

COLUMN FROM MAYOR TIM SHADBOLT

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I'm looking forward to meeting Rodney Hide next week to discuss the role of local government. He believes local Councils should stick to their core responsibilities of roads, footpaths, rubbish, sewage and drainage. My view is what's the point of having perfect roads, footpaths, drains etc if there are no people to use them?

Invercargill was for 30 years the fastest declining city in New Zealand or Australia. We had to actually do something or we would die. The City Council joined its partners on the Trusts and we set about launching a huge reconstruction programme. The Inner City Upgrade; Splash Palace; Stadium Southland and the Velodrome, as well as social and job creation projects such as Zero Fee education; Hollywood movies and industrial parks.

Of course 80% of our money goes into the works and parks budget for Council. It always has and it probably always will. It costs us a million dollars a year just to run Queens Park; over a million to run Splash Palace; over \$3 million to run our libraries and about a million to run the Civic Theatre. But what's the point of a sterile city full of perfect drains and roads if you don't have art, culture, sport, music, education, housing for the elderly, international events and movies?

If you want an enriching lifestyle then we need local facilities and Councils have always played a major role in developing a healthy happy community.