



Press Release

Support for the Hundertwasser Art Centre and Wairau Art Gallery Project.

Whangarei and the Northland region is about to be hit severely by the economic downturn in the dairy Industry and this will be compounded further by the completion of the refinery expansion project over the next 12 months. The forestry industry is also facing harder times and the Whangarei CBD area is seeing a change in retail spending patterns and an ever increasing number of vacant shops. The outlook is not good.

Industries that looked rock solid can lose the glamour very quickly due to over production and changing consumer demand. Think milk, forestry, mining in Australia, coal, oil and even electricity. So when a unique opportunity comes up in Whangarei to boost tourism in the region (a good growth industry) we owe it to ourselves and particularly the young people coming through to give it our best shot. The Hundertwasser Arts Centre and Wairau Art Gallery Project is a tremendous opportunity to increase economic activity in that area. NEAG strongly supports the initiatives taken by the Prosper Northland Trust to develop fund and operate the proposed Hundertwasser Arts Centre and Wairau Maori Art Gallery project.

This is a unique opportunity for Whangarei and Northland where we have a museum dedicated to one of the 20th Century's internationally renowned artists, architect and environmentalist who chose to make his home in Northland. Amongst Hundertwasser's buildings throughout the world this would be known as his "last design". This, combined with the Wairau Maori Art Gallery project would make the complex an iconic destination for both National and International tourists.

Opportunities don't come much better than this.

The Deloitte feasibility report, the Crowe Howarth report on the project and a recent Hotel Feasibility Report prepared for Ngatiwai Trust Board and the Whangarei District Council indicate a very significant increase in Tourists visiting Whangarei if this project is built and this will help lift the local economy. Additionally it will be a very important addition to the Northland Tourist Trail giving that extra incentive for visitors to turn north instead of south when they first arrive into Auckland.

Whangarei and Northland desperately needs economic growth and additional employment. We need more strings to our bow. The Hundertwasser Art Centre and the Wairua Art Gallery Project is low hanging fruit in terms of providing an increase in economic activity. It would be great to see an asset that has been lying idle for many years being turned into an iconic asset that help enhance tourism in the region with its on-going economic benefits.

Graham Dawson

Chair

Northland Economic Advisory Group

The Northland economic Advisory Group (NEAG) was formed from the 'Whole of Northland' Economic Summit series held in 2012. The NEAG is a sector representative group, which includes representatives from the main industry sectors in Northland as well as the Education and Health sectors and Maori. There are fourteen sector group representatives at the table.

NEAG is a voluntary organisation, formed to provide effective communication channels with identified sectors to provide validated independent advice and guidance to Northland Inc. This is to assist in growing a strong and thriving Northland economy.