find Palmerston North better than the naysayers suggest. They are usually older and have a growing family and inevitably this shapes priorities. Even the lack of a beach is not so bad – Himatangi is barely 30 minutes away, though psychologically is feels a distance apart.

"No Culture Can Live If It Attempts To Be Exclusive"
MAHATMA GANDHI

Many do feel that things are changing, especially the incomers, such as those from the research world and especially in the cultural sphere. 'Something is buzzing in the last five years ….. people were isolated …. The cultural coordinator's appointment was pivotal, before no one was there and everything was fragmented. This has helped make things more visible'. 'There is a veil that is being lifted, that has nationally not yet been seen'.

Another, a foreign lecturer from UCOL noted: 'the cultural institutions are now more open, they want to collaborate, this can allow art to eat up the city'. 'The synergies are having an impact, although we are somewhat trapped in the same circles'.

Above: The Korean grocery store in Cuba St. sends out a good message to Palmerston North citizens.

The library is by
international
standards special
and admired both
internally and
in the external
world.

Palmerston North has done some major things that are praiseworthy. Of special significance is that it has not allowed out of town shopping centres which would drain energy and hollow the City out. The new initiatives around urban design are increasing urban quality and its best expression is around George Street.

The presence of advisors such as Graeme McIndoe is important. Interestingly there are two initiatives that involved risk and contention in their time are showing their worth. The library is by international standards special and admired both internally and in the external world. It is really a 'living room in the city'.

The rejigged Square receives praise even though many say further improvements can be made especially in terms of animation. Worthy of special mention too is the Safety Advisory Board, which is a model of collaborative, integrated working to good effect and whose chair, the local Police area commander has special qualities of quiet and determined creativity.

An important positive is a slowly emerging shift from a "customer" to a "citizen" focus. Historically it was assumed that if something is wrong it is the Council's fault. The planning team especially, for instance, is encouraging people to address problems themselves or to co-create solutions and here the input of outsiders like David Engwicht is significant.

Palmerston North also punches above its expected weight in terms of facilities. The central library is far bigger than one would expect, as is Te Manawa, and the Regent could grace a far larger city.

The flipside of Palmerston North's relative smallness is its cheapness and affordability. This can be an asset, for instance, it provides opportunities for younger people to start businesses.

The Global Context

Crucially there is a global context within which any discussion of Palmerston North needs to fit. Most importantly there is an intense competition between cities nationally and globally. This is why greater Auckland with 42% of New Zealand's population (globally the highest) has grown so fast. It is the country's entry point to the world. These dynamics will put pressure on Palmerston North. There are thus dangerous threats on the horizon and some need highlighting.

1

The younger age group is leaving

The 25-35 year old group is leaving and there is a significant dip looking at the city's demographics. These are, my interviews suggest, often the most interesting and ambitious in their cohort. There are insufficient choices and ladders of opportunity in the city. Investing in them and getting them to stay is an investment into Palmerston North's future prosperity. The city needs to understand what they need and want. Someone noted acerbically: 'The lifers rise to the position of influence and the creatives move on'. The younger group interviewed felt that 'as young people a small provincial city is quite nice…….. you can walk around and bump into people, it is relaxed, but others say not enough is happening'. 'Everyone has to spread their wings a bit' and 'most of my student friends will not stay, even though they come from Palmerston North'. Increasingly they do not come back and the talent churn, a vital concept is negative.

There is 'a feeling that something missing but we do not know what it is'. There is a perception that energy is lacking. Importantly though meeting aspirations and limited job prospects are the key drivers.

Notable too were several comments by older people who

Above: Palmerston North needs to keep its best talents and attract them too from elsewhere.

whilst remaining in Palmerston North still felt they needed a safety valve by going elsewhere on extended trips in order to garner a broader perspective.

2

Massey might move its headquarters

While Massey is likely to stay, it might in essence revert to its agricultural research strengths which are difficult if not impossible to replicate. And the best students in other spheres are more attracted to Auckland which in time this might become the university's central hub. What is Palmerston North going to do to avert this threat? Of the 11 departmental heads, four live in Wellington and two in Auckland. Only by allowing them to live elsewhere was it possible to attract them.

3

Palmerston North is not really a University City

Palmerston North has two poles – the city and the university, neither is strong enough to give the city overall critical mass.

Although close to each other the mental geography is far. Palmerston North has a 'university in the city' rather than being a 'university city'. The latter would have a completely different feel and would encourage far greater interaction between the social groups in the city.

4

Invisible diversity

Fourth, as a refugee centre Palmerston North has diversity and the city has been welcoming to them. Yet unless this diversity is given opportunities to express itself more fully itself it may in time cause problems. Several commentators noted that this diversity is largely invisible. At some point these groups may want greater acknowledgement.

5

Town or city?

This is a central question: does Palmerston North think like a town or a city? My sense is that it thinks like a town, which implies a more inward looking and less strategic focus. One comment from the questionnaires sums up the issue well: 'PN is basically a conservative rural service town and centre for government services despite its university.

Creativity hasn't been encouraged in the past, in fact it doing new things or trying things out has been discouraged. However, there is a change taking place whereby citizens are being given more licence to claim their space and more emphasis is being put on arts and cultural activities.' Or another interviewee: 'We are doing the basics and catching up and told that it is innovative when it is just good practice'.

So, if Palmerston North perceives itself to be more like a provincial town this determines who is attracted to the city, what the overall capacity of the city is and its mindset.

Palmerston North has a 'university in the city' rather than being a 'university city'.

Negatively, the first impression I had of Palmerston North was arriving in the airport and being told: 'With 1500 researchers Palmerston North has the highest per capita brains in the Southern hemisphere'. I could not match that with the airport arrival experience. Although recent improvements have been made it stil feels rather ordinary. Then driving into the city I had the feeling that Palmerston North was built for a city of 250,000 people rather than 85,000. I felt the city was built around roads and too few of these felt like streets. My sense was that Palmerston North had much catching up to do in terms of modern city making and urban design.

New Urbanism

Most cities historically were built in a very functional way, encapsulated in the cliché 'roads, rates and rubbish' (a hardware focus). They tend to operate with a strong departmental focus which emphasizes the silo more than the collaborative insights of teams working together. There are power implications in that the largest budgets are held by departments, such as those concerned with roads. In governance terms, they tend to have more influence in the hierarchies.

To stereotype, this approach builds in infrastructure but finds it difficult to build in a soul to the city or establish strong identity. Those working in this way tend to view issues like urban design as 'adding the pretty bits on top' or as a marginal extra option.

Right: The age of asphalt urbanism has gone, it does not make for good cities.

By working
together it is
possible to create
an integrated
mindset.

In the last two decades, however, there has been a major shift related in large part to global competition between cities and the need to attract the best talents. Urban development is now concerned with combining hardware and software and so focus on what places look and feel and how emotionally satisfactory they are as well as how they attract activity. In this approach there is a stronger focus on walkability and the need to downgrade the power of the car.

Place making is now an aim and requires a completely different skill set, spread throughout a local authority and its external stakeholders. Silo thinking and working finds it difficult to encourage great places. This is not to decry the skills of the specialist but to emphasize the need to work in teams not only in a multi-disciplinary but more importantly inter-disciplinary way. In the former sector specialists come together, but usually focus on the needs of their discipline and their associated codes and standards. In interdisciplinary working, by contrast, aims are jointly agreed, such as how to create a great street, and then codes and standards adapted accordingly. By working together it is possible to create an integrated mindset. The new jobs emerging foster joined up thinking. Co-ordinators, connectors, intermediaries and brokers are becoming more important because of the synergies they create. Traditional hierarchies find it difficult to give these people the proper space and authority.

This new approach is concerned with building communities and places not only infrastructure. This thinking implies a wider conception of what an asset or capital is beyond physical assets. For instance, infrastructure may be built that serves functional purposes ostensibly well, but because it is ugly it reduces social capital by encouraging deviant behaviour.

Palmerston North has some catching up to do here, even in comparison to other New Zealand cities nearby, like Wanganui or even Feilding, let alone elsewhere. Palmerston North can feel in many areas like a traffic engineered

environment. There is a worry that too much is concerned with getting 'things done down to a price rather than up to a standard'. For instance, why is there a car park in front of the entrance to Te Manawa? This is a major Palmerston North icon and there would have been other options.

There is no need to get into the details of car parking, an issue well rehearsed in the city - suffice it to say that it is emblematic of the different approaches to city making. This first serious point is that it is unfortunate for the city to depend so much on parking revenue. Second, the revenue share with the city means Frogparking also wants revenues to go up. Lastly, the innovation that is Frogparking maximizes revenue as a single criterion, but does not optimize the diverse objectives for city making. This requires flexibility. Frogparking creates anxiety and fosters an unfriendly atmosphere, erodes goodwill in citizens and drives down income for the shops and cafes, for instance, in George Street. Indeed I have watched numerous people anxiously looking at their watches.

So, a parking innovation is creating economic fragility in one of the city's best streets. No wonder Sunday is the best day for many outlets.

Importantly and by contrast a growing number of people within the Council in several departments are beginning to be excited by the prospect of working differently with a new perspective on place making and community involvement, although there remains some nervousness about the necessary changes.

There is a need to get the business community to understand that good urbanism and place making is good for enterprise and that creating interesting places requires a good measure of creativity. With notable exceptions, there remains insufficient buy-in, and, as already noted, the property development world is strangely (given what happens elsewhere) too little engaged.

A good summing up of the situation was: 'If only everyone

There is a need to get the business community to understand that good urbanism and place making is good for enterprise and that creating interesting places requires a good measure of creativity.

could arrive at George Street when they come to Palmerston North'. And as one young person said: 'Welcome to an industrial zone, looking at old photos I think somewhere along the way the bulldozer got in the way especially in Fitzherbert Avenue'.

An achievable target is for Palmerston North to create five precincts like George Street. The second precinct could be around an enhanced UCOL campus. It already has a very good feel. Done well it could attract not only students but also other age groups. This in turn could spill back and help to revitalize Broadway.

The place making approach emphasizes the idea that urban development is less about having lots of isolated projects, but rather that the City itself is the major project

Character

It is useful to look at Palmerston North as if it were a person, assessing its character and personality as these shape and determine its prospects. In asking interviewees to use adjectives to describe Palmerston North the following emerged (remember this is what Palmerstonians say about themselves):

• Palmerston North is somewhat cautious, careful, even a touch wary. This is its default position.

• Its greatest attribute is being humble, it does not show off.

• It is more conservative with a small 'c', which makes it risk averse, although it is adept at solving problems when required.

- It exemplifies to 'no. 8 wire' mentality well.
- It minimizes observable risk and therefore sometimes misses opportunities.
- It is quite contained and even proper, on occasion uptight. For the young this can feel claustrophobic.
- It is loyal, simple in the best sense of the word, a hard worker.
- It is sheltered from the outside, although easy to get on with, but it can be slightly withdrawn.
- Its field of interest is somewhat narrow.
- It feels comfortable and that pushes it at times to become passive or even apathetic and not to follow things through.

It is more likely to say what is the problem rather than what is the opportunity, less pro-active it often waits for things to come to it. There are signs, though, that this is changing, it wants to be different, but struggles a bit, its emotional buttons need opening out, it needs to be more passionate. Under the radar it is cosmopolitan, but feels a little frightened of reflecting this.

On the spectrum of words from exceptional to dull it veers towards average, and is in danger of being mediocre. If it were a colour it would not be red or bright yellow, it is more likely to be a mellow shade.

What are the implications of these attributes? Most importantly it could lead to the City missing opportunities through a lack of an entrepreneurial spirit.

...its emotional buttons need opening out, it needs to be more passionate.

INDEXING PALMERSTON NORTH

The summary results of the assessment within each of the domains are shown here. Overall Palmerston North scores **54.47**, **making it equal 10th. That score comprises the** *internal assessment* **of** **55.41** **and the** *external evaluation* **of** **53.54**. **Inevitably the comments made opposite are brief and based on relatively limited knowledge. They should be taken for what they are – impressions.**

Left: The sculpture purchase scheme of the City is a model of best practice.

Right: Palmerston North shows the way with wind energy.

Political and Public Framework

1

internal 53.92, external 49 **Total 51.46**

This domain refers to the public institutions, to political life, to political life, to government and governance, and to public administration. In an ideal creative place these institutions will be lean but pro-active, ethical, transparent, accessible and enabling. Structures will be horizontal and co-operative and departmental lines thinly drawn. Personnel in the public sector are highly motivated and there are strong links with the private sector.

My external evaluation is lower than the internal self-assessment, because I believe Palmerston North could work more horizontally and engage more deeply with external stakeholders such as the University and UCOL in developing a clear vision for the city and in putting that into practice.

Councillors, apparently, over the last years have begun to set the agenda and to provide the direction for strategy and policy development. This is a change from previously when officers very much owned the strategies and policies. This puts greater responsibility on elected officials and assumes their knowledge and skills base is growing proportionately. It also tends to push them into focusing on the nitty-gritty of issues rather than focusing on the big picture ambitions and helping guide the city in getting there. This means there is 'not enough grunt to push the wheels'.

There is a further difficulty in taking on these responsibilities, which is that being a councillor itself needs professionalizing.

It is claimed that there is an implementation gap regarding Palmerston North's vision to be 'vibrant, caring, innovative and sustainable'. Many say words are not put into action. Turning ideas into reality is problematic. Where, for instance, is its sustainability goal visible, where is there evidence of innovation?

In addition, the rules and incentives regime of all the key interests groups in the city have not yet been re-assessed in the light of new city-making or Palmerston North's challenges.

The local authority controls a substantial proportion of the budget and thus in principle has the power to be a role model, the same applies to Massey.

The culture of public service in Palmerston North, it appears, is altruistic with a parental attitude. Both elected officials and officers have, with notable exceptions, been used to telling people what is good for them rather like in a parent/child relationship. The new era requires a different approach where policies are more co-created with citizens.

The problem-solving ethos appears to be under-developed although the recent shift, for example, in planning and community services to focus on the electorate as citizens rather than customers is praiseworthy.

Above: Faceless facades: Some of the City's urban design is not good enough.

Distinctiveness, Diversity, Vitality and Expression

internal 50.26, external 47 **Total 48.63**

2

In a creative place, there is a clear identity and dynamism. Citizens are self-confident and proud but at the same time receptive and open, inclusive and receptive to outsiders and outside influence. The cultural offering is wide and welcomes debate and critical thinking. The arts are dynamic and high quality as well as experimental and ground-breaking. It is a design-aware environment in which the creative industries flourish, where there are many independent shops, the chain-culture is in the minority, the retailing experience attractive and special.

Every place is distinctive in its own way and that is no different for Palmerston North. Nevertheless my score is lower than the self-assessment. Palmerston North does not have a strong architectural heritage though its natural surrounds are in part dramatic. Indeed the natural environment is better than the city Palmerstonians have built within it and which could have inspired them. Palmerston North's heritage has been allowed to disappear and degrade in several places and what has replaced it is of questionable quality. Palmerston North's physical fabric could improve substantially. However, things are on the move. The public sculpture initiative is clearly well supported and is a good model of how to organize such a public arts strategy. The recent awareness of urban design is a strong positive. Things appear to be going in the right direction.

People say there is renewed vigour in the cultural life, and the City's facilities from the library to the museum are far larger than one would expect. There is the Rugby museum, that some consider under-powered. Yet a buzz is emerging. The collaborative spirit evident in places like the museum or library is becoming infectious. Exceptional facilities like the Stomach are important in this process and even the youth space plays a role in this. This is something to build on in spite of younger people (as probably everywhere) saying 'things are missing' or others saying 'there is no soul'.

Obviously student life creates much activity, but there has not developed a special Palmerston North sound like it has in the past in Dunedin.

The presence of the university and its research strengths give the city special character making it more than merely a hub for a rural farming community. Unfortunately, and perhaps inevitably, it is not very visible.

There seems to be no obvious Maori presence or expression, the Maori studies department notwithstanding. There is nowhere to watch a carver, to take part in hangi, or to learn about Maori life and to share it.

The City has allowed others to define who it is and this needs to be taken seriously not in the sense of creating slogans, but in showing real achievement and going on to surprise New Zealanders. This might have led to an inferiority complex and why a focus on younger talent is proposed as well as thinking through how the invisible virtues and good things about the City can be made more visible.

Above: The Cuba/George St. corner has become a delightful hub.

45

Openness, Tolerance, Participation and Accessibility

internal 60.80, external 56.00 **Total 58.4**

3

A creative place is open minded and welcoming and as a result many people from a diversity of backgrounds have made it their home. Openness pervades the way society operates creating an enabling environment where opportunities are facilitated and it is easier to get projects going. This attitude is echoed in the inviting way facilities work.

Palmerston North is welcoming. The last decade has transformed Palmerston North given its refugee settlement status and there are incomers of all kinds from high skilled university people to others, such as some refugees with lower skill levels. There is little evidence of a town and gown conflict and whilst there are some rich and poorer ghettoes in general class differences appear not be marked.

Whilst the City seems quite conservative in attitudes there is an acceptance of the other and the university presence may have played a significant part in this. Nevertheless the presence of other cultures is not immediately visible even though there is the Festival of Cultures, an important event.

In the social sphere there is an openness witnessed by the Streetvan service, the Youth One Stop shop or the Zilch store and the admirable work of the Safety Board, which through its subtle strategies avoids a 'blame approach' to getting things done. It has helped reduce crime in the City.

The main area of criticism is about openness to new ideas and ways of doing things. There is a danger that 'the tried that in the past' approach predominates. This is where the small 'c' conservatism creates a problem.

Right: Zilch: A great example of social enterprise.

Entrepreneurship, Exploration and Innovation

internal 44.48, external 46 **Total 45.48**

4

A creative place is one where entrepreneurs feel very much at home, where an idea can become reality quite quickly. It is a place where you can make mistakes and you are not too severely judged. There are extensive support systems from advice to access to funding and risk capital. There is a higher than average level of innovation and R&D and the place has a reputation for its design-led distinctive products and services. The creative industries play a significant role.

The major faultline for Palmerston North, possibly, is its relatively weak entrepreneurial culture. There are, of course, exceptions, such as OBO and other companies I consulted working within the research community. This is why I scored higher than those in the self-assessment. Being entrepreneurial is not part of the mental landscape, being inventive is. There is the renowned New Zealand 'no.8 wire' inventiveness. This requires mental adaptability, but it does not scale up as it involves what the average farmer is capable of doing.

The reason possibly is that relatively secure public sector jobs make up a large proportion of employment and in addition there is the city's cautionary character.

Some refer also to the 'oyster culture' where the safe comfortableness of the city at some point irritates. This leads people to move and the hidden pearl and thus their creativity is lost to the city.

On the other hand initiatives like 'Innovate' targeted largely at younger people have very good responses in comparison to Auckland and Wellington - 350 in 2012. This provides a platform on which to build if ladders of opportunity and associated, hard and soft, infrastructures from incubators units, to mentoring, soft loans and so on. Palmerston North has a relative advantage in cheapness. An apparent weakness can be tuned into a strength.

This would help establish a creative milieu. Yet this requires clustering and cross-fertilization, which is physically quite difficult around the university campus and research institutes. Done well the serendipity this creates is acknowledged to help innovation. Some say Massey will not allow commercialisation around the campus, which is hindering its capacity to become a natural hub. They further comment that Massey is insufficiently preparing people for business and indeed some question its teaching style in some areas. Massey with its massive footprint and resources clearly needs to lead the way and be a model.

Equally more incubator spaces in the city could be part of this shift, especially if focused on younger entrepreneurs. Epic Innovation, a one stop shop in Christchurch was mentioned as a good model.

In time a collection of coherent initiatives could help overcome the deeper cultural problem – a fear of observable failure or the tall poppy syndrome by celebrating all kinds of entrepreneurship, whether it be economically or socially driven.

Above: The Bio Commerce Centre's 'Innovate' competition is exactly the right idea for the city.

Strategic Leadership, Agility and Vision

internal 53.04, external 47 **Total 50.02**

5

In a creative place, there are dynamic and forward looking people of quality in every sector providing a strong sense of vision for the place. Current trends and emerging developments are flagged early (currently, the green agenda would be a perfect example). Leadership style is noticeably inspiring, able to delegate and be empowering to others. Thinking is strategic and future-proofing. There are good mechanisms to gather information on best practices and innovative solutions from around the globe.

Leadership can be ordinary, innovative or visionary. The first simply reflects the desires or needs of the group being led. An innovative leader questions circumstances to draw out the latent needs, bringing fresh insight to new areas. By contrast, visionary leaders harness the power of completely new ideas getting beyond the ding-dong of day-to-day debate by cradling it in a compelling story. Such stories help foster leadership elsewhere - in public, business and voluntary bodies of all kinds so contributing to the pursuit of widespread change rather than the focus on sectional or personal interests.

Palmerston North should ask itself what kind of leadership it has in various sectors and whether the Council, Massey, UCOL, Vision Manawatu, Destination Manawatu and others have created a forward looking story for the city that engages everyone - city and also the rural hinterland. The danger, a number of people suggested, is that visioning exercises become formulaic and then that they are not followed up. Some say the city, collectively, finds it difficult to turn strategies into action. Looking at the Council it seems people feel more comfortable and are better at working operationally than strategically.

Here an important issue emerges: Who are the new leaders? Many say the current leadership groupings grew up together, but having a succession policy is vital. Thus initiatives, such as 3Keys, which is trying to develop a leadership academy are important.

In order for the city to make the most of its potential some issues like urban design are city-wide concerns and need to be addressed beyond the sector specialism. Interestingly most of the main officials in the Council immediately knew the organisational way forward, such as creating integrated teams with mixed skills. Yet somehow this has not been implemented.

Indeed most division heads realize that front ending joint discussions on joint aims and joint implementation is the appropriate thing to do. It is not yet happening sufficiently.

Above: Local designer Stacey Cottrill stays put in Palmerston North rather than moving away.

Talent and Learning

internal 50.35, external 59 **Total 54.67**

6

A creative place values learning and knowledge. All talents are nurtured, fostered, promoted, rewarded and celebrated. There is a diversity of learning options with ladders of opportunity that take people up the levels. There is teaching of core skills as well as centres of excellence that are globally recognised. There is pride in teaching and the education institutions strive to be the best in their field. The constantly evolving curriculum is in tune with the needs of business. This system grows and retains talent, and there also is a two way flow which places that talent abroad when appropriate and brings other abilities in as needed.

Palmerston North has many learning resources and its surprising that the self-evaluation is so low. From an outside perspective it appears far higher. There are formal learning places, from the public and private schools to the colleges and university as well as the library.

The major problem, which has an impact on learning is bringing new blood in to the city, who can become role models and challenge the city to do better. Widely acknowledged there is a recruitment problem in most sectors and the image issues around Palmerston North do not help. One bio-tech company noted that 60 of 80 applicants came from overseas and those from New Zealand were not of high enough quality. Six of the 11 Massey heads live elsewhere.

The reason recruiting the best is important is that they set standards, they are demanding, but they also give back to the City.

Right: Are there enough interesting jobs to keep the young in Palmerston North?

Communication, Connectivity and Networking

internal 66.51, external 58 **Total 62.25**

7

A creative place is well connected internally and externally, physically and virtually. It is easy to get around and ghettos are rare. Social mobility is more possible. There are high quality public transport systems. It has a sophisticated IT and communications infrastructure. The population travels at home and abroad taking advantage of the excellent rail and air services which also make a gateway for receiving outsiders. Speaking foreign languages is common place. Business to business and cross-sectoral links work well, there are clusters, hubs, focal points and knowledge exchanges. The place is outward looking and makes contact at all levels abroad, creating joint ventures, research projects, product development and civic partnerships.

This is the highest internal score of all 17 participating cities. It reflects the way people in the city know each other well and how it is easy to move around. It is possible to have multiple meetings in a day. This networking capacity is good and potentially less so. Tight networks can make transactions easy, but also they can become inward looking especially if there are provincial attitudes. Knowing each other too well can also make knowledge clusters less creative, because they are not sufficiently challenging. This is the 'old boys network' syndrome. Here the work of Granovetter is important and his book The Strength of Weak Ties (1973). He argues that weak ties are often better than stronger ties in gathering information, garnering resources or generating innovations. This is because by being involved in many diverse circuits unusual insights and potential can be explored.

Another dimension of communications is about urban storytelling. Palmerston North's new story needs to reflect its multiple layers and not be a slogan. Labels and sobriquets tend to come and go and as they have done in Palmerston North – the rose city, knowledge city and the easy city. A richer description is required and that depends on the

audience in view including Palmerstonians and outsiders. This story needs to drive a more complex process involved in shifting internal self-perceptions as well as creating external ones. It is less about branding and more about building immediate associations and a reputation for achievements made. Crucially Palmerston North communicates through every fibre of its being. What it looks like, feels like, how its invisible assets are made visible. Here the focus is on the physical. This is also why design is key. Everything matters – how you arrive at the airport, the entrance to the city and the overall experience of the place.

There are other aspects of communications that are well known. It is easy to get around and there are few traffic jams and 85% of the population is near a transport stop (CCI average is 75%). Logistically it is a hub for the South Island and in New Zealand terms well connected, but not internationally. The city knows that the city and Massey are separate worlds. There is a psychological distance - an issue discussed for years, and the recent free bus initiative clearly connects the two more seamlessly. The 35 minute walk is rarely taken. Palmerston North's free wifi schemes send out good messages about connectivity. At night on several occasions I saw groups of Koreans and Chinese clustering in the dark outside the library to catch the wifi. Naming things is important too as it communicates. Perhaps the Civic Administration Building should be renamed 'city hall' – the citizens' hall. Finally and this is significant the Council has a good relationship to the media.

The Place and Place-Making

internal 46.73, external 49.00 **Total**

In a creative place the built environment is human centric and sensitively conceived and implemented. Human interaction and activity is encouraged by this physical environment rather than being blocked by physical barriers. It acknowledges and respects and blends well with its natural environment, its surrounding landscape, and its green areas and is aware and responsible regarding its ecological footprint. When you are there you want to be there but its reputation drew you there in the first place – it has a critical mass and a magnetism which enables it to compete well with other places which have similar mass and attraction.

This score is not good both in terms of self-assessment or the outsider's evaluation. The city still feels too much as if it were a traffic engineering project. From a sensory perspective it feels like there is endless asphalt and some streets seem over-engineered. On first appearance the impression is that the road system was built for a far larger population base.

Now the infrastructure is in place one has to make the most of it. This is why the urban design perspective is important in order to humanize the environment.

Urban planning has a vital role to play in place making, but it is by no means the exclusive domain of the planners. Great places reflect an understanding of how the hardware and software mesh together. These are differing insights and require a combination of skills beyond physical planning such as social, economic and cultural skills. As Palmerston North seeks to position itself and expand it needs even more investment in the urban realm and in public space. It is good that improving the environment is now a priority.

A number of key praiseworthy moves have been made. Historically using the library to act as a regenerator was one. It was a generous and commendable civic gesture as was building Te Manawa and in a previous period the

Regent. More recently there has been the refurbishment of the Square. Thirdly, the initiative of committed citizen to develop public art is inventive. That aside rejecting out of town shopping has been significant.

The new ethos to get citizens to help make their own places better is important and little things can also have a dramatic effect, such as stating what owners are allowed to do rather than what they are not. Lessons from this approach can be valuable to other departments in the Council.

Liveability and Well-Being

internal 69.59, external 66 **Total 67.80**

9

A creative place has a very good quality of life. GDP is high and services work well and are of a high standard. People are generally happy to live and/or work here, appreciating the low levels of crime and violence and feeling generally safe. Health, housing and social facilities are well provided and well run. There is a good atmosphere and people help each other more willingly. The civic leadership is mostly respected and trusted.

The 'easy living' moniker encapsulates the why people feel Palmerston North is so liveable and why incomers feel it is better than the reputation and image would suggest. Clearly as a regional centre it has a range of facilities that are better than expected. It punches above its weight. Think here of the hospital, cultural facilities, recreation and parks.

However not to be forgotten there is a large of number of people who are living below the national average and in general household income is below the national average (82%) and unemployment is slightly worse than national average but good by global standards at 5.3%. So everything is not completely rosy.

Indeed in our life factor calculation, which is a comparison of Palmerston North with the national average on dimensions such as mortality, the city comes out at 0.93 (where above 1 is better than average).

Professionalism and Effectiveness

internal 58.43, external 54 **Total 56.22**

The creative place works well, things happen and are achieved. There is pride in being professional and doing things with quality. Standards are high and benchmarks are frequently set here. Companies, organisations, individuals and products are often given awards. This is a centre of expertise in a range of specific areas – attributes such as reliability, punctuality, efficiency or accuracy are highly respected. Professionals are confident in their own ability and not afraid to work in partnership with others and to delegate authority, breaking with conventional rules of hierarchy.

Palmerston North has a good reputation for delivering on agreed objectives. It is good at operations. Project management is a strength. It relative weakness is in understanding how you turn a strategic intent into a set of operational goals. Thus how do you show you are 'vibrant' or 'caring' or 'innovative' or 'sustainable'. This is why it is so important to bring in other skills in implementing projects, such as those who know how to communicate complex aims. This is not about writing promotional literature, but showing in the way the physical fabric is put together what you are trying to achieve.

To take a simple example: Walking down George Street communicates clearly some of the objectives of Palmerston North. You do not need a sign, it is the manner in which individual traders and the city council together have allowed the street to develop in an expressive way. To make this happen involved behind the scenes many discussions, rule changes, flexibility and encouragement.

10

Charles Landry is an international authority on the use of imagination and creativity in urban change. He helps cities identify and make the most of their resources and to reach their potential by triggering their inventiveness and thinking. His aim is to help cities His overall aim is to help cities get onto the global radar screen, to become more resilient and self-sustaining.

Acting as a critical friend, Charles works closely with decision makers and local leaders. He stimulates, facilitates and inspires so cities can transform for the better. He helps find apt and original solutions to seemingly intractable dilemmas, such as marrying innovation and tradition, balancing wealth creation and social cohesiveness, or local distinctiveness and a global orientation. One focus is how the culture of a place can invigorate and revitalize the economy, enhancing its sense of self and confidence.

Charles was born in 1948 and studied in Britain, Germany and Italy. In 1978 he founded Comedia, a highly respected European consultancy working in creativity, culture and urban change. He has completed several hundred assignments for a variety of public and private clients and given keynote addresses and workshops in over 50 countries across the continents.

Charles has written several books and in 2012 launched a new series of short, illustrated books, including: *The Sensory Landscape of Cities; The Origins and Futures of the Creative City; The Creative City Index: Measuring the Pulse of the City*; and *Culture & Commerce*. He is best known for his book, *The Creative City: A toolkit for Urban Innovators*, a concept that has become a global movement; *The Art of City Making* and *The Intercultural City: Planning for Diversity Advantage*, written with Phil Wood.

Palmerston North City Council

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