Presentation to Hutt City Council about continuation of funding support for Hutt Valley Horticultural Society.

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Hutt Valley Horticultural Society has been an integral part of what was described in David McGill's 1991 book as Lower Hutt -The First Garden City. Founded in 1903 after recognising that the Hutt Valley was home to spectacular vegetable and flower growers who supplied much of the lower North Island, the society has continued to support horticulture in the region. Some remnants of this top-quality fertile alluvial river soil are still available despite increasingly intensified housing. The society feels it has a responsibility to nurture the preservation and use of this vital and precious resource.

In a difficult economic climate, we have a unique opportunity through our shows to support and teach our community how to grow edible and decorative plants. The Society is pivotal as a learning hub to encourage all generations to grow food sustainably, in a manner relevant to local conditions. This is also a major opportunity to promote the importance of the regenerative approach to horticulture (very valuable after many years of soil depletion by the use of chemicals). Regenerative Living represents a comprehensive approach to human existence, so important at a time when we are facing serious environmental challenges, promoting as it does the restoration and enhancement of natural systems and human well-being. We can be part of the world-wide acknowledgement of its importance.

The continuation of the Hutt Valley Horticultural Society will benefit the whole of our community. Shows bring together the young and older people. They are a unique forum for the sharing of information across generations. Gardening is now well recognised as being a vital part of social, mental and physical well-being, both individual and community.

Hutt Valley Horticultural Society has six affiliate groups with a combined membership of over 550 keen horticulturalists. They, plus the general public visitors, benefit from the shows and other activities that the Society run.

We request that Hutt City Council reconsiders its decision to cease support for the Society and recognise the value of it continuing its activities. The Society has already suggested a major concession by no longer using the Events Centre – a saving of some $10,000. It also asks that the Council recognise that any transition

to other venues and possibly other financial streams will take time for both the Society and all its associated groups.