

# Evaluation of the Places of Tranquility partnership:

*A process evaluation of the partnership between Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust, and the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University.*

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## **Canterbury**

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

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# Executive Summary

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## Background

Places of Tranquility (PoT) is a collaborative Christchurch earthquake recovery initiative aimed at promoting wellbeing and raising the visibility of Māori and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities in the recovery process. To achieve these central goals, Healthy Christchurch (HChch) is collaborating with Greening The Rubble Trust (GTR) and the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University in order to create six landscaped gardens and meeting places of cultural significance in demolition sites around Christchurch's central city. This study seeks to evaluate the partnership between these three entities in order to inform Community & Public Health (CPH) practice regarding partnership working. Its specific objectives are to:

1. Gauge the overall success of the partnership between Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust and the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University
2. Explore and identify any relational, organisational and contextual influences on partnership working.

## Methods

A qualitative approach (using in-depth, semi-structured interviews) explored each of the partners' perceptions and experiences of working in the Places of Tranquility partnership. These interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically.

## Results

Partners described the partnership and working relationships in positive terms and attributed a range of benefits – either actual or potential – to working together. Although they also described the Places of Tranquility project in positive terms, each of the respondents expressed disappointment and/or frustration when discussing the difficulties they had experienced while trying to obtain the necessary approval to build on their chosen sites. However, they perceived these difficulties as a potential barrier to achieving the goals of the project rather than as a threat to the health of the partnership itself.

A number of potential influences on partnership working were identified. These emerged as common themes that were classified into two broader categories: those pertaining to the initiation of partnership working (preparing the ground for collaboration); and those pertaining to the maintenance of the partnership (keeping it going). Themes pertaining to 'preparing the ground' were further classified as: vision; perceived need for collaboration; choosing collaborators; defining the working relationship; and resourcing and support. Themes pertaining to 'keeping it going' were further classified as: roles and responsibilities; commitment; maintaining the working relationship; meetings; dealing with authority; and continuity.

## Discussion

The Places of Tranquility project is a partnership involving sharing information, resources and altering activities for mutual benefit and a common purpose. When assessed according to

respondents' appraisals of their experience as partners and their perceptions of the benefits of working together, the partnership can be regarded as a success. Thus, although the Places of Tranquility project has not yet achieved its original goal, the working relationship between the three partners appears to be healthy and sustainable.

A number of personal, interpersonal and organisational factors appear to underpin the partnership's success. Personal factors include: the reputation of each organisational representative; their commitment to, and shared responsibility for, achieving the original goal for the Places of Tranquility project; their clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the partnership; their expertise in their respective areas of remit; and their willingness to persist in the face of difficulty. Interpersonal factors include: the partners' trust in each other and mutual positive regard; their shared vision, values and interests; their previous positive experiences of working together; and their complementary capacities and working styles. Organisational factors include: the reputation and political standing of individual organisations; the existence of supportive structures within these organisations; the availability of organisational resources; and the existence of supportive organisational arrangements between the three partners, including the delegation of leadership and a flexible approach to scheduling meetings. Many of these factors have been identified in previous research as key positive influences on partnership working.

Two key contextual influences on the likely success of the Places of Tranquility project itself were also identified: the role of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) in controlling access to potential building sites within the city centre; and the existence of community support for the Places of Tranquility project. Although the former represented a substantial challenge to achieving the original goal of the Places of Tranquility project, it did not appear to undermine the health of the partnership as each of the partners voiced a strong commitment to responding proactively to this challenge.

## **Conclusion**

Although the Places of Tranquility project has not achieved its original goal at the time of writing, the Places of Tranquility partnership has been successful in terms of forging a healthy, mutually beneficial and seemingly sustainable alliance between individuals and organisations with shared values and interests. Factors perceived as underpinning the success of this partnership are consistent with those identified in previous research and suggest that future Community and Public Health partnerships would benefit from: having a clear vision, responsible leadership and organisational capacity and support; a choice of partners with shared values and interests, complementary capacities and working styles, expertise in their respective work areas and good 'track records'; previous positive experiences of working together; trust in each other, mutual positive regard, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and a sense of collective responsibility for achieving commonly agreed goals. To ensure the achievement of partnership project goals as well as the formation of healthy partnerships, we suggest that future partnerships would also benefit from considering the broader implementation context and ensuring that they have the necessary political persuasion to overcome contextual barriers.

# Evaluating the partnership established for the Places of Tranquility initiative

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## Background

### Places of Tranquility

Places of Tranquility (PoT) is a collaborative Christchurch earthquake recovery initiative underpinned by research highlighting the importance of tranquil and restorative environments for both individual and community health and wellbeing. The Places of Tranquility partnership was established in May 2011 in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake on 22 February 2011. The over-arching goals of the project are to:

1. Raise the visibility of Māori and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in the recovery process
2. Encourage Christchurch residents to develop or re-establish a positive relationship with the central city.

To achieve these over-arching goals, the Places of Tranquility project aims to create six landscaped gardens and meeting places of cultural significance in demolition sites around the Christchurch central city. To meet this specific objective, Healthy Christchurch is collaborating with Greening the Rubble Trust (GTR) and the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University (Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust and Lincoln University School of Landscape Architecture, 2013).

### The partners

Healthy Christchurch (HChch) is an intersectoral health promotion initiative involving over 200 organisations and led by Community and Public Health (CPH) on behalf of the Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB)<sup>1</sup>. Greening the Rubble Trust (GTR) is an organised team of volunteers engaged in the creation of temporary parks and gardens on demolition sites in commercial streets around Christchurch<sup>2</sup>. The School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University is an academic teaching department that trains students in the analysis, design and management of the natural and built environment<sup>3</sup>. Together, these organisations have worked extensively with Christchurch's Māori and CALD communities in order to ensure that the resulting gardens accurately represent their heritage, traditions and perspectives.

### Progress to date<sup>4</sup>

The Places of Tranquility (PoT) project concept was submitted to the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) (the statutory authority charged with the planning and oversight of the rebuilding of Christchurch) in January 2012. At this time, the Healthy Christchurch/CPH representative had been seconded to CERA. On 13 March 2012, the concept was presented to the Avon-Otakaro Network (AvON), a network of Christchurch residents and organisations dedicated to creating a reserve and river park in the Ōtākaro/Avon River Red Zone. The presentation purpose was two-fold, firstly to seek the network's support in developing the sites when

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.healthychristchurch.org.nz/>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://greeningtherubble.org.nz/wp/>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/schools/Landscape-Architecture/>

<sup>4</sup> As at July 2013. Final update of progress referred to in Discussion.

applicable, and secondly to seek support for the gardens to ultimately become part of AvON's future plans and be moved and established as permanent gardens along the residential red zone river corridor. Following this presentation, it was agreed that the PoT project would be included in the AvON Living Strategy, a proposal to the New Zealand Government concerning community use of the Ōtākaro/Avon River Red Zone<sup>5</sup>. The project concept was subsequently presented to the Healthy Christchurch Champions<sup>6</sup> on 11 May 2012. It is reported that all Champions, including the Chief Executive of CERA, expressed support for the PoT project.

The inaugural meeting for the PoT project was held on 27 March 2012 and was attended by representatives from the three partner organisations, as well as those from Christchurch Migrants Centre, Christchurch Resettlement Services and Partnership Health. In March to May 2012, the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University ran a design competition for the project. Second-year students were asked to put forward designs for gardens representing different global geographic regions and the respective ethnic communities were invited to select a winning design for each region through voting online or in person over a month-long period at either Community & Public Health or the Christchurch Migrants Centre. From 40 initial designs, six were selected, with the Deputy Chief Executive for Social and Cultural Recovery at CERA presenting the designers of these gardens with certificates at an award ceremony held at a Healthy Christchurch hui on 31 May 2012<sup>7</sup>. The winning designs have since been refined in order to make use of ideas that were put forward during subsequent community consultations, and to better adapt the designs to preferred building sites. The final designs were submitted to CERA in early 2012 and seed funding for the building of the first two gardens has been secured (Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust and Lincoln University School of Landscape Architecture, 2013).

The partners intend to build these gardens as soon as they obtain permission to build on sites in their preferred location; alongside or near the Avon River within the four avenues of the central city. To help locate suitable sites within this location, the partners enlisted the help of relationship managers and urban planners at CERA, Christchurch City Council (CCC) and Life in Vacant Spaces from August to September 2012. In February 2013, CERA appointed a manager for the central city Ōtākaro/Avon River Park Project. On 14 February 2013, and within the first week of his appointment, the partners met with the Ōtākaro/Avon River Park Project Manager. The partners requested a further meeting with this manager when in May 2013 they heard that no suitable sites could be found. During this follow-up meeting, the partners were assured of CERA's intention to find sites and were asked to submit a business proposal for the PoT project within a week. The proposal (Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust and Lincoln University School of Landscape Architecture, 2013) was submitted within the stipulated time-frame and, at the time of interviewing, the partners were awaiting a response from CERA (M. Whitaker, personal communication, October 18, 2013).

## The Evaluation

### *Design and aim*

As a collaborative initiative for Healthy Christchurch, the Places of Tranquillity project has presented Community and Public Health with an opportunity to study the process of partnership working. This process evaluation has therefore been designed to study the partnership between

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.avonotakaronetwork.co.nz/projects/projects-home.html>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.healthychristchurch.org.nz/about/champions.aspx> for a list of the Healthy Christchurch Champions.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.healthychristchurch.org.nz/focus-areas/places-of-tranquillity.aspx>

Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust and the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University. By using a qualitative approach, it does not aim to quantify factors previously assumed to influence partnership working, but rather to explore each of the organisations' perceptions and experiences of working in partnership with the other organisations.

### ***Purpose***

To provide information that can guide and inform Community and Public Health and Healthy Christchurch practice in relation to:

1. Maintaining the existing partnership between Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust and the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University
2. Developing and maintaining any other existing or future health promotion partnerships.

### ***Specific Objectives***

1. To gauge the overall success of the partnership between Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust and the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University
2. To explore and identify any personal, relational, organisational and contextual influences on partnership working.

# Methods

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## Data collection

The data collection method was in-depth interviews with the key representative from each of the partner organisations. The three interviews were semi-structured and explored respondents’:

1. Motivations for working in partnership
2. Understanding of roles, responsibilities and the overall reason for establishing the partnership
3. Perceptions of the benefits of, and influences on, partnership.

Interviews were held in June and July 2013 and were conducted face-to-face in private meeting rooms at the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University and Community and Public Health (CPH).

## Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed and analysed to gauge the success of the partnership, according to predetermined features. These features included:

1. Appraisals of the partnership, working relationships and project progress
2. Perceptions of the benefits arising, or likely to arise from, working in partnership.

To explore and identify any personal, relational, organisational and contextual influences on collaboration, the text was analysed for themes that were subsequently categorised according to the stages of partnership working previously articulated by Delaney (1994).

## Reporting

Although a number of terms, including ‘inter-agency working’, ‘intersectoral working’, ‘joint working’, ‘intersectoral collaboration’, ‘healthy alliances’, ‘coalitions’ and ‘partnerships’, have been used to describe approaches to collaborative working in recent years (Green and Tones 2010), we have chosen to use the word ‘partnership’.

Throughout the Results section, we refer to the key representatives from each of the partner organisations as ‘respondents’. In the Discussion, we refer to them as ‘partners’.

## Results

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Our findings are presented in two sections. The first - gauging the success of the partnership - presents respondents' overall perceptions of the success of the partnership. The second - perceived influences on partnership working - outlines their perceptions of the factors that have influenced the process of partnership working so far.

### Gauging the success of the partnership

Partners perceived the experience of working together as a successful collaboration. Additionally, they offered perspectives on the pursuit of the goal: creating the six Places of Tranquility.

#### Perceptions of the partnership and working relationships

All three respondents spoke of their experience of working together in very positive terms. Their experience is captured by the following statements:

*Yeah, I think everything has been really, really positive – yeah, absolutely.*

*It's been really great and inspiring.*

*I'm delighted with it as a partnership. It's a really good partnership.*

Respondents used the words 'collegial', 'amicable', 'professional' and 'healthy' to describe their relationship with each other, with trust, openness, respect and integrity being cited as defining characteristics of this relationship. Two of the respondents drew attention to never having experienced conflict within the working relationship:

*There's never been a moment where anyone's had a heated word exchange, or anything like that....*

*There's never been any clash of ideas or anything....*

#### Perceived benefits of working together

All three respondents attributed a range of benefits – either actual or potential – to working together. For the Healthy Christchurch and Lincoln University representatives, forging and strengthening relationships with the other two partner organisations was seen as potentially beneficial for future projects:

*I think it's great also to be able to build up all of those professional connections between all of these bodies, so who knows, another 5-10 years down the track you can pick up the pieces again and run with another project....*

*[W]e've now got a relationship with them, who knows what could come out of it. We know them now and.... we can easily approach them, and we know that it's mutual respect and they would listen to some more innovative ideas – and you know, opportunities – often you don't approach organisations if you don't have that understanding or they'd probably tell you to go away.... So we've got that, it creates opportunities for the future.*

The links forged between Lincoln University students and Greening the Rubble were seen as particularly beneficial:

*So GTR definitely has the potential for free labour, and the students get the potential for free experience....*

Both Lincoln University and Greening the Rubble representatives indicated that working with the other organisations was helping to raise awareness of the mental health aspects of the work they routinely conduct. Although the Lincoln respondent appeared to already be aware of this aspect of his work, his connection with Healthy Christchurch was seen as being able to promote the idea of landscaping being important for mental health:

*It's nice to see connections with CPH and Healthy Christchurch.... with all of the research coming out saying how much benefit the landscape can have on wellbeing and mental health....*

For the Greening the Rubble representative, working with the other organisations was seen as having facilitated a greater understanding of the mental health aspects of the group's projects, with this understanding being cited as useful for making cases to potential project sponsors and supporters:

*Healthy Christchurch and Lincoln certainly increased my appreciation of and understanding of the mental wellbeing aspects of what we're doing.... I think it's given us another way of making a case to sponsors and backers....*

The Greening the Rubble representative also identified having the opportunity to work with parts of the community that they wouldn't otherwise see as volunteers, as a tangible benefit of having worked with the other organisations. In terms of potential future benefits, the same representative cited the possibility of making permanent parks, building a base of community participation and volunteer engagement, and reviving the concept of the Garden City.

## **Success of the partnership versus achievement of project goals**

Mirroring the positive perceptions of the partnership and associated working relationships, the Places of Tranquility project itself was also described in very positive terms:

*[I]t ended up being quite a great project to get involved with and very apt timing as well for Christchurch. So we figured it was great for the students, great for Christchurch, and I guess also quite good for the school to be involved with this sort of thing too. Positive all round.*

Despite these appraisals and the tangible and foreseeable benefits of working together, all three respondents expressed disappointment and/or frustration when discussing the difficulties they had experienced while trying to obtain the necessary approval to build on their chosen sites. The disappointment and frustration were discussed in relation to not being able to move forward with the project as a result of the length of time needed to wait for decisions:

*I guess we thought that things would happen a lot quicker. It just hasn't quite come to fruition – I guess everyone is probably in that same boat. A little bit disappointed with the speed of approval of all of these things. We'd anticipated getting cracking in the middle of last year, shortly after the designs had been finalised, but getting a site that was right is very difficult.*

For one respondent, the feeling of frustration was also discussed in relation to the sense of not being able to communicate successfully with a statutory authority that they perceived as having limited accountability for decisions.

The frustration expressed was also described in terms of perceiving that the aims of the Places of Tranquility project were somewhat unconventional and therefore outside of the typical remit of statutory authorities:

*I guess sometimes it can feel very, very frustrating for all of us though, I guess, in some ways what we're trying to do is a little bit outside of the box, and regulatory bodies like things that are inside the box.*

Despite these difficulties, one respondent referred to all the groundwork the team had done as 'an investment' and all three respondents talked about responding creatively and proactively to the challenge. The difficulties were therefore regarded as obstacles to achieving the goals of the PoT project rather than as challenges to the healthy functioning of the partnership:

*And because the barrier – not so much with the partners, but for the project....*

Furthermore, one of the respondents highlighted that the project itself had still been successful in terms of working towards the higher order goal of raising the visibility of CALD communities because, in the face of structural barriers, the organisations found alternative ways of engaging with these communities.

*[O]nce we realised we weren't going to be able to do something last autumn, which was our goal, that's the aim at that point, and it was going to have to wait to the spring, then through winter we just came up with another solution to engage with those communities.*

## **Perceived influences on partnership**

Perceived influences on partnership were classified according to whether they could be considered as preparing the ground for partnership working, or facilitating its maintenance.

### **Preparing the ground**

Factors perceived as preparing the ground for partnership working were organised into five distinct but overlapping themes: vision; perceived need for collaboration; choosing collaborators; defining the working relationship; and resourcing and support.

## **Vision**

### *Recognition of opportunity*

In discussing how they initiated the partnership, two of the respondents referred to the early vision of the Healthy Christchurch representative. Following the first of the Christchurch earthquakes, this representative clearly recognised that there was an opportunity for Healthy Christchurch to support the role of community organisations in their recovery process, and that the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities were not being addressed in existing recovery plans:

*[S]oon after February's earthquake, I was involved a lot – actually, following September's earthquakes, I saw there was an opportunity for Healthy Christchurch to support the community organisations and their role in the recovery.... I realised there was quite a lot of key communities in Christchurch.... that were getting their own recovery plans going. But there were two very obvious gaps. One was the youth sector; and the other was culturally and linguistically diverse communities – the CALD communities.*

*I think she was particularly in tune with the different cultural perspectives, which she spotted were not being expressed, not in the media, not through the public events, or even the Share An Idea activity quite some months afterwards. It was a little monocultural and she spotted the opportunity for a way of expressing people's different perspectives, their different view on the losses in the city.*

### *Articulation of and commitment to umbrella goal*

From the recognition of this opportunity and gap, a clear umbrella goal for the partnership was articulated, with all three respondents demonstrating some level of understanding of, and commitment to, this overarching goal:

*So about midway through, or early 2011, I came up with two potential initiatives that Healthy Christchurch could do to work with those communities, to raise the visibility - not so much to support them in their own recovery but to raise the visibility for those social services in particular, and government organisations – to remember that they needed to be included in the recovery process.*

*So pretty early on, [Healthy Christchurch representative's] idea of looking for gardens which had the expression of a different culture in each garden was clearly an idea that we should run with and try to help her with.*

*Yeah well it sort of started off with Lincoln jumping on with the design side, to be able to contribute towards the greater project, really.*

## **Perceived need for partnership**

### *Working towards the umbrella goal*

In terms of working towards the broad umbrella goal, all three respondents perceived a need for partnership. This was sometimes expressed as an awareness of interdependence:

*So we were a natural ally for the project and we recognised that we couldn't ever do it on our own.*

The need for partnership was also expressed as a clear recognition of the complementary capacity of the three organisations:

*So, it was a natural triangular platform to work with. Healthy Christchurch had its group, its connections into sections of the community we haven't otherwise got contact with, who are very interested in the mental health value of work on these gardens.... Ourselves as a voluntary community project who made things happen on the ground and could probably negotiate access to sites and so on, and Lincoln who had this design input and willing students who wanted to be involved in designing and potentially in building.*

### *Meeting the needs of individual organisations*

Beyond achieving the broad umbrella goal, respondents were also aware of the partnership serving to meet specific needs of individual organisations. For Greening the Rubble, working in partnership was perceived as providing an opportunity to strengthen their established relationship with Lincoln University and to work with sectors of the community with whom they wouldn't otherwise have contact:

*[T]his project gave us the chance of another fruitful connection with Lincoln. It gave us the chance of working with other parts of the community that we weren't otherwise seeing as volunteers.*

For Lincoln University, the partnership was perceived as providing students with a project with real-world relevance and the opportunity to gain free work experience, with the latter also being recognised as potentially beneficial for Greening the Rubble:

*It's great to have student work grounded in real-life experience, so the opportunity was there for a student project.*

*So GTR definitely has the potential for free labour, and the students get the potential for free experience.*

## **Choosing partners**

### *Skills and abilities*

Choosing organisations, and people within those organisations, with the skills and abilities appropriate to the task was regarded as important:

*Yeah, well I guess the main thing was, out of the three of us, we had all the right skill-sets required to get the thing cracking. We had the main facilitating side, which I guess is the CPH side, the plan and design and graphic side to get the ideas down to something that's able to be built, and then GTR looking at building and the selection of sites and that sort of thing, and the on-the-ground sort of stuff which they're just absolutely superb at.*

*But with the three of us, I think having the right people representing those organisations, it's been really good – I mean they're experts in their own field, they know about partnership*

*working, they're very clear communicators, they're passionate and committed to the project, so they could drive it for their organisations.*

### *Pre-existing networks*

The process of choosing appropriate partners appeared to be greatly facilitated by the existence of previously established professional networks:

*GTR had already done some work with Lincoln - Lincoln students had helped us with our first significant project at Victoria Street so given that we already had a link with Lincoln, they were already wanting to do projects that responded to the earthquake so the ground for it was set by GTR collaborating with Lincoln University.*

*And then, I'd met [Healthy Christchurch representative] through her role in Healthy Christchurch before I got involved in this project.*

### *Trust*

One of the respondents spoke extensively about the importance of 'personal trust' and 'trust in the organisation'. A number of factors appeared to underpin the trust that he perceived had been established between the three organisations and their representatives. Firstly, there was a sense that the representatives, and to some extent the organisations, shared common interests, values and approaches:

*We're probably all interested in community development and education. I'm also an adult education tutor and trainer of adult education teachers so I suppose, yes, we've come from backgrounds that are about empowering people.*

*The whole public health aspect links rather well with us so I felt confident in the institution. I already knew about Healthy Christchurch because of my interest in sustainability issues, which is one of their interests so I knew of Healthy Christchurch.*

Secondly, each organisation had an established reputation for being competent and efficient in its respective area of activity:

*I think probably for each of us we each had track records so we didn't come alone.... GTR had by that stage.... built.... four or five parks and gone on to do a lot more so we'd demonstrated that we can do it. That was crucial I think. [Lincoln University representative] and his colleagues continue to train landscape architects.... And [Healthy Christchurch representative's] credibility I think came from the fact that Healthy Christchurch has this amazing base of organisations and their strength is their networking....*

However, the reputation of the organisation alone was not sufficient to inspire trust. The behaviour of the people within the organisation was also seen as fundamental:

*.... and a certain amount of personality and confidence that comes from [Healthy Christchurch representative] as an individual. So partly it's personal manner if you like and partly it's the organisation.*

Finally, it appeared that each organisation had had previous positive experiences of working or interacting with either the other organisations or the people within them:

*Well I had confidence that there were some good people working here because I knew [CPH employee] and I'd met various other colleagues here so I thought well I'm working with a good team.*

*A connection was made and it worked well. That project had been very creative.... So we've had repeated contact with Lincoln University and we're very happy to work with them....*

## **Defining the working relationship**

### *Collaboration versus partnership*

One of the respondents defined the working relationship as a 'high level collaboration' rather than a 'partnership'. This was qualified by explaining that, although each representative had formal support from their respective organisations, the project did not need to be officially signed off between the three organisations.

*.... they've got formal backing from their organisations.... but nothing that has to be signed off between the three organisations.*

### *Formal documentation*

There was no perceived need for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlining the specific nature of the working relationship because all three representatives appeared to share the same vision for, and understanding of, the project:

*.... because the partners were such a perfect match, and the understanding was already there, there wasn't a need to do that.*

### *Leadership*

Despite the absence of formal documentation, there appeared to be a shared understanding that the Healthy Christchurch representative was leading the project:

*So as the ideas took shape, [Healthy Christchurch representative] remained as the champion of the project. So [Healthy Christchurch representative], she hatched it up, we respected that throughout so [Healthy Christchurch representative] has been the champion of the project. So.... our role has been a supporting role rather than attempting to take over the project. That's not our approach. So she's the lead partner and we respect that.*

This leadership was perceived as beneficial and described more as a practical means to ensure that the project was managed efficiently rather than as an official designation of authority that sanctioned unequal power relations between the three organisations:

*But when I say project lead, that was my role, it didn't mean that I was the head partner – it wasn't an unequal partnership. But that was just my project management side of it.*

### *Small working group*

Since a small working group was perceived as beneficial, the CALD communities with whom a great deal of consultation took place were considered to be additional, secondary partners:

*And I think with a small group too. Because I think there was a couple of project meetings where we brought some people that worked with CALD communities and that sort of thing, but we work with them now as needed over the time of the project, and they're sort of secondary partners.*

## **Resourcing and support**

### *Supportive organisational structures*

All three representatives spoke of the partnership being supported by their respective organisations. They each made specific references to the project having been incorporated into wider programmes within two of the organisations: it was described as a core part of the teaching for second-year students of landscape architecture at Lincoln University and as a model initiative for Healthy Christchurch. This incorporation was perceived as securing organisational commitment to the collaboration:

*.... she had a mandate to do it from within Healthy Christchurch and she wouldn't have done it without that mandate.*

*.... so she basically said 'Yeah, this is great, let's do it, and we'll try and slot it in' and I think that's where it ended up being part of a second year project for students, which then became something that we definitely were involved with.*

For the Healthy Christchurch representative, the act of finding a home for the project within a wider organisational programme was described as deliberate and intentional:

*And I worked quite hard to make sure the project clearly fitted underneath Healthy Christchurch in my role within CDHB, to ensure the buy in and eventual management support.*

In addition to the support garnered from situating the project within a wider organisational programme, the Healthy Christchurch representative highlighted the support that her role within Healthy Christchurch's home organisation offered:

*I think it's ideal that my role, and Healthy Christchurch, are both proactive and responsive around partnership working, so the capacity was there.*

### *Organisational resourcing*

Two respondents also spoke of the benefits of the Healthy Christchurch's home organisation [CPH] having the necessary resources to support the project:

*But I guess it's quite a benefit that [CPH] are quite a well-organised, well-resourced agency, to be able to help these sort of things happen.... They've got that established build-up of networks and all that sort of jazz.*

*So I've been able to call in here with the Pacific health promoter, and the Māori health promoters, and a couple of other health promoters who are, who have worked with those communities before. So that's been quite core.*

The position of CPH as a governmental agency was also perceived as beneficial in terms of conferring the status and having the relationships necessary to address the barriers encountered:

*I think that's one of the strengths of CPH, they're inside .... I guess they have more of those networks and connections as well which kind of helps. A bit more mana I guess you could say. In that sort of field.*

### **Community support**

In addition to support from within the respective organisations, community support for the work of one of the organisations was perceived as beneficial:

*We have a lot of community backing for our projects so we know we're strong. We've also got backing from people like the mayor of the city and various others who want us to succeed.*

## **Keeping it Going**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Clearly defined**

Each of the respondents appeared to be very clear about their specific roles and responsibilities. They each described themselves as having had specific roles from the beginning of the project. These were articulated as:

1. Project lead;
2. Overseeing students' input; and
3. Building and selection of sites.

Respondents' clarity about these roles was regarded as being at least partially the result of an implicit process, whereby partners were selected on the basis of the skills and organisational roles they could each bring:

*With this one, the organisations – the role that those representatives brought – were very clear for this project.*

*Some projects can be you have to go through a journey together to work out what the vision is. Or you have to go through a journey to work out the roles and that sort of thing. But I think with this particular project, because the organisational roles [are] what we brought, and the right people, and then the project is very clear.*

One respondent described the partners as a “perfect match”, which for her meant that expectations could be unwritten and informal, and that previously established protocols for clarifying the expectations of partnership working were unnecessary:

*Depending on the group of people that I get together...what are the expectations for this role?...going through...shared vision, shared understanding, shared planning and all that process, and being much more explicit, but I haven't for this. Because it was, because the*

*partners were such a perfect match, and the understanding was already there, there wasn't a need to do that.*

Respondents appeared to be very aware of where each other's strengths lay, with each expressing an appreciation of their complementary skill-sets. This appreciation was perceived as having helped to clarify specific roles and responsibilities.

### *Processes*

Although the respondents didn't perceive a need for formal written expectations, the roles were described as becoming more clearly defined because of some time spent establishing processes at the beginning of the project (eliminating 'potential crossover'), and clarifying roles through project meetings:

*Yeah I guess some of the earlier meetings, we had talked about – this is the process, and you'll do this, and you'll do that kind of thing, and I guess it's been pretty clear from the start. Which obviously helps – there's no potential crossover, and no 'I don't want to do that just in case they're going to do that...'*

*And then through our project meetings, we're more defined, we've got certain roles. And where the strengths are, being very, very clear.*

### *Assertiveness*

The clarity about individual roles and responsibilities was also described as being at least partly due to individual personality, with one of the respondents attributing the group's ability to ask questions to clarify roles to the members' assertiveness:

*We all ask questions; if something isn't clear, we ask. So I think we're quite assertive people and that probably helps.*

## **Commitment**

### *Highly Committed*

Each of the respondents expressed a high level of commitment to the project. For one, this was made explicit, as the person who had conceived the initial vision:

*Cos it's my baby, highly committed.*

For another, a high level of commitment was also made explicit, although this was described as depending on the particular phase of the project:

*I'd like to put more into it, but I guess I sort of get pulled in different directions every now and then, so – when we're in a particular phase, then yeah, obviously, it becomes a very high priority. But I guess at the moment we're in the building-up phase again. But definitely, overall, it's a high commitment.*

For the other respondent, a high level of commitment was more implicit, being evident from his comments about persistence in the face of the challenges encountered.

### *Going the extra mile*

As a result of their high level of commitment, the partners were described as being prepared to go the extra mile:

*[The partners had] done additional stuff to make sure of that kind of quality and delivery.*

### *Organisational and personal*

Two of the respondents spoke of the importance of both organisational and personal commitment to a project. Although personal commitment was viewed as crucial, the partnership was first and foremost regarded as requiring organisational commitment. Respondents felt that, without that support, the project would be unlikely to happen:

*It's ideal that my role, and Healthy Christchurch, are both proactive and responsive around partnership working, so the capacity was there. I could have come up with an idea but if I haven't got the capacity, or the capacity of the rest of the organisation to support that, then it doesn't happen.*

Once organisational buy-in had been achieved, personally committing to the project in order to help drive it forward was perceived as important:

*They could drive it for their organisations. So there was never any challenges which often can happen when you get a person within an organisation saying yes we're committed to this project, but they haven't really got the organisation –because you've got [for] these types of projects, to not only have an organisational commitment, but that personal commitment and vice versa.*

The GTR respondent drew attention to his personal commitment to the project, arising from having started out as a volunteer in his organisation and thus having greater personal stakes in what happened. He also described his personal commitment as being related to being a longer-term resident of the city, thus being part of how the community responded:

*Oh yes, it's a lot related to the personal stake that goes into this.... I'm a contractor in this role but I started as a volunteer and I'm going back to being a volunteer so yeah, there's a personal commitment there. And, y'know, I've come through all these earthquakes, I've been here, I'm part of it. It's my home city for sixteen years so I've got a stake in the community's response and this particular project, making temporary parks and gardens, seemed like the right thing to work on.*

Having a personal stake in the project was perceived as enabling the partners to continue to endeavour to make the project work. Along with the personal satisfaction of working on the project, one respondent described his sense of the common goal as providing a 'light at the end of the tunnel':

*Well if it wasn't personally satisfying and it wasn't productive and we didn't feel that there was light at the end of the tunnel, then we'd probably stop but we've stuck with it because the idea is really good, the community interest and buy-in is good and the sites are there – we just have to get access to them. So I think in that sense we've stuck with it. There's far more reasons to continue with it than to stop.*

## Accountability

The group's commitment to the project appeared to be influenced by a sense of accountability to others. For the Lincoln respondent, this was expressed as a desire to see the project completed for the sake of his students:

*I want to make sure that this gets done and completed and Christchurch can have this amazing little project. And the students get their designs built too, which is another thing. So they can tell their parents and grandparents 'Yes it's finally getting built' and that sort of thing....*

*They're always asking 'What's happening, what's happening?'. We've even had design mentors for them as well, as well as hopefully getting some construction mentors, and so those design mentors have also asked how things are going, and how's it progressing.*

## Maintaining the working relationship

### Respect and admiration

Respondents expressed an appreciation for the qualities and skills of the other two partners and the overall working relationship appeared to be supported by each partner respecting and admiring the others' abilities and professional achievements, and being aware of interdependence:

*It's a professional link, we each respect the areas in which we're competent and try to work with each other because of the advantages in collaborating. Yes, yes, it's.... mutual respect, appreciating that what each has to do is different, and knowing that our combined effort is greater than our solo effort.*

### Interpersonal trust

The partners viewed their working relationship as being founded on interpersonal trust, with one of the respondents clearly articulating that this was essential for keeping a partnership going:

*It always depends a lot. Any business partnership, any social partnership, marriage partnership depends on mutual trust.... without it, it wouldn't happen.*

Trusting the person who was responsible for managing the project was regarded as especially important:

*I think sufficient delegation and trust to the person who really is moving and checking the idea is crucial. I always felt that [Healthy Christchurch representative] didn't have to go back for a formal permission process for the actions she took. I felt that she was trusted and that she did report her progress, or lack of it as the case may be, but she was not constrained by having to go back and check up all the time.*

### Using initiative and pulling weight

The amicable working relationship also appeared to be supported by each of the partners being willing to 'pull their weight' and using their initiative to make things happen:

*And the input by those other two partners has been quite often without having to ask, they've used their own initiative. And done additional stuff to make sure of that kind of quality and delivery.*

*I mean everyone is pulling their weight, and everyone is doing what they need to do, and everyone's always trying to make things happen, so – it's really good. There's never been a moment where anyone's had a heated word exchange, or anything like that, it's been very amicable, very professional.*

## **Practical orientation**

The Places of Tranquility project was described as a practical project requiring a practical approach and working style:

*I think it was ... very clear it was a practical project.*

*Yeah, and it's always providing those practical, visible opportunities – because we can plan and talk and meet, but that doesn't say anything to the communities themselves.*

The working relationship therefore appeared to be facilitated by the practical orientation each of the partners brought to the project, with respondents expressing appreciation for the practical qualities they perceived in each other:

*[Lincoln University representative] is very practical, and [he] brought in that he's actually worked as a landscape architect as well, which brings in a whole different practical – this is such a practical project. So he's brought that in to be able to support Greening the Rubble, they've got practical around building temporary, but he's got practical building, more intensive landscape sites, and that whole process around that, and working with the students.*

## **Meetings**

### *Flexible*

An agreement about a flexible approach towards scheduling meetings was perceived as another important influence on the partners' ability to keep the partnership going. Meetings were described as happening on an as-needed basis, and this flexible approach seemed to work well:

*And that's the thing too, that's really good with this project, is that everyone's quite happy with that flexibility. And we'll have meetings when we need to have them, we don't need to have them regularly – because it's a project, and for the sake of it. So there's been times when it's been more intensive, around specific parts, and components of the project. And other times when we're not in touch at all. Cos we don't need to be. And I've really appreciated that too.*

The flexibility of this approach was perceived as allowing the partners to adapt to the changing demands of the project. When they had to, they felt they were able to “pull the stops out”. One respondent drew attention to their efficient use of time when they did meet and described their approach as “very...task-orientated”:

*I think it's quite good, we tend to, when we have our meetings it's just basically we've got a window, and we just basically try and fill that window with getting through everything, and making task lists and everything...I think if anything, because we're all quite busy, it becomes very sort of task-orientated, and that kind of works.*

Again, this efficiency was described as an informal expectation, and appeared to be an underlying ethos that directed the partners' working style:

*I think maybe the ethos is that everyone's trying to get through this, and we're not trying to dilly-dally, and muck around, we're all kind of like we want to make sure that we're efficient and effective – it's just a common thread through it all, the three of us...Everyone's got that common underlying thing.*

The physical location of the meetings was also perceived as important, with one respondent citing a central place that was easy to get to as a specific enabler:

*It kind of helps that also that coming to work, I can go to their office, have a meeting, and then still go to work, rather than having to go out of my way to go there as well. So it's just a minor helpful thing that's been part of the process.*

### **Responding to challenges**

Respondents explained that the most challenging aspect of the Places of Tranquility project was finding sites. Two main requirements for the site were articulated: long-term availability; and proximity to the river. Most potential sites fell under the jurisdiction of CERA, and their use therefore had to be negotiated. As described earlier, negotiating the sites had led to a considerable amount of frustration.

#### *Frustrated yet persistent*

While there was some frustration voiced within the group about having limited power relative to CERA's authority, respondents did, however, make reference to a number of strategies for working with CERA. They perceived their ability to draw on these strategies as being at least partly due to their background in working for grassroots community organisations, which they cited as having given them prior experience of dealing with authority. These strategies appeared to have kept them going in their determination to see the project through – despite their frustration, the respondents expressed a willingness and ability to persist.

Along with being persistent in pursuing their goal, another strategy was to emphasise to CERA the reciprocal benefits of working together:

*We've opened our search for new sites...and saying 'But you are in a position to help us and we're in a position to help you'.*

Despite the frustration, there was a sense that the group felt empowered through knowing that they had secured community backing for what they were trying to do:

*We have a lot of community backing for our projects so we know we're strong. We've also got backing from people like the mayor of the city and various others who want us to succeed.*

Another aspect of their ability to persist thus far was their apparent ability to manage the high risk stakes of investment versus potential return. The project was described as having required a great deal of effort:

*A whole year's worth of community consultation and participation.... it's a big amount of community effort.*

The effort put in had been in the face of substantial uncertainty, with respondents not knowing whether they would be able to “pull it off”. If they were unsuccessful in securing a site, one respondent’s interpretation of events would be to conclude that they’d “put a lot of time in for very little return”.

## **Continuity**

### *Reappraisal*

Respondents seemed realistic about how sustainable the Places of Tranquility project would be. They realised that in future they may need to weigh up what they were putting in if it seemed likely that little could come out of it:

*[We’ll] have to weigh up the energy and effort needed for searching for sites elsewhere.*

### *Successor*

One of the respondents also addressed the fact that the make-up of the group would be changing upon his retirement from his organisation. He felt that this would be unlikely to affect the continuity of the project into the future. He acknowledged that “different people bring different qualities” and had made a point of introducing his successor to the project lead.

### *Potential opportunities / positive future benefits*

The group was also looking ahead, to identify further opportunities from the project. It was looking beyond the immediate focus of the gardens themselves, to the benefits the project could have for the communities involved and how it might link with other Healthy Christchurch projects:

*A mini project was set up with the cultural communities to have planter boxes at six organisations across Christchurch...those communities can actually plant and then take out edible plants and put them in their own gardens, or in the centres, and plant them up with flowers or whatever they want to, and that actually turns into a second phase with them becoming part of the Festival of Flowers in 2014.*

They also felt that this project was laying the ground for future connections. They were keen to keep thinking about other projects and hoped that the work of this project might extend for 5-10 years from now.

*Well, there’s been lots of other extra connections that have been made as well, so I think it’s about other projects that people could be involved with, I think it’s great also to be able to build up all of those professional connections between all of these bodies, so who knows, another 5-10 years down the track you can pick up the pieces again and run with another project or you can think of someone that you can forward other things to as well, which is really handy.*

There was “great potential” for the continuity of the partnership, in terms of connections with GTR, with the “design zone” and links with students. In terms of connections with CPH and Healthy Christchurch, the Lincoln respondent felt that there was “a positive future”. The potential he perceived was not solely framed in terms of embarking on practical projects, but also in terms of extending research and knowledge through partnering under the banner of wellbeing and mental health:

*It's nice to see connections with CPH and Healthy Christchurch being a positive future, with all of the research coming out saying how much benefit the landscape can have to wellbeing and mental health and things like that as well. So there's lots of potential not just for the doing of it, but also potential research actually extending everyone's knowledge, all these combinations as well.*

The overall feeling was that there were:

*All sorts of positive things for the future.*

## Discussion

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Interviews with the three key partners for the Places of Tranquility initiative (Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble Trust and the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University) have shed light on both how successful this partnership has been and the personal, relational, organisational and contextual factors that may have influenced its success.

### Success of the partnership

Each of the partners indicated that it was a successful working arrangement. This was evident in the positive comments they made about each other and about the experience of working together, as well as towards the goals of the project itself. This positivity had not been dampened by the delay in achieving the project's goals – instead, each of the partners appeared to be both optimistic and persistent in keeping the momentum going. The partnership itself appeared to be characterised by mutual trust and respect, and was described in various positive terms, such as 'collegial', 'amicable', 'professional' and 'healthy'. The success of the partnership was also indicated by the partners' awareness of the benefits of working together, including the professional connections established with other organisations and the raised awareness of the mental health aspects of their work. The partners independently noted that there had been no conflict. Overall, the picture painted was of a happy and positive working arrangement.

The criteria for success here relate to the working arrangement itself, rather than achievement of the project's goals. This is due to our focus on evaluating the process of partnership working (as requested), rather than outcome. At the time of final writing of this report, the project lead had provided an update of progress: CERA had been unable to fulfil their part of the group's proposal (due to planned future public works and commercial development proposals in all locations investigated) and thus the Places of Tranquility partners had been unsuccessful in gaining access to inner-city sites (M. Whitaker, personal communication, November 1, 2013). The partners were therefore planning to advertise their project widely and procure sponsorship for suburban sites. We return to a fuller discussion of process versus outcome below.

### Factors influencing the partnership

There were common threads that emerged from the three interviews about the factors that may have influenced the success of the partnership. These could be described as:

#### Personal and relational

The partners appeared to relate to one another extremely well. A key factor in this appeared to be the high regard which they had for one another, as a result of recognising the specific skills that each person brought to the partnership. They respected what each other could bring and recognised the need for and value of collaboration – and that it was to their mutual advantage. They also respected each other's working style, and trusted one another to work independently to get the job done.

Trust was an important facet of the project partners' high regard for one another. Trust stemmed not only from their current and ongoing commitment to the project, but from prior reputations for being competent and efficient. These prior "track records" were seen as "crucial". Trust for the project lead was inspired partly by the "personality and confidence that comes from [Healthy

Christchurch representative] as an individual". However, the professional reputation of partners was not solely individual. According to one respondent, the "credibility" of the project lead also came from her affiliation with Healthy Christchurch and the function of the latter as a network for many organisations. The success of the partnership therefore appeared to depend on both the reputation of the organisation and the behaviour and personality of the individuals representing those organisations.

Another aspect of the partners' ability to relate was their common background. At least two of the respondents had previously worked for grassroots organisations on community development projects. They therefore shared a similar ethos, which was characterised by shared interests, values and approaches. They were committed to empowering people. Also in common to each of them was a working style characterised by a practical, task-oriented approach and time-efficiency.

The partners' common background and values allowed them to endorse a shared vision for the project. Whilst the project lead had identified a need for collaboration in terms of supporting community organisations in their recovery and raising the visibility of ethnic minorities, the other partners recognised the importance of that vision. In particular, they were well aware of interdependence and the need for "other players" to make the project work, with one of the partners openly acknowledging that they "couldn't ever do it on [their] own".

The choice of partners was an important factor influencing the partnership. Partners were chosen because they had the skills and abilities appropriate to the task. Partners therefore spoke of having the "right people" representing their respective organisations, those who were "experts in their own field". The careful and intentional selection of the partners based on what they could bring to the partnership created clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Although these roles remained mostly informal and unwritten, the partners did, however, spend some time establishing processes at the beginning of the project.

The partners related to one another well as highly committed individuals. They each brought a personal commitment to their roles in the project that went above and beyond their role as a representative of their organisation. This varied a little for each one. For the project lead, the personal commitment stemmed from having identified the need for the project and having created the vision. For the Greening the Rubble representative, a history of being a volunteer and being a longer-term resident of the city brought a personal commitment that was linked to caring about what happened to Christchurch. For the Lincoln University representative, personal commitment was aligned with accountability to his students, requiring him to report back to them. The partners all demonstrated persistence in terms of staying committed to the project even in the face of difficulties. Alongside this personal commitment were the personal qualities of the individuals themselves. In addition to persistence, these qualities included optimism, assertiveness and community-mindedness.

## Organisational

An important motivation for establishing the partnership was the perception that it could meet some of the more specific needs of individual organisations. Pre-existing organisational connections appeared to facilitate its establishment, but resourcing and support from within the partners' respective organisations were also required. There was a clear mandate from Healthy Christchurch for the lead partner to work on the project. The project was seen as "a proactive

response to vulnerable communities” and a “very good fit for Healthy Christchurch”. The project lead had also accessed other organisational resources as necessary for the project, through her dual role with Community and Public Health, including the expertise of Māori and Pacific health promoters. Her involvement with CPH also brought organisational authority to the project, perceived by one of the partners as “mana...in that sort of field”. The project had the organisational support of Lincoln University, being incorporated into the second-year curriculum for Lincoln University students.

Certain organisational arrangements between the three partners also appeared to underpin the success of the partnership. Firstly, there was a shared understanding that the Healthy Christchurch representative was leading the project, but this did not appear to create an imbalance of power. Secondly, there was a flexible approach towards scheduling meetings. This flexibility appeared to suit each of the partners well – they appreciated not being tied to a rigorous schedule of meetings. Thirdly, there was a common work ethos within those meetings, with partners appearing to be similarly efficient and able to ‘pull out the stops’ when necessary. Finally, the physical location for meetings (the central city office of CPH) was a central and convenient place for the other two partners. All of these organisational arrangements were perhaps more achievable because there were only three people in the working group.

## Contextual

The project got underway in the immediate aftermath of the devastating February 2011 earthquake, which seriously damaged Christchurch’s city centre. The project was therefore situated in the context of the post-earthquake recovery focus of both the city of Christchurch and the country. The project came under the wider political influence of not only CCC but more importantly, CERA, which controlled access to the vacant land in the city centre.

The contextual influence of CERA was perceived as one of the greatest challenges to achieving the goals of the project, experienced by each of the partners as frustration. One of the partners articulated this frustration as a sense of powerlessness. Despite being unsuccessful so far in securing appropriate sites, the partners drew on their experience of working for grassroots organisations by persisting in their search for suitable sites, and felt more empowered by knowing that they had community support for the goals of the project. The difficulty with gaining approval to access central city sites also brought the greatest risk to the project, with the uncertainty of whether the effort put into the partnership would translate into achieving the project goals.

## Factors previously associated with successful partnership working

A number of sources seem to agree on the following core ingredients as necessary to successful partnership: commitment, mutuality and purpose (Boydell 2007, VicHealth 2003, Green and Tones 2010, Delaney 1994). However, there is no one overall agreed set of criteria for defining successful partnership and many definitions do not distinguish between factors that support the development of healthy partnerships and those that support the achievement of partnership project goals.

One researcher breaks the components of partnership working into three stages: ‘preparing the ground’, ‘setting out’ and ‘keeping going’ (Delaney 1994). The findings of other research appear to support these stages. Based on this research, the earliest stage includes ensuring organisational support and capacity for the partnership, including senior-level commitment. This early stage may also include considering the wider structural forces at work, such as the political context. In

the early stage, it is important to have a clear purpose, a perceived need for the partnership, a shared vision and objectives, a clear goal and commitment to that goal and a careful choice of partners based on common ideologies. The partners should be chosen on the basis of having the necessary skills for the project and they should be aware of their interdependence. The intermediate stage appears to be one that includes having clearly defined roles and responsibilities and a sense of group ownership for the project. It may also include having political influence, with the necessary persuasion required in the political realm. The later (or maintenance) stage involves considering process issues, including having a task focus and accountability. One researcher argues that, most importantly, partners should have positive regard for one another, suggesting that “trust lies at the heart of the ‘microdynamics of collaboration’” (Delaney 1994, 481).

According to these criteria, the Places of Tranquility (PoT) partnership fulfils many of the requirements for successful partnership. Although the issue of senior-level commitment did not emerge as a sub-theme, the lead partner had senior-level support for advancing the project (M. Whitaker, personal communication, October 22, 2013). As discussed in the “Introduction”, there also appears to have been senior-level commitment on the part of CERA early in the life of the project. Although a more complete understanding of why the project has failed to date to achieve its original goals would require a more thorough investigation of CERA perceptions and processes, it appears that the partners were diligent in their efforts to engage this key player in a timely manner. One issue that could perhaps have been given greater consideration was the extent to which the partners and their respective organisations considered themselves to have the political influence necessary for advancing the Places of Tranquility agenda in the context of post-earthquake Christchurch.

## Partnership or collaboration?

Over the years, the terminology used to describe the process of organisations working together has changed (Green and Tones 2010). This process has been described variously as “‘inter-agency working’, ‘intersectoral working’, ‘joint working’, ‘intersectoral collaboration’, ‘healthy alliances’, ‘coalitions’ and, most recently, ‘partnerships’” (Green and Tones 2010, p.193). Partnership working has also been described as a continuum, ranging from the lowest level ‘network’ (sharing information for mutual benefit) to the highest level of ‘collaborating’ (sharing information and resources and altering activities in order to enhance the “capacity of the other partner for mutual benefit and a common purpose” (VicHealth 2003, p. 3). Based on this latter definition, collaboration itself can be considered a *form* of partnership working. Recent research defines partnership as: “‘a programme that has a high level of commitment, mutual trust, equal ownership and the achievement of a common goal’, as distinct from networks which might ‘involve sharing information or other resources but not for the explicit purpose of joint working’” (Stern and Green 2005, p.270; Boydell 2007).

The Places of Tranquility partnership was described variously by the three partners as a “partnership” and a “collaboration”. The project lead referred to both the Lincoln University and ‘Greening the Rubble’ representatives as “partners” and described the working arrangement using both terms. She qualified the use of “collaboration” by explaining that the project had no official sign-off, and that there wasn’t a need for formal documentation of the partnership itself, such as Terms of Reference or a Memorandum of Understanding<sup>8</sup>. Although this might be considered an

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<sup>8</sup> There are however numerous shared documents including project plans, the business proposal presented to CERA and a literature review developed early on as part of the funding application process.

unusual working arrangement, it appears to have been successful in this context because of the careful selection of, and ‘goodness of fit’ between, partners. The Places of Tranquility project would appear to be both a collaboration and a partnership, that is, a form of partnership working that involves sharing information, resources and altering activities for mutual benefit and a common purpose.

### Process versus outcomes

Some research includes the “achievement of a common goal” in the definition of partnership (Stern and Green 2005, p. 270). However, the distinction between *process* and *outcome* is at the heart of debate concerning the evaluation of partnerships (Boydell 2007, Bauld et al 2005, Mann et al 2004). There is potential for partnership working to “lead to losses for less powerful partners, particularly from the voluntary sector” (Boydell 2007 p. 11, Mann et al 2004). Evaluations of partnerships may be unnecessarily limited by focusing exclusively on outcomes. Rather, it may be more helpful to distinguish between *process* (referring to the *health* of a partnership) and *outcomes* (referring to improved services or health and wellbeing for end users, for example) – despite the lines between process and outcome being blurred. For the purposes of this evaluation, it is helpful to focus on process (as requested). Our findings indicate that the Places of Tranquility partnership is indeed a *healthy* partnership.

## Conclusion

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The Places of Tranquility project is a partnership which involves collaborating for mutual benefit to achieve an agreed goal. The success of the partnership is evident from analysing how respondents have appraised their experience as partners and how they perceive the tangible and potential future benefits of working together. Factors perceived as underpinning the success of this partnership are consistent with those identified in previous research. The Places of Tranquility partnership has a clear purpose and responsible leadership, adds value to the work of the partners, is based on a shared vision, and has organisational support. The partners themselves are highly committed to achieving a common goal, are aware of the benefits of interdependence, have confidence in each other's abilities, are clear about their individual roles and responsibilities, and have a working style appropriate to the task at hand. Despite these success factors, the partnership has not achieved its original goals because of difficulties accessing central city sites.

Future partnerships can be informed by the results from the Places of Tranquility partnership. In particular, future partnerships would benefit from giving careful thought to the choice of partners and securing organisational commitment to, and resourcing of, partnership projects. The Places of Tranquility project lead deserves credit for the careful choice of partners: the partners have been well chosen based on their skills and common ideologies, contributing to an appreciation of interdependence and the ability to invest in a shared vision and commitment to the goal. Locating the project within wider organisational programmes and initiatives also appears to have been beneficial, and all partners can be commended for having drawn on the available organisational resources. In future, partnerships may also benefit from considering what might be necessary to ensure that partners and their respective organisations have the influence necessary to overcome any contextual barriers.

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## Appendix One: Interview Questions

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1. Could you tell us about your involvement with the Places of Tranquility project?
2. What motivated you to get involved?
3. From your perspective, what was the overall reason for establishing a working relationship between Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble and Lincoln University?
4. What do you understand to be your role in this working relationship?
5. What do you think have been the benefits of Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble and Lincoln University working together so far?
6. Has the project lived up to your expectations?
7. What do you think will be the long-term benefits of Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble and Lincoln University working together?
8. How would you describe your relationship with the other two organisations?
9. Is there anything about your interaction with the other two organisations that supports your relationship with them?
10. Is there anything about your interaction with the other two organisations that presents challenges to your relationship with them?
11. Other than your relationship with them, is there anything else that has enhanced your capacity to work with the other two organisations?
12. Is there anything that has made working with the other two organisations difficult?
13. Can you talk to us about any potential barriers you might foresee regarding Healthy Christchurch, Greening the Rubble and Lincoln University continuing to work together?
14. How would you describe your level of commitment to working with the other two organisations?