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This closed-up building, at 110-114 Seaview Rd in New Brighton is on the city council's list of problem sites. PETER MEECHAM/THE PRESS

Sites' owners paint a different picture

More than just the 'dirty half-dozen' holding back suburb, they say

NEW BRIGHTON
Liz McDonald

Owners of properties on New Brighton's "dirty half-dozen" list of problem sites say bigger issues than boarded-up sites are holding the area back.

Last week Christchurch City Council issued a name-and shame list of six eyesore properties it said are hampering progress in the seaside suburb.

The properties are at numbers 52, 81, 96, and 101 Brighton Mall, 110-114 Seaview Rd, and the Hawke St car park, which spreads across several titles.

Council case management and relationships team leader Jo Anderson said the vacant or underused properties appear untidy or in need of improvement. Most have been graffitied.

Anderson said these "barrier sites", similar to the central city's "Dirty 30" list, can discourage investment and development, and influence how people feel about the area.

Some of the owners were unaware of the list when contacted by *The Press*.

Auckland property developer and investor NJMI bought the vacant site at 101 Brighton Mall 10 years ago and director Nicolaas Kotze said they have made several unsuccessful attempts to develop apartments and commercial premises.

"Construction in general has got all sorts of challenges in terms of costs. We are in our sixth iteration looking for something that will be profitable for banks and developers to construct. We're running the numbers. It is difficult in terms of costs to bring something to New Brighton."

Their latest plan is for apartments only, as "there's oodles of commercial space available in Brighton that's under-utilised".

Kotze said any type of council penalty for

lack of action would be unfair "for people like myself with a real intention to develop, but I can understand it if people are land-banking". He conceded the site was "not as tidy as I'd like".

Christchurch investor Denis Harwood owns 110 to 114 Seaview Rd, which once held a supermarket, and hopes another one can be built there.

The building has boarded-up windows, and bears street art and graffiti. Harwood said it is now used mostly for storage, but he has happily let local street artists put murals on it. "We just keep it locked up most of the time."

He said uncertainty about climate change zoning makes redevelopment planning in the area difficult.

Harwood also owns a boarded-up central-city office building, and two old houses on the Sumner Esplanade he wants to redevelop.

Martini Investments, owned by Christchurch's Harris family, have been buying up properties along the mall and already have Southpaw Brewery Company and the Village Green as tenants. One of their 13 sites - number 96 - is on the council's list.

Director Robbie Harris said they intended to develop the recent purchase as part of their New Brighton "mini-master plan" which includes a service hub with a new supermarket, and a hospitality precinct.

Owners do not want to waste money on upgrading buildings that will eventually be redeveloped, he said.

Harris said New Brighton's issues are structural, with many small property owners sitting on under-used sites waiting for the suburb to fulfil its potential.

Some feel let down because the council's own masterplan was not fully realised, he said.

He said curated areas such as Riverside in

the central city showed the benefits of collaboration and masterplanning.

"Everyone knows the potential here, and no-one wants to miss out on the opportunity, so people don't want to sell. Some people think they can do something on their own, but the owners need to work together."

Harris said the commercial area became too spread out during last century's Saturday shopping boom, and land further back from the beach should be rezoned for housing.

The vacant building at 81 Brighton Mall housed a surfwear shop until the earthquakes. It is owned by Vicki and Adrian Campbell, of Timaru, whose veterinary business Vetlife has premises behind the property.

Campbell was surprised to be on the list, and said Vetlife has a large number of properties and they have done what the council wanted at New Brighton.

Grant Doonan's clothing recycling business Save Mart still owns their now-closed store at 52 Brighton Mall, and rejected council attempts to buy it for a plan to extend Oram Ave and create a sheltered shopping area.

Local community board member Alex Hewson said last week the owners are holding the suburb to ransom and the building should be demolished.

Doonan said they are about to apply for building consent "and hope to have the premises revitalised before the coming summer". He did not elaborate on the plans.

"The recent efforts of council and the Harris family with their vision for New Brighton are in keeping with our own, and these improvements have initiated a more positive outlook for the mall and the community," he said.

"I see further development within New Brighton only increasing."

Witness to history, voice for the South: Press at 165

OPINION
Kamala Hayman
Editor, The Press

Today marks a milestone that belongs as much to our readers as to our newsroom.

On May 25, 1861, James FitzGerald published the very first edition of *The Press* from a small cottage on Montreal St. Today, we stand proud as the oldest surviving newspaper in the South Island.

For 165 years, *The Press* has recorded the defining moments of global history: two world wars, the Great Depression, the historic reign of Queen Elizabeth II, and the global shock of 9/11. But our deepest purpose has always been closer to home.

When the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes struck, *The Press* covered the personal tragedies, the loss of lives and homes, and continued to cover the years of insurance challenges and political debates, charting the gradual rebuild of our city.



A man reads *The Press*' coverage of the Commonwealth Games in 1974.

In March 2019, our reporters were first on the scene when a terrorist attacked two mosques, killing 51 worshippers.

In 2020, when Covid 19 locked us in our homes, we set up a virtual newsroom, co-ordinating news coverage on twice-daily video calls. We wore masks and socially distanced so we could continue to go into our communities and tell the stories of lockdown.

I have worked for *The Press* since 2003, and am honoured to be editor as it marks this significant anniversary.

The media landscape of 2026 looks vastly different from that of 1861.

Our newsroom, once focused on producing a weekly broadsheet, is now delivering stories, photos and videos throughout the day on our dedicated subscriber website. It carries the journalism of *The Press*, plus stories from across the South Island thanks to the *Nelson Mail*, *Marlborough Express*, *The Timaru Herald* and *The Southland Times*, and also those of North Island titles, including *The Post* and *Sunday Star Times*.

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