# Renewing Community Infrastructure:

a case study of the Building one community consultation

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#### **Abstract**

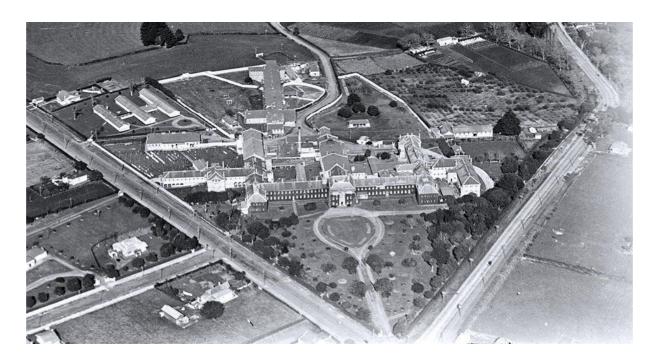
A case study is provided of a community needs assessment of Point Chevalier community assesses the interest of the community in retaining the BuildingOne as a community arts center.

Key Words: BuildingOne, Psychiatric Hospitals, Point Chevalier, Community Faculties, Community Consultations, Community Needs assessments.

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# Building One - 2020, 1930, 1890.







#### **Background**

In growing areas and even where there has merely some 'churn' of residents the urban fabric is continually being renewed. The private sector involves the refurbishment and replacement of some housing but the more public sector of infrastructure requires more deliberate change. In turn, such development and change often requires studies to be implemented to allow planning. This article provides a case study of the methods that may be involved in carrying out such studies.

The study is located in Point Chevalier/Mt Eden North in the central-western portion of the Auckland isthmus. Pt Chevalier occupies a peninsula bordered to the East by green areas along the Meola reef to the west by the Harbour and to the south by the North-Western motorway (and the consolidated suburb of Waterview). However, the Motorway is a porous border and to some extent the subjective community boundaries extend into parts of Mt Albert North (and West) including the Carrington polytechnic (Unitec) and a sprawling Auckland Healthcare campus<sup>1</sup>.

The population of Pt Chev has been slowly growing over the years and is currently some 14,000 but there is considerable building activity taking up the opportunities offered by zoning allowing more intensive developments, and there are several major housing projects likely to be carried out in the area, including a very large housing development on the Unitec campus area (3,000-4,000 dwellings). Alongside these are several community infrastructural developments (see Mobius, 2018). The Mobius study sought to understand community service requirements and their implications for the Point Chevalier Community Centre and the community more generally. Included in their study is a review of an array of plans relating to the area.<sup>2</sup>

One of the area's potential community facilities is the former Carrington/Oakley Hospital on the Unitec campus. Built in 1865 in a classic Victorian style on the Oakley Farm Estate bordering on Great North Road, it was one of the largest asylums in the Colony. In 1992, Carrington Hospital was closed by the Auckland Area Health Board and was purchased by tertiary education provider, Carrington Polytech, who refurbished the building, opening the Unitec Institute of Technology School of Architecture and Design in 1994. Until recently, most of the site continued to be occupied by the Unitec, with smaller sections occupied by the Mason Clinic (a forensic psychiatric clinic also serving as a facility for mentally disturbed prisoners) and various private businesses. However, the majority of the land has been purchased by the New Zealand government for affordable housing developments.

The fate of the former Hospital is tied up with the evolution of policies concerning the delivery of mental health care (Kearns, 201). Since the 1980s there has been a process of deinsitutionalisation as a significant shift from the former state commitment to asylum-based mental health care to a mixed economy of care in a variety of locations. One consequence of this has been the abandonment of many asylums and their sites, buildings and landscapes which have become derelict. Re-uses raise challenges in transcending stigma while yet sustaining memory.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Community Consultation covers The boundary includes Westmere/Garnet Rd, to St Luke's, up to Owairaka School, New North Rd to the Avondale roundabout, Rosebank Rd back to Waterview and Pt Chevalier.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Plans include The Auckland Plan (2012); The Auckland Unitary Plan; The Long Term Plan (2015-2025); Thriving Communities: Community and Social Development Action Plan 2014; The Community Facilities Network Plan (2014); The Community Facilities Action Plan (2014); Albert-Eden Local Board Plan (2017); Auckland City Council – Future Planning framework version 3.0, 9 September (2010); Point Chevalier Community Facility and Recreation Action Plan, prepared by Urban Logic for the Albert-Eden Local Board, (2014); Point Chevalier Place Audit Report, prepared by Nicole Miller and Melody Chow – Plans and Places, November (2014)

Following its purchase by the Crown there is a potential in the interim as a cultural heritage, community arts, creative and well-being hub while it is vacant, and its longer-term future is decided. With 270 studio spaces and over 8500 sqm of floor space, it could potentially provide access to affordable studio spaces, rehearsal rooms, offices, residencies, lecture theatres, gallery spaces, gathering spaces and community rooms for youth and adult education.

Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau and the Crown (the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development) are partners in the residential development of the site. They have asked the Point Chevalier Social Enterprise Trust, implemented by Point and Associates, to undertake a feasibility study (looking at 5 years) ontheir behalf. The purpose of this consultation was to find out:

- Whether there is a need for an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub inthe St Lukes, Pt Chev, Mt Albert, Waterview, Avondale area
- Whether there is interest in turning Building One at Unitec into an arts/heritageprecinct and community asset while it is vacant.

#### Methods

The community consultation included feedback from over 500 respondents. It sits alongside a needs assessment from the creative arts, culture and heritage sector. The consultation wasundertaken in two parts:

- An on-line survey
- An open day at the Point Chevalier library.

An online survey was developed. The target audience was the Central West Community and the arts and wellbeing communities in the catchment area. The key stakeholders included those living, working, playing, training, or undertaking education in the Central West catchment area. It is noted that Mana Whenua were made aware of and invited to the OpenDay via their development partnership with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

In order to connect with these communities, the survey link was shared on Facebook pages, in community newsletters, community Facebook pages, through community group networks, with local Business Associations, through arts databases and Facebook pages andwith organisations such as the Albert-Eden Local Board, Auckland Council libraries in the catchment area, and Creative New Zealand. The survey link was shared with the following, amongst others:

- Building One Facebook page
- Point Research Facebook page
- Pt Chev Community hub emailed newsletter and Facebook page
- Local school newsletters within the study catchment
- BISC, the local business association
- United
- The Big Idea database through a paid advertisement
- Elephant Publicity
- The Arts Regional Trust
- Arts Covid Facebook page
- Creative New Zealand
- Communications Council
- Planet Radio
- Migrant Services
- Neighbourly
- Council media links

- Posters in local businesses within the catchment area, and
- The Waterview, Mt Albert and Avondale Community Facebook pages
- MPs in the area and the Albert-Eden Local Board.

It was supported by press releases, interviews, and articles in community newspapers. Those who completed the survey and said they were interested in attending the open daywere sent an invitation.

Respondents to the survey were asked:

- If they are supportive of Building One becoming an arts, creative, cultural, heritageand wellbeing hub;
- Whether they have an interest in Building One due to its history, heritage, design, landmark status;
- Whether they see value in an interim arts precinct, such as Building One, having amix of activities from the creative, cultural, heritage and community sectors;
- If they have an interest in the Central West area;
- If there were arts, creative, heritage, wellbeing programmes, lectures, community activities in Building One in Pt Chevalier, how likely would you and your family/whanau be to attend them;
- What kinds of activities and community classes they or their whanau might beinterested in;
- As this is an opportunity for interim use while the building is vacant and its future use is investigated, what the MINIMUM number of years they think it would need to be available to be viable as an arts and wellbeing hub;
- If Building One offered affordable space what they would be interested in using itfor;
- If Building One were to be turned into an arts, cultural, community and heritagespace, what mix of activities they thought might make it work well;
- What, if any, are the drawbacks, concerns or challenges of turning Building One into an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub?

Resilio Studio was engaged by the Pt. Chevalier Social Enterprise Trust to support with the development of a consultation andengagement methodology and programme for the Community Open Day. The day was designed to:

- ensure that attendees experience a welcoming, coherent, cohesive and engaging event that optimises attendees time and contributions to inform the feasibility study;
- ensure that the Open Day complements the online surveys, in particular, to find out if attendees are supportive of Building One becoming an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub.

The Community Open Day programme provided a range of opportunities for stakeholders to engage in the day and provide feedback on the proposed use of Building One for the feasibility study. The programme involved providing both interactive and static engagement opportunities as well as self-guided and dialogue-based interactions. A range of visual engagement material was designed specifically for face to face and physicalstakeholder interactions. A series of five information posters and five interactive posters were created to support the day. The material on these posters included:

- An overview of the Building One Feasibility Study Welcome, context, intro to feasibility study, how stakeholders can contribute, timelines, deliverables, processmap etc.
- The purpose and summary of the Building One Feasibility Study;
- The historical context and timeline of the site;
- The Building One site floor plan.

• A map of wider landscape including the pedestrian shed; cycle shed; local schools and library; the 'Central West' neighbourhoods and existing transportroutes and infrastructure. This map was used for people to pin their location/'home base' (relative to Building One).

On the day the Pt. Chevalier Social Enterprise Trust, with support from Resilio Studio and Point and Associates, coordinated and facilitated a community engagement process with a range of stakeholders. The Pt. Chevalier SocialEnterprise Trust's role on the day was primarily to host the attendees. They made themselves available to answer questions and engage in informal dialogue about Building One and the feasibility study. Resilio's role involved both to design, plan and coordinate the day. Planning included developing an Open Day programme and indicative runsheet, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and briefing the interactive session facilitators. During the Open Day they supported the Pt. Chevalier Social Enterprise Trust as event hosts, directed attendees through consultation material, and encouraged attendees to complete the survey.

During the Open Day Point and Associates ran an interactive 'survey' with Open Day attendees to gain insights into their connection and relationship to Building One, as well as to find out the communities' wants, needs and aspirations for the site. This was done through one on one discussions and note-taking using sticky notes. Four separate 'interview survey stations' were staffed by interviewers.

### **Findings**

The responses from the survey and community open daywere themed and grouped. It is noted that the overall themes remained largely consistent between the data collection methods, including the needs assessment.

While over 400 people completed the online survey and attended the open day, and the study was designed to ensure a representation of ages, ethnicities and geographical spread, the views may not be representative of the different population groups across the study area. As people who completed the survey were invited to the open day, there may be a double up of their views. However, the homogeneity of the views within the survey and within theopen day on the critical question, "whether they saw value in Building One becoming an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub", limits the impact of any potential double-ups.

A total of 276 people responded to the survey. The number of people attending the openday was not recorded, but at least 130 people responded to the survey at the survey stations. As many attendees did not attend the survey stations, it is likely to be upwards 130. Most of the respondents to the survey said they had an interest in the Central West area, living, working or participating in activities in the area, including attending education or training. Those who had not lived, worked, played or been educated in the catchment tended to have family and whanau connections, or had past connections, such as growingup in the Central West.

While there was a mix of ages and ethnicities at the open day, there was female (75%) and Pakeha skew in the on-line survey with Maori (8%, n=22), Pasifika (5%, n=13) and Asian (5%,n=13) responding. A range of people of other ethnicities responded to the survey, including Indian, South American, French, German and South African.

There was widespread and strong support to keep Building One as a community asset due to its history, heritage, and connection to the community:

"It is a place where people inspire and get inspired."

Interest in the Central West area (survey respondents: n=262)	,
I/we live in the area	64%
I/we work in the area	27%
I/we participate in activities in the area	41%
I/we attend school/university/training in the area	19%
Other	16%

Ethnicity	Percent	Number
NZ European/Pakeha	86%	236
Maori	8%	22
Pasifika	5%	13
Asian	5%	13
Other (please specify)	11%	29
Total		274

The community vision is for Building One to become an interdisciplinary creative and wellbeing hub for play, curiosity-led learning and exploration that brings the Central West, wellbeing and creative communities together. There was a strong sense that it needed to bebusy and vibrant and for this to happen it would need to include anchoring activities such as a library, resource centre, shops, a café, an art gallery for exhibitions, permanent wellbeing organisations such as occupational and physiotherapy clinics, and regular classes.

"To feel alive, it cannot be empty. It needs a base of activities, with people so they are not entering an empty space. If it is to feel vibrant it needs to buzz."

The community said they would also like to see performance venues, rehearsal rooms, exhibition spaces, workshop spaces, and a creative research centre. In recognition of Building One's history, they would like to see a heritage room, museum or library whichacknowledges the history of the building and land.

The community would like to see room made for maker spaces and repair cafes i.e. hands on teaching/workshop spaces with tools, equipment with access to people with expertise, where you can take things to be fixed, mend them yourself, be shown how to mend them, upgrade them or recycle them into something new, or design and make them from scratch. They believe these workshops and repair cafes will help our community to live more sustainably.

Some said they would like to see the hub include room for organisations and groups that require permanent equipment and materials. They would like to see space for hot and dirtyactivities, including a foundry, blacksmithing space, woodworking space, masonry area, space for a kiln and pottery and space to learn the basics of mechanics, similar to 'a men's shed but for everyone'. They see Building One as being a community asset where people, old and young can share skills. As such they would like it to be accessible to everyone who wants to try things out, experiment, create, connect, and enhance their wellbeing. This includes disabled people, allgenerations, creative people, and those from all cultures and backgrounds, including newcomers.

"(A space) encouraging unexpected encounters."

"I'd like to see it as a space where people from all backgrounds, abilities, generations and cultures can connect."

The community said they would also like to see a one stop shop for healing and wellbeing activities such as community doctors, mental health services, alcohol and drugs support groups and services – where you get not only your physical needs met, but any mental health and wellbeing needs can further be supported through the activities and connections on offer.

"You might go there because you need a doctor or JP but you stay there because youneed more than a doctor to be well, and we hope you will be able to find it at Building One."

The community see the space outside Building One as important. They would like to see night markets and regular market days. They would like to see community gardens established which can produce food for the community, for the cooking classes, the café,and potentially for community meals. The gardens could be used to teach people how togrow food and to inspire gardening.

Almost all survey respondents (95%, n=221) and open day participants saw value in BuildingOne becoming an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub and having a mix of activities from the creative, cultural, heritage and community sectors. There was overwhelming support from those attending the open day.

Most saw it as a progressive step for not just the Central West community but for Auckland. The community see it as potentially creating more opportunities for people to be involved in the arts. More importantly, however, they see it as building a community heart. It was noted that many people in the Central West area experience isolation and loneliness. Their hope for Building One is that it will become a place where people can meet and connect.

It was noted that Auckland is `desperate 'for spaces where people can meet and connect'. Itwas pointed out that while community halls, for example, are meeting spaces, with no permanent groups, galleries, cafes, or people occupying them, they do not feel alive or vibrant. They are empty until life is brought to them, rather than spaces `with life, vibrancy and heart.' The community believe a hub with heart could bring together different people `from different walks of life and create a massive space of community friendliness and fun'.

"An opportunity to learn about anything that you want sounds simply amazing."

Similarly, it was noted that there was nowhere in the city for artists to gather and create an arts community. They too need a space where they can come together, learn from, and inspire each other. They saw having the diversity of arts, wellbeing, cultural and heritage activities in one space as an opportunity to strengthen the arts community, and connections between the arts and Central West community.

"I think a lot of artists feel disconnected from this city as over the years there have been fewer and fewer spaces in which we can work and form community. There is strength in community and this space would provide and awesome opportunity to create a diverse and vibrant community which would feed back into the energy of thecity."

Most survey respondents (80%) and open day attendees had an interest in Building One due to this history, heritage, design, and landmark status. The community see Building One as having both architectural and heritage significance. It isone of the few landmark buildings in Point Chevalier and is valued as such. In the community's view, it has always been part of the neighbourhood and landscape and connects us with our past. Many referred to it as iconic:

"The history and architectural beauty is needed in our city."
"It is a beautiful looking building that reminds us of our past and those that wentbefore."

The trees, gardens and landscape are also seen as having tremendous community value. It iswell used as a park, recreation, and dog walking area. People talked of having got married on the grounds, showed us wedding photos in front of the arches, and told us of learning to cycle and roller blade on the footpaths and learning to drive on the roads around Building One. The tree collection, in particular, is seen by those in the community as very significant, withseveral people noting that there are more than 200 species of trees surrounding Building One, some which are rare.

Several people noted that the building has a strong connection to the land as the bricks were made at the mill on the banks of Oakley Creek. It was pointed out that it is increasinglyhard in urban environments where connections to the past are being stripped from the community, to retain our connections with the past.

While some considered it in need of cleansing, others noted it has been cleansed and blessed in its many iterations.

"I just think it's gorgeous to look at, and we need those visual heritage anchors to bereimagined and given new life, as our neighbourhoods grow and change in all the necessary ways to make more space for people."

In addition to its landmark status, many in the community has strong personal connections to the building. Some visited whanau and family when it was a mental health facility. For those connected to the building through its mental health history, they felt that that it was important to respect its wairua.

"It was tough having family connections to the hospital. Creativity builds wellbeing.Let's grow this in the wake of sadness.

"The building itself and its history deserve a respectful future."

It also has a strong connection to the visual and creative arts community which the community would like to see continue. Many in the community had studied there, setting them off on dance, theatre and architectural careers, and at least some felt as if their time Building One `had changed their lives.'

"When I was studying in performing and screen arts, the building was crucial in mydeveloping education."

Many of those who responded had worked there and described how their own families had grown up there, sleeping on the floor of the library while their parents studied or worked. Those who had worked there talked of their love for the building, seeing it as a vibrant placefilled with young, creative people full of life.

"It was full of creativity and youth."

The overall response from the community survey and open day was that using Building Oneas an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub `completes the circle'. It started itslife as a mental health facility and became a place of creativity as a Creative Arts and Architectural school. An arts and wellbeing hub would `draw the threads of its history together', particularly as now we `understand the link between creativity, wellbeing and healing.'

"There is such a disconnect between how wellbeing and mental health was positioned in the community and how we understand that it should be now."

"It is a fascinating part of our local history which needs to be preserved. The asylumhistory and heritage is too easily removed and denied."

"The whole area has wairua for healing. Mistakes in how to achieve this have beenmade. This is a chance to rectify it."

"The place has always been about healing. Let's keep it that way."

The respondents were asked if there were arts, creative, heritage, wellbeing programmes, lectures, and community activities in Building One in Pt Chevalier, how likely they and their family/whanau would be to use them. Most (86%, n=235) of survey respondents said they would be likely to use or attend them, with a further 10% (n=38) somewhat likely to use or attend them.

"I have been searching for a way to connect in with the community for the last 2 years as a new resident."

Many commented that they would love to attend classes, use the space, and potentially runclasses themselves.

"On a personal level I'm always looking for learning opportunities. With the business, I may even consider to facilitate some workshops."

"I would look at the programs available at Building One to see if there were any goodfits for the clients/tangata whai I te ora I work with. Ideally we would also be able to contribute to the programs that were available."

Respondents were asked what types of activities they or their whanau would be interested inattending. Most wanted to attended exhibitions, performances, and classes.

Activities	Percent	N

Attending exhibitions	88%	241
Attending performances	81%	220
Art classes	73%	200
Cultural activities or classes	71%	195
Language classes	60%	165
Wellbeing services e.g. physio	54%	148
Dance classes	50%	137
Heritage activities - lectures, classes	48%	130
Music classes	41%	113
Theatre classes	37%	101
Circus classes	27%	75
Other (please specify)	21%	57

Other activities included workshops, meetings, groups, maker spaces, markets, arts retail outlets, gigs, concerts, craft spaces, yoga lessons, choir rehearsals, lectures, woodworkingspaces.

"Craft workshops (e.g. soap, jewellery, candles, pottery); eco/gardening/culinary workshops (composting, growing, fermenting, pickling, foraging, beeswax wraps, kombucha making etc); floral art workshops; cooking classes; markets and pop-upshops; gigs and concerts (daytime or evening) with pop-up bar; pop up dinners or foodie events, theatre productions; artist 'interventions' and installations; artist studio open days; free, hands-on, family friendly stuff."

Survey respondents were asked if Building One offered affordable space, whether they would be interested in using it for activities, classes, meetings, gatherings, or services. Overhalf (55% n=149) said they would with a further 30 % (n=82) unsure. There were myriad ways in which the community would like to use the space, from sharing skills such as sour dough bread making, to teaching yoga, creating art installations, accessingshared office space, and establishing access to photography, filming and editing studios. They would like to see soundproof spaces for band rehearsals, space for writing, space for teaching furniture making, restoration and upcycling. Some would like to provide talks and lectures, run design workshops, run dance classes, meditation, and mindfulness classes, while others said they would like to attend them.

"At our school (Mount Albert Grammar) we do not have a theatre or space to perform any of our cultural, dance drama and music performances instead we have to book out another schools space

and it would be so awesome to have a local placethat would provide an arena for us to perform for our friends and family and community."

"A share space mechanical workshop for teaching motorcycle maintenance. And the joy of doing it yourself. It would be as much about mental health as it would be aboutlearning to use your hands."

To make it work, the community say there needs to be a diverse range and mix of arts, cultural, heritage, wellbeing, and creative activities, including classes, spaces for temporaryuse and spaces for permanent use. They see the café, performance, exhibition, retail, and permanent users as helping to create the heart of the Building, with space for casual and temporary users to meet, connect, create, learn and teach.

The community want Building One to be a community asset in perpetuity. As this is an opportunity for interim use while the building is vacant and its future use is investigated, respondents were asked what the minimum number of years they thought might be needed if it were to be viable as an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeinghub. Most people would like to see Building One used as a community asset in perpetuity. Nonetheless suggestions raged between 1 and fifteen years, with the median and average, 5years.

Most saw the advantages of creating a community asset and arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub as outweighing any challenges. Those who raised challenges, tended also toidentify solutions. When asked if they foresee any drawbacks, concerns, or challenges of turning Building One into a hub, most said they could not. Of those who identified challenges, the primary concern was the length of time it would be made available to the community.

"This kind of site and building deserves a community voice and a place for expression on a longterm basis."

There were questions as to how the space will acknowledge our history, firstly in terms of Treaty responsibilities and secondly to make sure the history of the building is respected and not forgotten or destroyed. Those raising this suggested a partnership with iwi wouldhelp meet Treaty obligations and responsibilities. It was pointed out that it would need to be directed and curated well to ensure it meets theneeds of the community, the arts, cultural and wellbeing communities, and becomes a well-used space. There was concern that all people feel welcomed, including tangata whenua, vulnerable communities, those with mental health challenges, disabilities, on low incomes and those who do not speak English.

"It will need strong representation from all arts disciplines so that the space is not biased or spatially does not fulfil the needs of all the artists and arts communities."

It was suggested that it would need an artistic advisory board of iwi, diverse cultural ambassadors, artists, historians, and practitioners to help honour its history and to steer the areas of engagement, including community events, workshops, performances, projects and discussions. Some were concerned at the size of the space and whether there would be sufficient usersand community to fill it. Having it empty was not only seen as compromising its viability butits 'life'. As people were seen as essential to making the space come alive, making space affordable, accessible, and multi directional was seen as integral to bringing a sense of community.

"It is a huge space to fill to maintain that vibrancy."

A key concern related to the funding of Building One. It was acknowledged that the running costs, security and maintenance, along with any costs associated with repurposing the spacewould be

significant. The community want the space to remain truly accessible and affordable for all. Various ideas were postulated on how to make it sustainable. Some suggested a cross-subsidisation model with commercial and professional users subsidising arts and community users, particularly those who are unemployed. The community feels that commercial interests need to be balanced against notions of social capital so that commercialisation does not take over from the community.

There were questions about whether Building One might need earthquake proofing, andwhat the implications of that were. It was also noted that there might be security implications as the building is such a rabbit warren. While some were concerned that there might be issues with parking, others pointed outthat it is on good transport routes with good transport links, Lastly, it was pointed out that although there was a lack of space in the Central West and Auckland, it would be important to ensure that it did not result in other venues, such as Tapac, becoming unsustainable.

#### Conclusion

Overall, there is widespread support for Building One as an arts, creative, cultural, heritageand wellbeing hub. The building is significant to the community. It is one of the only heritage buildings in the area and is considered iconic. The community believes Building One connects us to our pastand that repurposing it as an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub honours itshistory as a psychiatric hospital and Creative Arts and Architectural school.

The community believes, with the right mix of activities, it could become an important community asset. Both survey respondents and those attending the open day said they would not only be likely to attend classes, performances, exhibitions and activities there, but over half would like to share their skills and knowledge with others in the Central Westand Auckland communities. They believe, if done well, it could become the heart of the Central West, and build a strong, vibrant arts and wellbeing community that enhances the lives of people in the community. The primary concerns are that it will be short-term, unsustainable, and unaffordable to community users and the arts community. They believe, however, that Building One couldbe sustainable and affordable if a cross subsidisation model is implemented. They see anyconcerns as far outweighed by the potential benefits.

In sum, there is overwhelming community support for Building One to become an arts, creative, cultural, heritage and wellbeing hub.

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