

# Saving the Town

HERITAGE TOOLKIT



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND  
POUHERE TAONGA

**Front cover image:**  
Dunedin Midwinter Carnival.  
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# INTRODUCTION

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

**T**he character of many of New Zealand's small towns and cities is strongly defined by their heritage buildings and old building stock. Compared with the larger towns and cities, slower growth in these places has seen fewer older buildings being demolished and fewer new buildings developed, meaning older buildings make up a higher proportion of the overall building stock.

These buildings give these towns and cities their unique identities. They are familiar to and often well loved by their local communities, both for their architectural beauty and for the stories they tell about local places. They have often been important sites of commerce, industry, worship or residence for many years. Their retention, reuse and preservation result in substantial benefits for many of these towns and cities, when their potential can be unlocked. As part of comprehensive, coordinated and collaborative efforts, they can become drivers of broader positive change in these places.

While these buildings may impart a unique character to small towns and cities, in contemporary New Zealand there are a growing number of challenges to their long-term utility and survival. These challenges affect not only individual owners and businesses, but also councils and the communities more generally.

One of the key challenges relates to changing regulatory requirements, particularly around the need for earthquake-strengthening and also the fire and accessibility upgrades that may be triggered independently or as a result of

earthquake-strengthening work. The Government's legislative changes following the Canterbury earthquakes have led to shorter timeframes to earthquake-strengthen buildings in high-risk seismic zones. In many small towns and cities, the costs of these upgrades in comparison to the potential future economic returns of the buildings will be difficult to reconcile. This increases the risk that many buildings will simply be demolished, many heritage buildings lost, and unique heritage areas, towns and cities irreversibly changed.

The repercussions of this challenge reach further than just the loss of heritage buildings. It also affects the integrity, viability and vibrancy of the places themselves, especially where buildings are left unmaintained or deteriorating or are demolished. With new buildings generally being far more expensive to lease than older ones, or where it is simply not financially viable to replace buildings at all, a proliferation of vacant sites can result.

The importance of older buildings as homes for the arts, cultural, creative, start-up and not-for-profit sectors and social/community groups and activities should not be underestimated. Nor should their potential for reduced business diversity, community services and cultural activities resulting from their demolition.

For many small towns and cities, meeting upgrade requirements is already a challenge, especially where there is low or negligible growth. A heightened sensitivity to perceptions of safety for employees and customers, and specific percentages of New Building Standard requirements for businesses, government agencies, insurers and banks, has led some businesses and service providers to relocate out of older buildings, either to newer buildings elsewhere or to leave some towns entirely. In some cases safety concerns or issues around the costs of upgrades appear to have influenced or justified decisions to downgrade services in small towns and cities. These decisions can have significant negative effects on small towns, where the loss of even one or two key services or businesses can substantially undermine accessibility, other businesses and local residents' quality of life. Frustratingly, such decisions are most often outside the control or influence of councils.

In many small towns and cities, the same lack of development that has resulted in the survival of older buildings now threatens their future survival. Low tenant demand, rental returns and capital gains, changing retail and business trends and fewer adaptive reuse options exacerbate the challenges presented by upgrade requirements in trying to maintain or enhance the financial viability of buildings. Without increased returns to offset upgrade costs, a growing number of buildings will become uneconomic, making their demolition more likely. Compounding this issue is the fact that the longer many buildings are empty and under-maintained, the higher are the costs of their rehabilitation and upgrading.

In some other locations, renewed urban growth is putting heritage at risk. The effects of strong urban growth are felt not only in the expansion and intensification of large centres like Auckland and Christchurch, but also as this growth spills over into small towns and cities within commuting distance, or those seen as alternative lifestyle choices to the major centres. While such growth can assist the reuse and retention of heritage buildings, factors such as rapid growth, property speculation, a lack of good strategic planning and guidance on how to integrate old and new, and insufficient provisions and incentives for protection can lead to negative outcomes for heritage. Building owners' and tenants' confidence in community and local and central government commitments to strategies for wide urban renewal, with a focus on the redevelopment of existing building stock, can influence their decisions on the future use of and investment in their buildings.

While these and other issues are certainly creating a challenging environment, recent developments in New Zealand and overseas have demonstrated that given the right incentives, direction, assistance and encouragement, significant positive heritage outcomes are possible. In fact, some places actually appear to have been able to create positive heritage restoration and adaptive reuse momentum on a broader scale out of a necessity to upgrade buildings. Others have been able to harness or encourage new growth in their places by focusing on development and tourism, for example, in or around their heritage buildings and identities. These success stories may not only deliver positive heritage results but also have much broader social, economic and cultural outcomes, transforming their respective towns and regions.

## PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

The purpose of this **Saving the Town** toolkit is to provide councils and community stakeholders with ideas for, suggestions on and information about a range of strategies, programmes and practical initiatives that can be used to take a proactive approach to facilitating and encouraging heritage retention, preservation and reuse.

The toolkit is based on the premise that positive outcomes are possible, even in the challenging contemporary environment, but that these will more often be guided by a comprehensive approach to areas rather than deal solely with individual buildings. For this reason, it is particularly focused on encouraging good collective heritage outcomes, where clusters of buildings in heritage precincts, areas, towns or even regions are preserved, adapted and upgraded. These area-based approaches tend to have more positive effects for heritage specifically, and the broader physical, economic, social and cultural regeneration of towns and cities.

The toolkit does not take a one-size-fits-all approach. It is not a prescriptive, checklist approach. Instead it provides a range of ideas for councils, building owners, project and town centre managers and other stakeholders to explore and adapt, acknowledging that each location will have individual dynamics and issues to address and unique advantages and opportunities they can leverage.

Case studies and examples are used to illustrate the nine different sections, to inspire and to encourage councils and stakeholders to adapt some of the successful initiatives elsewhere. Above all, the toolkit aims to encourage councils and stakeholders to experiment with new ideas and approaches to heritage preservation and reuse in their towns, given the positive outcomes that taking a new approach to challenges can have.

Achieving some good early adaptive reuses of key buildings not only builds momentum and morale, but is important because it helps to unlock further reuse options and investment opportunities in surrounding buildings for owners, developers and councils.







Oamaru has prioritised its Victorian Heritage Precinct, recognising its unique characteristics and collective charm.

PHOTO CREDIT: TOURISM WAITAKI

# 01

## THINK ABOUT PRIORITIES

It is an unfortunate reality that not all old buildings will be able to be saved.

Prioritising which buildings or areas should be focused on involves considering a range of factors, including significance, potential, connections to broader identity and the receptiveness of owners.

Resources and energy should be strongly directed at and aligned with these prioritised buildings and areas, to best ensure successful regeneration and the most effective use of time and investment.

Prioritisation need not entail a full or permanent abandonment of buildings or areas: thought should also be given to stabilisation, staging and sequencing.



## Some buildings or areas will prove easy to upgrade and revitalise, but for most small towns and cities it will be difficult to upgrade and save every old building.

On one hand there are unlikely to be sufficient public and private resources to invest in every building, particularly where government timeframes for earthquake-strengthening are short. Some buildings will be in locations that could offer more profitable uses.

There will also be many cases where the owners lack enthusiasm for or a commitment to saving buildings, and the focus may instead shift to reducing the negative effects of their demolition or encouraging the sale of the buildings to new, more motivated owners. The redevelopment of some buildings will require more time than others. For example, some buildings may need other key buildings around them to be redeveloped for the right opportunities and economic circumstances to arise. In such circumstances, building owners may need support to retain these buildings in a holding action.

On the other hand, there will be cases where buildings are too degraded or unsafe to save, or where structural issues are too challenging for them to be saved in an economically feasible manner, even when there is a desire to do so. Some will have been built for highly specialised uses with no realistic adaptive reuse options. Some will just be not worth saving when all the factors are considered. And some buildings will be lost to earthquakes, other natural disasters, fires and the like over the course of the coming decades.

For this reason it is important to prioritise what is most important to save and direct resources to these buildings and/or areas. The prioritised buildings and areas should be the focus of regeneration efforts.

Of course this prioritisation also involves making some tough decisions, directly or indirectly, about the buildings and/or areas for which there will be no specific preservation efforts. While this does not entail actively promoting demolition, it does mean being prepared to potentially accept losses or changes in these areas while resources are directed elsewhere.

There are numerous factors that should guide considerations of what and how to prioritise. Any prioritisation will likely be quite complex and rest on competing variables. The following factors are not exhaustive and will not always align easily, but they should help give some direction on where to start thinking about this issue.

### **Which are the most significant buildings/ structures/streetscape features/areas?**

The level of heritage significance and the townscape contribution of heritage buildings should be a key factor in prioritising efforts to save them.

There are many elements of 'significance'. The most obvious might be that the buildings or places are important to a community for architectural, cultural and landmark reasons, they are an important part of a town's history or identity, they are uncommon or rare, or they have connections to important local, regional or national themes or events. However, a wide range of other factors might make a building or area significant.



## Never underestimate the importance of having motivated building owners.

Working with Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (Heritage New Zealand), the community, building owners and other stakeholders such as local historians and architectural experts is a good starting point for formally identifying the most important buildings or areas in a place. Heritage assessments of the buildings or areas should be completed as part of the initial prioritisation. These will ensure that, as part of any public consultation, the heritage significance of the individual buildings and areas is considered.

It is worth recognising that decisions on prioritisation are inherently political. Irrespective of any prioritisation, the demolition of older buildings in non-prioritised areas may spark negative reactions from parts of the community. Involving the community in a robust process of prioritisation and clearly communicating the reasons for decisions may reduce some of this conflict.

### Which buildings and/or areas have the greatest potential for successful adaptation or transformation?

Prioritisation should include a consideration of which buildings, sites and areas have the greatest potential for being restored, earthquake-strengthened and put to new and interesting compatible uses (see also Section 3 – Think About Adaptive Reuse). It should look at which buildings, sites and areas create the biggest 'bang for buck' for quick wins and cost-effective returns. Those buildings with high visibility, and where restoration and upgrades may help stimulate other investment around them, should be specifically identified.

### Which buildings and/or areas best tell the story about a place?

Related to Section 7 – Think About a Point of Difference – any prioritisation should consider placing importance on the buildings or areas that contribute most positively to the story an area or place is trying to tell about itself. These may be buildings traditionally associated with a place's identity, or buildings that can directly or indirectly be used to emphasise a new or different image for the place.

Fort Lane has successfully made an asset out of the backs of heritage buildings.



### Where is the best potential for cooperation?

Never underestimate the importance of having motivated building owners who want to work together to achieve a constructive, heritage-focused vision.

Given that most heritage buildings around the country are owned by private individuals or groups, working with the private sector across the board is very important (it is covered at length in other parts of this toolkit). However, even at this early stage of prioritisation, identifying owners and stakeholders such as businesses, business associations and other advocacy groups who are most keen to collaborate is important. Cooperative owners will help facilitate and potentially accelerate change. It will always be easier to get positive outcomes with people who want to work together than it will from those who do not.

Some of these groups and owners will be obvious, as they may have already worked together on other projects. Others may be keen to work on a new idea, be new to town or even have tried unsuccessfully to reach out in the past. Once the people and groups who want to work collaboratively have been identified, these relationships should be nurtured. Relationships are hugely important in this area of heritage. These people will be the ones doing most of the physical work on the ground, investing in the vision, and they will be the best advocates for the project. Bring these people together and foster new connections between them as much as possible to maximise the positive potential of collaboration.

There will be situations where key buildings are owned by people who lack the finances, are cautious, like working alone or do not agree with a joint vision. It is important to not give up or reprioritise based on this resistance alone. Sometimes the right incentives, evidence that positive momentum is being built, peer pressure from other owners, time, or even changes in circumstances or ownership can transform the

potential for collaboration on specific buildings or areas. In some cases it is possible to work around individual owners.

The point here is that while any prioritisation should target buildings and areas that have the best potential for collaboration, these conditions can also be actively cultivated over time. Patience is often key. The vision does not have to be abandoned permanently just because all owners cannot be brought on board straight away.

### Remain pragmatic and flexible

As indicated above, any prioritisation needs to be pragmatic and flexible. It is important to be able to react to changing circumstances or adapt to priorities when new opportunities arise.



Sometimes positive developments are a question of time. Changes in conditions and ownership can result in buildings becoming more attractive or feasible projects and this may influence changes in priorities. Prioritisation processes should consider how to deal with those buildings and areas that are not identified as immediate priorities to avoid their loss, particularly if they have some heritage significance or streetscape value and longer-term potential. Remember, once buildings are demolished this potential is lost forever.

Wherever possible, ensure that those owners who are trying to do the right thing are not discouraged from doing so. Some of the suggestions elsewhere in this toolkit can also provide benefits to all owners of heritage buildings, irrespective of whether those buildings are identified as priorities or not. For example, some of the non-financial incentives discussed in Section 5 – Think About Incentives –

can benefit a wide range of owners, particularly by making projects easier to progress, and need not only be applied to prioritised projects.

It may also be valuable to investigate alternative solutions to demolition, to 'buy time' for buildings. For example, it may be possible to work with owners and council building services teams to find ways to satisfy legal requirements or regulatory timeframes by stabilising and 'mothballing' buildings in the short to medium term, rather than demolishing them straight away. Financial or other incentives may be able to be used to defer such decisions and prevent losses that will be regretted in the longer term.

Any prioritisation exercise can also include scope for other buildings and areas to be considered in the future. Prioritising one building, a group of buildings or an area over another does not mean that those of lesser priority are not worth saving, and prioritisation does not need to be a permanent abandonment of buildings or areas. Once successful outcomes and positive momentum have been built in a group of buildings or one area, it may be possible to shift the focus to other buildings or areas. In this way, prioritisation may also involve an element of staging or sequencing, for example, where different areas are prioritised over the course of a council's long-term plan.

Once the prioritisation stage is completed, it is important to refocus efforts and resources on the identified priorities in the short to medium term. The following sections provide further ideas on ways to direct energy and resources to these priorities. In the longer term, changes to documents such as district plans may be required to reflect this prioritisation, in terms of which buildings or areas are formally protected and the rules in place for doing so, including how adaptation and reuse are encouraged.



Where some would have prioritised restoring buildings in the central city, The Tannery has become one of the city's heritage success stories based around adaptive reuse of an industrial complex in Christchurch's suburbs.

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTCHURCHNZ

## Case Study 1.1 Christchurch City Council Public Appeal for the Reuse of Heritage Buildings

As the owner of many heritage buildings and structures, the Christchurch City Council faced challenges after the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010/2011 in assessing which buildings could be salvaged and the funding of subsequent repairs and restoration.

Although the council had completed numerous high-profile restorations by 2018, many had still not been repaired. Constrained council resources meant prioritisation was necessary on how funds should be spent.

In response the council took a new approach, launching a programme seeking expressions of interest from individuals and groups keen to use and/or help to fund the restoration of one or more of the 17 buildings and structures in question. The innovative programme sought to raise awareness of the buildings available and prioritise restorative works by partnering with the private and voluntary sectors to drive projects forward with secured tenants or leases or resources from other partners.

A public campaign was used to generate interest in the buildings. It was supported by a website with information on each building, including a summary, location map, photographs, condition report, heritage statement, property statement, future use arrangements and information on legislation and policy in relation to the building. Closing dates were set for expressions of interest. Council staff would then

assess each building to see how it aligned with its policy, goals and aspirations for the place, as well as each project's financial viability.

While the motivation for the programme was specific to Christchurch, this type of open 'call to arms' could be pursued elsewhere. It could be particularly useful where a council owns buildings that it cannot fund in the short term but wishes to retain and restore. A public campaign for partners can help in driving potential new uses for buildings, securing tenants that give the council greater confidence to invest in the properties, establishing new use arrangements and/or increasing the resources available to the council for restoration. The approach could be replicated with a diverse range of council heritage assets, where partnerships (or even disposals of assets to responsible tenants) could see buildings restored more quickly than the council's own resources would allow.





The Sign of Takahe.  
PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

A cluster of heritage buildings has become the site of a farmers' market, bar and offices at Catalina Bay, Hobsonville.

PHOTO CREDIT: WILLIS BOND & CO.

# 02

## THINK COLLECTIVELY

Focusing on areas rather than individual buildings can assist preservation and revitalisation.

A collective approach should seek to understand and address the underlying issues preventing the optimal use of buildings in specific areas.

Collective approaches encourage cooperation and collaboration among a range of building owners and stakeholders to find solutions to issues and challenges.

There are benefits delivered by hubs and clusters of projects, for both improvements to amenity and the positive cumulative effects of growing business or residential activity.



New Regent Street has developed its own distinct identity, due to a combination of its heritage architecture, urban design investment and the interesting mix of businesses.

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTCHURCHNZ

**One of the central tenets of this toolkit is that a collective approach to the preservation, reuse and revitalisation of heritage buildings is highly valuable. In the past few decades there has been a growing number of examples – internationally and locally – of successful area or ‘place-based’ revitalisation projects that have the preservation and restoration of heritage buildings as a key component.**

Even where a town project is not to the same scale as well-known examples, there are good reasons for taking a more collective approach.

**It encourages understanding and addressing of the underlying issues for and constraints to preservation and restoration**

Taking a collective approach requires a look at the bigger picture of what is going on in a town or location and how this affects its heritage buildings. While it is always important to consider the issues for each heritage building, and work with the owner on a case-by-case approach to address them, it is also essential to understand the broader factors that might be inhibiting positive heritage outcomes. It is important to look beyond heritage-specific issues and think holistically about the more general challenges that building owners, developers, businesses and other building users face.

Typically, the issues that lead to any individual heritage building being vacant, under-utilised or at risk are broader than the building itself, and are often also quite distinct from specific heritage issues. Low economic growth and business confidence, changing business patterns (particularly for retail), planning or zoning constraints, a negative public image or perception, high rates of crime and vandalism, and safety and accessibility issues are just some of the issues that can affect the vitality of an area and have negative repercussions for individual heritage buildings. Working with owners and other stakeholders in an area to ascertain the potential underlying constraints

is recommended. The importance of this is covered further in Section 4 – Think About Engagement.

In these circumstances, targeting issues on an area-wide basis can be more effective for both costs and outcomes. Removing some of the impediments or barriers for all heritage buildings in an area can end up encouraging and facilitating change in numerous buildings, rather than just one individual target. It can motivate and incentivise multiple owners to capitalise on the changes by investing in their buildings, and in doing so expand the potential benefits for an area. It also reduces the risk of individual buildings remaining vacant and isolated after they have been upgraded, with all the investment and hard work put into them going to waste. Such failed cases can strongly discourage other owners in an area from investing in upgrading their buildings.

**It encourages cooperation and collaborative approaches to problem-solving**

Taking a collective approach necessitates cooperation and collaboration, something that this toolkit promotes as a key ingredient in contemporary heritage preservation and the protection and revitalisation of small towns and cities.

Finding solutions to many of the above issues requires collaboration, not just between councils and building owners but also among building owners and with a range of stakeholders. This collaboration should be encouraged wherever possible, and need not have the council at the centre. Often the council’s best role is in



providing an overview and framework and facilitating and connecting other stakeholders, who are then able to develop ideas and advance proposals.

Opportunities for cooperation and collaboration have the potential to lead to new, innovative solutions to challenges and reduce the burden of costs on any one partner. Approaches to challenges that have the buy-in of a number of building owners and provide them with both individual and collective benefits are more likely to be successful and sustainable in the long term. Working collectively with a group of owners also reduces the potential for criticism of the council about favouritism towards specific individuals or projects. It is important that there is a sense of collective commitment.

There can also be more practical reasons to explore opportunities for collaboration. Numerous heritage buildings in a town centre or street block that were built at a similar time may face similar, specific issues related to the deterioration of building fabric and their construction methods or materials. Even where these issues can be dealt with on an individual basis, a collective approach may provide better, more cost-effective outcomes.

For example, a coordinated approach to earthquake-strengthening multiple unreinforced masonry buildings that share party walls in a block could see better seismic performance levels overall, a reduction in the amount of work required by each owner, a decrease in the time required to improve public safety, and less business disruption (including to neighbours). There may also be savings in consultant and construction costs provided by scale and competition.

Of course there can be challenges or barriers to a collective, coordinated approach, which often discourage building owners and developers from participating in or pursuing potential opportunities. Councils can play an important role in facilitating this type of approach by providing leadership, confidence that there is support for a collective and integrated approach, incentives for participation, and flexibility in consenting and applying regulations that do not typically envisage collaboration between owners and across multiple buildings.

### **It recognises the clustering benefits of restoration and reuse projects**

A third reason to take a collective, area-based approach is that clusters of projects in a distinct area can have much greater impacts than individual projects scattered across a town or district.



On one hand, having multiple heritage building projects completed close to each other can have a greater visual effect, positively affecting the look and feel of the area. It can be surprising how much an area can be visually transformed by only one or two key projects.

On the other hand, there are benefits that go beyond simple amenity improvements, particularly when a project also results in new business, cultural or residential activity and increased foot traffic and visitors. The more projects that happen close to each other, the more potential there is for them to start having cumulative benefits. Hubs or groups of activities may start to build off each other's energy and investment, encouraging further growth and development. When dispersed, such benefits of clustering can be lost.

Importantly, the progress of multiple projects can start shifting the dynamics of a place. It creates confidence and a momentum of its own, even before substantive economic or other benefits start to occur. Creating a 'buzz' in an area, including through temporary projects such as one-off events, can make people aware that change is underway. It can start the process of redefining how a town or area is perceived by residents, potential visitors or investors, and then re-shape its direction. An investment in some public relations and marketing expertise around such a project, to reframe how the area is perceived, can be money well spent. This investment can help to better leverage opportunities to reposition an area or town and ensure that the potential for change from individual projects is collectively maximised.

The focus on the cluster of buildings in Oamaru Victorian Precinct has encouraged businesses like walking tours to establish.

PHOTO CREDIT: TOURISM WAITAKI

## Case Study 2.1 Bank Street, Whangarei

Whāngārei's Bank Street presents an alternative example of grassroots community efforts to pull together a collective, area-based approach to revitalising a heritage streetscape.

Initiated through a discussion at a community arts centre in the area, and building on an existing base of Fairtrade certified workplaces, a number of local businesses began working together to encourage a better community identity built on a shared passion for their street's heritage character. Working closely with a councillor advocate, the group has worked to inspire others in the community to bring the council along on the journey as a partner and investor.

In a three-year period the group has been successful in securing a series of small improvement projects and building its social and political capital with the council. Additional projects are now planned that will deliver more amenity improvements and further showcase the area's heritage. This incremental approach, gradually building trust, confidence and capability, is often necessary, particularly when revitalisation efforts are being led by those running their own businesses or with other commitments.

Tenacity and patience are also important attributes of this example. The group has not always felt it has the support of key council staff and at times has struggled to get traction for its ideas. While this situation has improved in recent years as staff have changed, key players in the group have had to remain motivated for long periods with less support from the council for their heritage revitalisation goals than they had hoped.

This challenge is relatively common. Efforts to take a collective approach may not always be met by a receptive council or be achieved in the timeframe that stakeholders want. Ensuring that groups of businesses and owners remain motivated and positive in the face of delays or disinterest from councils can be challenging, but is essential to longer-term success.

Focusing on incremental goals and projects that can be achieved with little or no council involvement can be a strategy for keeping those involved motivated during down times. In this situation it is important to continue cultivating relationships with the council, particularly as staff change and new opportunities to advance the project may arise, as has occurred in the Whāngārei example. It is also important to identify a strong, committed political champion who can help to leverage such opportunities and generally work to develop greater support for the idea within the council.

## Case Study 2.2 Reefton

The revival of historic Reefton has been cast in the mainstream press as an overnight success due largely to the verve of one well-disposed investor. In truth it's been 30 years in the making and has drawn heavily on community efforts and a couple of crucial outside alliances – very much a case of 'united we stand'.

Located in the Inangahua River valley north-east of Greymouth, Reefton was briefly a gold-rush-era boom town. In 1888, it became the first town in the Southern Hemisphere to be lit by electricity. Forestry and coal subsequently sustained the town, but by the late 20th century Reefton was battling the same issues that afflicted other West Coast townships, including a declining population, unemployment and shuttered stores.

By contrast, contemporary Reefton has become a destination town and is increasingly attracting entrepreneurial and creative people to put down roots. A key factor in that turnaround has been the rehabilitation and repurposing of its Victorian buildings, along with the restoration of sites connected to its historical industries. Registered as a Heritage New Zealand historic area, with a handful of listed buildings, Reefton was awarded Tohu Whenua status in 2018.

There were various heritage-focused community efforts to re-animate Reefton in the 1980s and 1990s. The transformational initiative was the 'Reefton Shop Front' project of the early 2000s, when a community group known as Inangahua Tourism Promotions

lobbied Development West Coast (DWC) for funding to rehabilitate historic shop fronts on the main street, most of which had been modified over the years. DWC was a trust established by the Government in 2001 to offset the loss of income from milling native timber on the coast.

Driven by a hard core of committed locals, the initiative was a response to two significant obstacles to a heritage-led revival: reluctance by lenders to invest in a town in decline; and a sentiment among some in the community that progress for Reefton would be about new buildings, not old ones.



The Reefton Distilling Co. has been a core business in revitalising the town.

PHOTO CREDIT: REEFTON DISTILLING CO.

Reefton's main street is made up of an interesting range of businesses in heritage buildings.

PHOTO CREDIT: TOURISM WEST COAST





The first challenge was answered when DWC provided a loan to the community group, which it then on-loaned to individual business owners to 'do up' their 19th century buildings. When that first phase of restoration and repurposing proved successful, it set the tone.

"We found that as we stepped forward, other business owners said, 'Right, I need to be part of this,'" noted Paul Thomas, a local heritage advocate and joint owner of the Broadway Tearooms and the restored 1873 National Bank. He described the DWC investment as a "leap of faith" in community-led economic development that paid off. "A few of us had a vision and drove really hard, and it gathered momentum."

In recent years the cudgels have been taken up by businessman John Bougen, co-founder of Dress Smart, who has bought and restored several historic Reefton buildings. In 2018, Reefton-born Christchurch businesswoman Patsy Bass co-founded a high-end distillery and tasting bar in the restored 1870s Haralds General Store, with a range themed on Reefton's pioneering characters.

At the same time, a variety of individuals and organisations, from the Department of Conservation to the Reefton Historic Trust, have collaborated on restoring landmark public buildings as well as historic infrastructure in surrounding areas, consolidating Reefton's broader heritage appeal.

"Because we've worked collectively and achieved success, we've now got a thriving town where people want to remain and where others want to come," said Thomas.

**– By Matt Philp**

## Case Study 2.3 Britomart, Auckland and the Warehouse Precinct, Dunedin

Auckland's Britomart area was formed from the 1870s when Point Britomart was levelled and the land surrounding it was reclaimed from the harbour. Soon after, the area's proximity to the expanding port and other commercial activities saw it become an important trading centre. At its height the area housed many large warehouses, commercial premises, a railway station and the city's Chief Post Office.

However, by the middle of the 20th century the area was falling into disrepair. The train station was replaced with a bus terminal, a large car park was constructed, and the surrounding buildings became increasingly derelict as businesses relocated to other parts of the city.

From the 1970s the heritage buildings repeatedly faced the risk of demolition as the large, run-down area became an increasingly attractive redevelopment proposition. In the mid-1990s public opposition to one of these redevelopment proposals by the Auckland City Council (the area's underlying landowner) began a process that would eventually lead to these buildings' restoration and adaptive reuse, rather than their demolition.

Following additional consultation with the public, the council undertook a two-stage process to redevelop and reuse the site. The first involved the adaptive reuse of the Chief Post Office as a train station within the city's expanding public transport network.

The second stage involved the restoration and adaptive reuse of the existing heritage buildings on site, the protection of the area's special character, and the development of new buildings and a public space to create a more coherent identity and vibrant mixed-use precinct of shops, offices and apartments in line with an area master plan.

Rather than undertake this development itself, the then Auckland City Council ran a competitive bid process for the long-term rights to own, develop and manage the Britomart development area. At the end of this term (100 years) the area will be returned to the Auckland City Council.

This restoration and adaptive reuse was guided by conservation plans for each of the heritage and character buildings. These were developed by the council and included as part of the competition and subsequent development agreement. They detailed specific remedial works, including the reinstatement of parapets, ground floor fenestration and the adaptation of existing loading docks, to protect and enhance the unique characteristics of these buildings. To this day, the conservation plans remain important documents in managing the heritage fabric of the buildings and maintaining the look and feel of the entire area.

The restoration of the first historic buildings began in 2004 and most projects have now been completed. The restored buildings form a key component of the character and commercial floor space of the thriving area, which is now home to more than 4000 workers,

The Britomart project has repurposed buildings from a range of periods.

PHOTO CREDIT: TROMP L'OEIL



Britomart has become a popular destination for Aucklanders.

numerous retail, food and beverage outlets, and the expanding transportation hub. Improvements to public spaces such as footpaths, roads and communal spaces have accompanied the restoration and new construction, to create a welcoming and interesting environment.

The model has been a success for Britomart's heritage. The buildings have not only been saved, but also restored and upgraded to a very high standard. In part this relates to contractual responsibilities, which require the restoration of the 18 heritage-listed buildings on site in accordance with their conservation plans.

That said, the nature of the agreement has incentivised the developer to take a long-term approach to creating an attractive and unique precinct, in order to extract the maximum returns via leases from the area. Britomart's heritage and historic architectural character have been harnessed as an integral part of a neighbourhood identity that creates a sense of place and point of difference that are used to attract visitors, workers, businesses and residents. Britomart has been successfully transformed from a disparate collection of run-down historic buildings into a cohesive heritage precinct. It has been consciously managed and crafted by the developer in terms of the physical changes, the selection of tenants and the curation of activities that occupy the buildings and spaces.

While the ownership model is not replicable in all locations, Britomart demonstrates the potential for successful public-private partnerships. It shows how commercial developers can deliver good heritage outcomes in an entire area when working within the right framework and provided with the right incentives.

### **Britomart, Auckland and Warehouse Precinct, Dunedin**

At the other end of the country, a similar former portside commercial-industrial area has enjoyed a similar renaissance using a very different model.

Like Britomart, the area in Dunedin now known as the Warehouse Precinct emerged from harbour reclamations starting in the late 1870s, and in subsequent decades became populated with grand Victorian warehouses, head offices and other commercial enterprises.

While the area remained an economic powerhouse in the city until the mid-20th century, a long period of decline resulting from changes in transportation, de-industrialisation and stagnation of the city's economy eroded its economic vitality. The once busy and productive area became increasingly beset by long-term vacancy and marginal uses. A growing number of buildings were demolished and the vacant sites were used only for car parking, leaving unsightly gaps in the streetscape.

A fragmented leasehold ownership impeded efforts to develop more comprehensive redevelopment plans. Efforts to repurpose the area through a rezoning for large-scale retail activities in the 1990s only made the situation worse. Restricting the potential uses of the area's historic buildings compounded the issues of dereliction, particularly when the envisaged activities did not establish in the area, prompting growing calls to demolish the increasingly unsightly buildings.

Then, from around 2010, a small group of motivated, heritage-sensitive building owners in the area began lobbying a more receptive and heritage-friendly council for change. A small number of successful adaptive reuse projects in the area gave the council and other building owners confidence that a new approach could be timely. The council subsequently developed the Warehouse Precinct Revitalisation Plan, together with stakeholders and the broader community, to ensure a staged approach to revitalising the area. The plan sought to address the underlying issues constraining the reuse of the historic buildings and create targeted incentives and interventions to encourage greater private investment in the area.

In a relatively short space of time, the plan succeeded in kick-starting the transformation of the area. Between 2012 and 2017 the council's \$1.6m investment leveraged an estimated \$50m of private investment in the area. At-risk buildings were secured or upgraded and a growing number of buildings were restored and reused, with hundreds of new workers and residents moving in. What was once an area struggling with high vacancy rates and dereliction has become one of the city's hotspots, home to a hotel, numerous cafés and bars, boutique producers and cottage industries, technology businesses, professional offices and start-up enterprises.



Vogel Street in the Warehouse Precinct has become a popular Dunedin neighbourhood.

PHOTO CREDIT: REWA PENE

The Dunedin City Council has attributed this success to a number of factors, including a focus on relationships with the area's stakeholders, building trust, promoting confidence and positivity, and removing barriers to the reuse and development of the precinct's heritage buildings. A 'red-carpet' approach was rolled out for projects in the area and a case manager was nominated to help in the negotiations for various council approvals.

Looking to the future, changes to the district plan zoning for the area were initiated. The council focused on making it easier for the private sector to revitalise the area, rather than relying on its own projects or investment to drive the transformation. The success of these measures and the key role of private-sector capital demonstrated the latent potential for development in the area, waiting for conditions to change.

Similarly, the Warehouse Precinct Revitalisation Plan did not place the same emphasis on public realm enhancements that many council-led urban

revitalisation projects have. This related in part to the council's constrained financial situation, but also to uncertainty about the types of activity that might move into the area and the desire to not over-design it at an early stage. While modest upgrades were made to improve pedestrian amenity, safety and convenience, and more are planned, the Dunedin City Council focused on providing financial and non-financial incentives to enable private owners to enhance and reuse their buildings.

Despite the differing approaches – Britomart using a single developer to manage the overall revitalisation, and the Dunedin City Council acting as coordinator and broker, facilitating relationships to align multiple private development aspirations and proposals with an overall area plan – both have led to similarly positive heritage outcomes. While the Dunedin example may seem less cohesive, comprehensive and affluent than that of Britomart, it can also be more easily replicated in other small towns and cities around the country.

Adaptive reuse can attract new people to buildings and areas they might not have previously visited. The Tannery, Christchurch.

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTCHURCHNZ

# 03

## THINK ABOUT ADAPTIVE REUSE

The activities undertaken in many heritage buildings will need to change in order to have these buildings used and preserved.

Sympathetic adaptive reuse can deliver substantial benefits for individual buildings and broader areas.

Building owners, councils, Heritage New Zealand and other stakeholders should work together to ascertain, facilitate and promote the most sensitive alternative uses for heritage buildings.

A coordinated approach to adaptive reuse can maximise the potential for these uses to complement broader revitalisation efforts.

Pop-up and interim uses should also be considered as part of efforts to get buildings used and offer opportunities to trial activities and create greater vibrancy in the short term, before more permanent changes are made.



**T**he future of many heritage buildings lies in adaptive reuse, particularly if their original uses no longer have any demand. Achieving a sympathetic adaptive reuse relies on those involved having an understanding of what gives the building or area its heritage significance and distinctive character, and working with this when considering the uses and alterations that are necessary to make the building viable.

Sometimes what are seen as constraints and challenges are in fact opportunities to come up with solutions and innovations that set a building and area apart from competitors. Compromise is unavoidable; in the best examples of adaptive reuse, the modern layers that are added further enhance the heritage values of the buildings.

Sometimes, in order to create or build on momentum and confidence or to stimulate the redevelopment of other buildings and the wider area, it may be necessary to focus on the benefits of allowing more alterations to a significant building than would be considered appropriate if assessing the adverse impacts in isolation.

This section discusses how to encourage adaptive reuse and maximise the benefits of adapting buildings generally, rather than focusing on the factors that make individual building projects successful. For more information on adaptive reuse, see the Heritage New Zealand brochure: [www.heritage.org.nz/resources/adaptive-reuse](http://www.heritage.org.nz/resources/adaptive-reuse)

More advice on managing and changing heritage places can be found in the Heritage New Zealand sustainable management series: [www.heritage.org.nz/resources/sustainable-management-guides](http://www.heritage.org.nz/resources/sustainable-management-guides)

### **Consider the most sensitive alternative uses for heritage buildings and encourage these changes**

On one hand, it is necessary to consider the types of use (activities) that can take place in a building that will best preserve its heritage fabric and values. It is usually unavoidable that alterations will need to be made to a building to enable a viable reuse. However, if there is a clear understanding of the relative levels of significance of the fabric and features of the building, change should be focused on what is of lesser value so that the unnecessary loss of significant fabric can be avoided. New uses that require the least intrusive changes should be prioritised and expert advice sought on how to make informed compromises where changes need to occur.

On the other hand, it is necessary to consider which uses are most feasible from a structural or building perspective and which are actually financially viable. This includes considering the types of space for which there may be demand now or in the future.

For example, while adapting a building to apartments may be the most sensitive option from a heritage perspective, the high costs of residential conversion may make this use financially unviable, particularly in a low-return market. The change of use's higher seismic requirements (67% of the New Building Standard) may be too difficult to meet in a way that is sensitive to the building. A better compromise may be a different type of commercial activity, such as a restaurant, bar or office, that may not require the same levels of upgrade.



## “ It is worth thinking outside the box. Consider what new uses could be attracted to the buildings.

Councils can play an important role in influencing these choices by providing clear information on the upgrade requirements for different changes of use. This information can assist owners to make good decisions about uses that are feasible, affordable and sympathetic to their buildings.

Building owners and potential tenants are normally responsible for identifying alternative uses for buildings. However, councils and other stakeholders and organisations can also assist this process in a broader sense, particularly when they are seeking to facilitate change in an area and to a number of buildings. They may be able to assist by creating an overall master plan for how they see the area working and the types of use that could support this. They can help connect heritage specialists, building owners, potential tenants, architects and designers, and other stakeholders like businesses, to establish which uses might present the best options for buildings. Workshopping sessions (discussed in Section 4 – Think About Engagement) may be a good way to do this.

Councils can also provide different incentives, dispensations or infrastructure and amenity improvements to further encourage specific uses for buildings and/or areas. For example, wider footpaths for outdoor dining and a more attractive pedestrian environment can complement the changes that building owners are making in an area earmarked for greater hospitality use. Rules and charges that enable the use of footpaths for dining and signs would also assist businesses to get established.

### **Consider which new uses are most beneficial to the area or town**

When considering alternative uses, it is important to consider which ones might complement other activities in an area or in other parts of a town. There is little point in encouraging the same types of use if there is not a strong demand for additional space. Doing so will only increase the potential of relocating tenants from elsewhere and shifting vacancy problems from one area to another. This is not a viable solution for ‘Saving the Town’.

Instead, it is worth thinking outside the box. Consider what new uses could be attracted to the buildings, area or town. Investigate whether there are industries that could be expanded or need additional space. There may be other, non-commercial uses that could be encouraged into the area, such as residential or educational activities that might currently use vacant spaces. It is also valuable to think about the uses that could be attracted to the buildings or area that would further enhance the overall point of difference or story places are trying to tell about themselves (Section 7 – Think About a Point of Difference).

Sometimes these uses are unexpected. Engaging businesses, stakeholders and the community in exploring the options can bring forward a range of new ideas. Being open to these new ideas and trying new things is important. Keeping the options as broad as possible is also worthwhile, as unexpected uses can often emerge as an area regenerates and evolves.

### **Check whether district plan rules and other regulations support adaptive reuse**

Having a planning framework that encourages adaptive reuse is important. While most district plans have historically focused on reducing the risks of negative effects on heritage values from changes to buildings, such as alterations and demolition, they do not always enable sensitive adaptive reuse.



Objectives and policies are often silent on adaptive reuse and rules do not differentiate positive alterations for the purpose of adaptive reuse from other types of alteration. While this type of differentiation might not always be easy to make, it is a factor that some councils have been investigating. There is a risk that without this differentiation, or a strong policy framework encouraging adaptive reuse, efforts to reuse buildings will be slowed and confidence in the regeneration of the wider area affected.

Once the most appropriate activities for the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings have been identified, whether they are sufficiently enabled by the local district plan needs to be considered. Changes to zoning rules may be required if these potential activities are not currently permitted within the zone in which the buildings are located. Other changes to, or exemptions from, development standards may also be required for these activities, such as those relating to parking, set-backs, minimum/maximum heights and glazing percentages.

Even with an appropriately enabling district plan, many projects will still require resource consent. It should be recognised that applying for consent is an uncertain process and increases costs, which will discourage some developers from even trying to change the use of their buildings. Requiring consent may also send a message to building owners or developers that efforts to preserve heritage buildings by finding new uses for them are not valued. Providing as enabling a planning regime as possible will be particularly important if the goal is to encourage and enable the adaptive reuse of a

number of similar buildings in a single area. If changes to the planning regime cannot be made, coaching owners through processes and having an enabling outlook, as outlined in Section 6 – Think About ‘Red Carpet, Not Red Tape’ – will be even more important.

It is also necessary to weigh up the broader impacts of enabling new activities. These changes may have distributional or other effects such as reverse sensitivity (the vulnerability of established activities like industry to complaints from newly establishing, more sensitive land uses such as residential or other noise-sensitive activities), or traffic and parking demands that need to be considered and addressed or mitigated. In some situations, enabling an activity in a zone could actually increase the incentive to demolish the heritage building, as a new, purpose-built building for that activity may be a more attractive option.

It is also important to check other associated council rules and regulations to see whether they are supportive of adaptive reuse and the uses proposed for an area. For example, returning to the earlier example of encouraging more hospitality uses into heritage buildings in an area, it may be necessary to review policies and charges for related activities such as outdoor dining permits, food and liquor licences and mobile trading. Once again, the overall goal should be to remove, streamline or simplify as many barriers as possible to the desired uses being achieved and activated.



Urbn Vino first used the Terminus building in Dunedin as a 'pop-up' activity to trial their business model during the building's adaptive reuse work (left), but later became permanent tenants in the completed building (right).

PHOTO CREDIT: URBN VINO.

### **Check what non-regulatory incentives are available**

It is important to investigate funding and other financial incentives that are provided by central government and regional, district and city councils to owners of heritage buildings, to support their regeneration, repair and strengthening. A wide range of assessments, reports, design work and physical works may be eligible, and understanding what is available and how and when to apply for it is an essential part of investigating the feasibility of a project. It is important for councils to provide non-regulatory incentives or strengthen existing incentives, and for interested parties to encourage local councils to provide such incentives through making submissions to their annual and long-term plans.

### **Consider temporary or interim uses**

It is important to build confidence that regeneration is achievable, and the sight of a large number of empty shops and buildings in a town can feed perceptions of decline and create a cycle that is hard to break. In locations where there is low rental demand and a proportionally high number of vacant spaces, pop-up uses may be a possibility to fill these spaces in the short term. These temporary initiatives offer an opportunity to bring activity back to heritage buildings at a low cost, while also creating some excitement and vibrancy in an area.

Pop-up activities or trials need not be restricted to buildings. Locations like alleys, car parks and other open spaces can also be successful. There is also a growing trend for councils to consider temporary trials in public spaces, such as vehicle-free zones and pocket parks, as a way of activating areas. Coordinated together, building pop-ups and temporary public space trials have the potential to transform places significantly at relatively low cost and risk.

Pop-up and temporary arrangements offer a number of benefits to those involved. While they typically do not result in large returns for building owners, having buildings periodically occupied can discourage vandalism and ensure that basic maintenance tasks are identified. They also encourage more people through the doors, of whom some might be future tenants. For new and start-up businesses they can be a great way to trial their ideas, particularly when they may be initially unable to commit, or nervous about committing, to long-term leases. Importantly, they also raise the profile of the buildings, show off their character and potential, engage the wider public with the buildings and areas, and offer a low-risk way to see how different business activities might work in a heritage building. There are numerous examples of pop-ups becoming permanent fixtures in locations that have encouraged pop-up use, although they are not always in the buildings they initially trialled or even occupied immediately after the trial.

While this potential for attracting permanent tenants is important and obviously a great outcome when it occurs, it should not be the main motivation for people to get involved, or the only measure of success. The bigger-picture benefits of pop-up activities are just as valuable, particularly where they are part of coordinated programmes or schemes. The variety that pop-ups offer and the interest they create can generate greater vibrancy in a town or place, particularly by encouraging new visitors. And as well as encouraging greater foot traffic, they can help shift perceptions, encouraging people to reconsider their preconceived notions of what could occur in buildings or areas, and their opinions of the overall value of those places.

While there are many benefits, there are a number of matters to consider in encouraging pop-ups in heritage buildings. Pop-up schemes tend to work best where there are a number of activities occurring at once: scale creates more interest and increases the motivation for people to visit. The quality of the pop-ups is also important. The better their quality, the more likely it is that people will want to visit and encourage others to visit. A coordinated programme is more likely to deliver benefits than individual, sporadic occurrences.

It is also worth recognising that making pop-up spaces happen is not always as easy as it seems. There is often significant facilitation work required with building owners and potential occupiers, as well as negotiations for any approvals that may be required. As with many elements of this toolkit, brokering flexibility around these rules and regulations can be integral to the success of a scheme. Having the right person to facilitate and assist is important. Also, while pop-ups may be low cost, the successful ones are seldom no cost; having some resources available to support initiatives will always help to ensure good outcomes.

Interim uses should also be considered. These are longer term than pop-up activities, but are not acknowledged as the best long-term uses of buildings. They are activities that occupy a space while the owner waits for the right tenant or economic conditions to maximise the building's potential. Interim uses typically require little investment from the owner but ensure the building is not empty and is generating some income. They are basically a holding pattern until a better use or the capital for investment can be found, and the arrangements may last for a number of years.

Facilitating interim uses may be the best short-term outcomes for some buildings, where the conditions are not yet suitable for more permanent adaptive reuse projects. In some circumstances they help to form the foundation for future transformation and growth that enables adaptive reuse. However, this should not be a condition of their selection, as the occupation of a building should be sufficient. Interim uses are more often preferable to empty buildings.

The best interim uses are those that require few physical alterations, avoid further damage to the heritage fabric of the building, and do not cause issues for neighbouring buildings or degrade the surrounding area in any way. While they may have few benefits, their effects should be neutral, or at least able to be mitigated or reversed when more suitable uses come along.

## Case Study 3.1 Dunedin City Council Planning for Adaptive Reuse

The Dunedin City Council proposed including a number of planning incentives in its 2nd Generation District Plan, aimed at encouraging and facilitating the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. These included exemptions from requirements, which recognised the difficulty of heritage buildings meeting standard provisions without affecting heritage values, and more enabling rules around activities such as repairs and maintenance, restoration and earthquake-strengthening, and other upgrades required by the Building Act 2004.

The council has tried to take this a step further by offering planning incentives within its zoning framework. The range of activities permitted for heritage buildings in two city-fringe zones is broader than that for non-heritage buildings, to provide additional use and development opportunities for heritage buildings. In the Smith Street/York Place Zone, commercial office activity is only provided for in heritage buildings, recognising the compatibility of this use with the style of heritage buildings in the area.

In the Warehouse Precinct Zone, retail activities are only provided for in scheduled heritage buildings, rather than in all buildings in the zone. This provides a number of heritage benefits: for instance, while offering an additional adaptive reuse option for the former warehouses in the area, it tries to avoid spreading retail activities too broadly in the city at a time when retail growth is low. It also discourages any potential inducements to demolish existing buildings and replace them with new retail buildings that might

emerge if retail were permitted in the zone. Finally, it provides an incentive for owners to schedule their buildings for heritage protection in order to take advantage of this dispensation.



The proximity to the CBD and size of heritage houses motivated the Dunedin City Council to adopt a differentiated planning approach in the York Place area.

PHOTO CREDIT: ALAN DOVE

## Case Study 3.2 Urban Dream Brokerage

Urban Dream Brokerage was an organisation that worked with property managers, artists, individuals and community groups to broker the temporary use of commercial and public spaces for innovative projects that assisted in urban revitalisation. Established first in Wellington, it eventually set up in Dunedin, and in each location it was funded by the local city council and community trust. Trials were also run in Masterton and Porirua. The Dunedin Dream Brokerage has continued with support from the Chamber of Commerce, Otago Polytechnic and the Dunedin City Council.

Urban Dream Brokerage aimed to:

- Increase diversity and community
- Reduce vacant space and increase citizen ownership in towns and cities
- Increase professionalism and help innovate business development
- Increase mixed use of the city's building stock
- See stronger representation of mana whenua in the city
- Increase public engagement in the city
- See cities known for their innovative use of space and public interaction.

What differentiated Urban Dream Brokerage from other similar organisations and one-off efforts was the professionalism of its processes and the quality of its outputs. Urban Dream Brokerage worked successfully as a negotiator and problem-solver, resolving the many

issues and challenges that faced landlords, potential short-term tenants and the councils stemming from pop-up temporary uses. In various ways it worked closely with both the arts community and the property sector to negotiate positive outcomes. Many of the spaces in which it staged temporary installations went on to be leased. Its projects were not simple, untailored pop-ups in the traditional sense, but quality installations that delivered broad-ranging positive outcomes for both the owners and creatives involved. The Urban Dream Brokerage website showcases those diverse projects: <http://urbandreambrokerage.org.nz>

While Urban Dream Brokerage did not confine itself to heritage buildings, it is a model that could be emulated in and tailored more specifically to heritage settings and town centres. It is a demonstration of the potential transformative outcomes of curated temporary uses when they are undertaken in a professional, structured and accountable manner.



Urban Dream Brokerage has facilitated a range of projects in vacant buildings across Dunedin.  
PHOTO CREDIT: JUSTIN SPIERS

Heritage buildings have become the centrepiece of the community in Hobsonville Point.

PHOTO CREDIT: WILLIS BOND & CO.

## Case Study 3.3 Hobsonville Point

Imbuing a raw subdivision with a sense of place is no easy thing, but consider the scale of the task when you are creating an entire new township. Such was the challenge confronting the architects of Hobsonville Point, a master-planned urban redevelopment of the former Hobsonville Airbase that will eventually be home to 8000 people.

Executed poorly, the venture might have birthed a new part of Auckland with harbour views to die for but lacking a soul. The fact that it has not become a beige commuter suburb on the Upper Waitematā Harbour is due in large part to the far-sighted repurposing of the airbase's original buildings.

Led by the Hobsonville Land Company (HLC), which was established in 2006 as a subsidiary of Housing New Zealand to master plan and develop the township, the venture launched with a strong sense of the importance of 'place-making'. It had a vision that the base's surviving houses, hangars and other

air force buildings could provide a sense of belonging in an otherwise fresh-faced new suburb. Alongside this preference for repurposing buildings, there was an undertaking to retain as much as possible of the mature vegetation and some original streetscapes. As one resident put it, the new community would be built "on the bones of the old".

This overarching commitment to historic character was critical, because repurposing these buildings would probably not have stacked up in narrow commercial terms. "You might have looked at those individual buildings and said if we pulled them down the sites would be worth much more," said Katja Lietz, General Manager of Master-planning and Place-making at HLC. "What we did instead was to say that the value those buildings added to the whole area, and therefore to other properties, was significant. Repurposing them would add value to the project overall."



The Sunderland Hangar has been adaptively reused to serve a mix of purposes for local residents.

PHOTO CREDIT: WILLIS BOND & CO.





Not everything could be saved: the wooden Catalina barracks proved too difficult to upgrade to fire code. But there were plenty of wins, including the remediation and seismic upgrading of half a dozen air force hangars and buildings at 'Catalina Bay', which have been repurposed as eateries, office space, a micro-brewery and a farmers' market venue. Meanwhile, in the Sunderland precinct, contracted developer Willis Bond & Co revamped a collection of 1930s bungalows, bringing them up to modern standards while restoring key heritage elements.

These successes were achieved through pragmatism and creative decision-making. For example, when it came to determining how much heritage curtilage (land adjacent to a building) to provide for around historic buildings, a balance was struck between allowing enough space for them to 'breathe' and be visible and ensuring that the development of the surrounding area remained viable. In another instance the framework plan was crafted to facilitate 'mixed use' in an area where HLC wanted to safeguard the future of a particular historic building. Throughout, there was an emphasis on the buildings being

accessible to the public. Other than the bungalows, these buildings are all public or semi-public spaces.

As for repurposing, the big-picture view at Hobsonville Point meant there was an emphasis on putting old buildings together with new uses that worked for everyone. The old airbase cinema and headquarters were transferred to the council and redeveloped as a community hall and community centre. Boutique retail was seen as a good fit with the heritage character at Catalina Bay. Throughout, key considerations were diversity and viability; half a dozen competing cafés was not what the community needed, nor could all those businesses survive the contest.

Hobsonville Point is not yet the finished article, but the well-considered repurposing of its airbase buildings has given the new community a head start in forging a sense of identity.

– **By Matt Philp**

# 04

## THINK ABOUT ENGAGEMENT

Encourage engagement from an early stage and make it as broad as possible, rather than just consulting on a plan or options.

Allow people to be creative.

Open engagement processes can help different stakeholders to understand each other's challenges and points of view and build mutual understanding.

People are more likely to contribute to implementing a plan when they feel they have been involved in putting it together and can see their ideas reflected in it.



**I**t is important to encourage people to engage constructively with heritage buildings and any plans for revitalisation and change in an area. Generally speaking, the broader this engagement can be, the better. Open workshops, design charrettes and other similar engagement processes should be encouraged wherever possible, particularly at the beginning of a project.

Allowing scope for people to influence how an area could be developed differently, rather than just consulting them on options, is valuable. Inviting all the relevant stakeholders to participate, and allowing them to discuss their challenges, ideas and hopes for the future, is an important starting point and more likely to deliver effective, more sustainable outcomes.

Engagement should also be meaningful. Going into engagement processes with an open mind and allowing people the opportunity to explore ideas is important. There is no point in engaging on certain issues if there is no potential for taking on board the public's views on those issues. People will not engage fully if they do not feel that what they say can, and will, have an influence. Past experiences can discourage people from taking part, so it is important to not repeat these mistakes. For this reason, it is essential that any plan developed out of consultation reflects the engagement clearly. Being able to open the plan and see their ideas represented in some way gives people a sense of confidence that they have been listened to and encourages them to continue to engage in the future.

Feedback should also not stop with the end of consultation. Providing people with constant feedback on implementation progress and further opportunities to engage during the life of a plan is advisable. Keeping people informed helps to retain their interest and support. It also reinforces the value placed on their ideas and input.

There are a number of ways in which quality, open engagement can contribute to any heritage project aimed at Saving the Town.

#### **A thorough understanding of challenges**

Broad, open engagement helps everyone to understand the possible current issues that are constraining investment in restoring and upgrading buildings in an area. While there are often preconceived ideas about why buildings are not being restored or why an area is failing, asking owners, developers and businesses to describe these issues can help people understand the challenges they face. Allowing owners, developers and businesses to also hear from the public about why they might not visit an area, and what changes might encourage them to do so, can also be useful. It can help owners and businesses to improve their own projects and better understand what is important to their potential visitors and customers.

Such sessions provide those seeking to facilitate change with a list of the issues that might need to be addressed for their efforts to be successful. They can then work out strategies to address or mitigate those issues as part of any future plans. Stakeholders at the sessions may also suggest ways to address the issues, and these diverse ideas can offer new, innovative solutions to long-running problems.

Engaging in this way may not only improve the conditions and potential for change, but also help to build trust. It can demonstrate to potential partners the ability of those leading a project to listen,

empathise and be responsive. It can also demonstrate the enthusiasm of a community to get involved and support those seeking to transform those heritage buildings and areas that are so important to them.

### **Ensuring ownership and active involvement**

Broad engagement in developing a vision can also encourage more active participation in and a sense of ownership of any subsequent plan by the stakeholders who get involved. The more that people feel they have had an influence on the development of a vision for change, the more they will believe in it and the more likely they will be to contribute to making it happen. Encouraging the buy-in of strategic partners such as building owners, businesses and developers is particularly important given that their investments will typically be key to the success of the plan. However, it is also imperative that the plan resonates with the public, whether as ratepayers who may bear the costs of any public investment or as those who will be the core visitors to and customers of the area. These individuals or groups may also find other ways to contribute more directly, leading to the implementation of initiatives that assist in the transformation of the town or area.

Broad engagement can also help demonstrate to a range of people and organisations their potential role in regeneration, even when they may not perceive themselves as main stakeholders. Within councils, for example, there is a range of councillors, departments and personnel who may not see themselves as directly involved in heritage preservation, but who have roles, responsibilities and/or experience and influence that will affect a project. Engagement can help them see that they do have a role to play.

In addition to Heritage New Zealand, there is a range of government departments and agencies that can support and assist regeneration. Again, these may not always be initially obvious, but engaging broadly can



Variations of Candy Chang's famous 'I wish this was' installation have been used in consultation projects around the world.

PHOTO CREDIT: CANDY CHANG

encourage them to see how they could participate. As an example, the NZ Transport Agency can have a positive influence by doing as little as installing signage encouraging people to visit. It could also have greater impacts through decisions, such as on whether or not to create bypasses, work with councils to create safer areas for pedestrians, or assist businesses through better traffic flows.

As well as local businesses and tenants, the participants in the broader business sector may have a role to play in using their influence and interest in an area. They can be stakeholders and potentially sponsors even when they are not located in a heritage building or area, as they see benefits accruing from improvements in the town.

Engaging those who are likely to be active supporters of a project and can influence others is also important. These may be local politicians, personalities, celebrities, media and owners who can bring positive attention and support to a project. The more people who want to see a project succeed, the better its chance of success.



Christchurch Central City Plan Consultation.  
PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

### Innovation

Allowing people to be creative, through processes such as design charrettes and interactive workshops, can also help to increase the excitement around ideas and generate new, unique initiatives that will help a plan to succeed. While many of the approaches will be fairly similar across towns and cities around the world, engagement offers the opportunity for communities to tailor these ideas to local conditions and come up with ideas that relate specifically to their locations and reflect their unique characters and identities.

### Bringing in a human element

Where documents such as heritage inventories and other types of assessment reports can be somewhat technical and impersonal, engagement offers the opportunity to bring a human element to the process of developing a plan. Ultimately, people are the most important component of a plan for Saving the Town. Engagement allows people to bring in intangible elements, values and connections that no technical survey will reveal. These connections, stories and

characters are exactly the ingredients that can contribute to developing an interesting, authentic and successful area that people want to visit and invest in. Encouraging people to develop, deepen and celebrate their connections to buildings and areas also makes it more likely that they will attribute value to them and want (even advocate) to see them preserved.

The principles for consulting to Save the Town are really no different from those for any other broad engagement project. It is advisable to seek support from those experienced in consultation about the best ways to engage and how to apply best practice and innovation to get the most from any consultation.

## Case Study 4.1 Christchurch Central City Plan Consultation

After the devastation of the Canterbury earthquakes, the Government and the Christchurch City Council turned their attention to how to rebuild the city. To shape this future, the council developed a draft recovery plan (Central City Recovery Plan) for the central business district (CBD), as required by the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act 2011. While heritage was only one of the topics addressed in the plan, there are valuable lessons from the consultation process that could be applied to consultation and engagement on heritage issues more specifically.

Seeking input from a public that was more mobilised than it had been for some time and simultaneously traumatised by the events that had occurred, the council encouraged broad, meaningful consultation to gather a range of ideas on the future of the central city through the 'Share an Idea' campaign.

This process was seen as a 'conversation' with the community, allowing the public to tell the council their ideas about how the CBD should be redeveloped to be a great place again. It started with a Community Expo in May 2011 and ran for six weeks, in which anyone could input their ideas for the future of the central city. At the end of the process the more than 106,000 ideas were brought together to inform the draft Central City Plan.

The process was recognised locally and internationally for its success in encouraging participation and enthusiasm and inspiring people to generate and share new ideas. On a smaller scale, this type of constructive, open-ended consultation, where the community is encouraged to think creatively, could be easily replicated to motivate and challenge people to think about heritage buildings, areas and town centres.



Christchurch Central City Plan Consultation.  
PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

## Case Study 4.2 Invercargill City Council Protected Heritage Buildings Consultation

In March 2018, the Invercargill City Council commenced a consultation programme aimed at informing the public about a proposal to reduce the number of heritage buildings protected on its district plan.

Alongside a more traditional online survey, the council established a pop-up shop in the city centre to engage the community. Visitors to the shop could see large aerial maps of the city with the locations and photos of all the heritage buildings, including those proposed to be removed from the city's list of protected buildings.

Visitors were encouraged to 'sticker' their favourites and provide their thoughts on those proposed to be no longer protected. They were also given the opportunity to post information about their thoughts on what heritage meant to Invercargill. Council staff were on hand to hear the thoughts of those who called by and to have more in-depth discussions about heritage matters in the city. A simple voting mechanism was also provided through the use of jars for people to provide their feedback on what incentives, if any, they believed the council should use to help owners of heritage buildings.

Invercargill City Council Senior Policy Planner Liz Devery commented on the benefits of the pop-up shop as a forum for sharing ideas.

"Council staff really enjoyed working in the pop-up shop and talking with a wide cross-section of our community and hearing their views – and yes, there was a range of views. We felt it was a reasonably non-confrontational forum to get people talking and they could wander in and out as it suited them, staying as long as they wanted," she said.

The pop-up shop and its interactive nature proved a very successful initiative. It demonstrated a willingness on the part of the council to try something different to engage a wider range of people than might normally take part in conversations about heritage. The visually focused materials made it easy for people of all backgrounds to engage with the subject matter and express their feelings in a simple way, without requiring the reading of large amounts of information or the writing of long submissions. This approach made it very accessible and inclusive, increasing the potential for more diverse and innovative responses. It is also an approach other councils around the country could easily emulate for a range of heritage topics.



“ **Council staff really enjoyed working in the pop-up shop.** ”

For Devery, the level of community engagement was another benefit. “One of the highlights of the pop-up shop was the engagement with the public on heritage matters. We have a lot of heritage buildings in our city centre, but in general people don’t notice them in their day-to-day lives, especially with a lot of the heritage features sitting above verandahs. The photos were a great visual tool that really made people step back and start to look up and pay some attention to what we have.”

“One of the other significant outcomes was that the feedback gained was a valuable source of information for the development of our city centre heritage strategy and the identification of what the public saw as our priority heritage buildings,” she said.

Invercargill City Council staff hold up consultation materials.

PHOTO CREDIT: INVERCARGILL CITY COUNCIL



Interactive consultation methods were a focus of the pop-up shop.

PHOTO CREDIT: INVERCARGILL CITY COUNCIL

Investments in public spaces can incentivise private sector investment in businesses and buildings, such as in the Wynyard Quarter, Auckland.

PHOTO CREDIT: TODD EYRE

# 05

## THINK ABOUT INCENTIVES

Financial and non-financial incentives can be important elements in encouraging good heritage outcomes.

Not all incentives are created equal – work with owners to figure out which types of incentive would assist and motivate them best.

There are also ways to maximise the potential benefits of any incentive schemes to ensure they leverage the best outcomes possible.

Exemptions, dispensations and waivers can often be just as beneficial as grants and concessions.

Coordinating incentives with statutory or regulatory controls can be a way to reduce the costs and the perceived inconvenience of compliance for owners.



**Incentives are an important part of any toolkit for encouraging heritage-led revitalisation. They come in both financial and non-financial forms and typically seek to recognise the additional challenges and costs faced by heritage building owners and the 'public good' benefits of the responsible stewardship of their buildings.**

This section is not an exhaustive list of the potential incentives that can be offered. Instead, it outlines the reasons for their importance and ways to maximise their impacts. For more information on the types of incentives employed around New Zealand, see: <https://bit.ly/HeritageIncentives>

### **Financial incentives**

Many councils offer financial incentives to the owners of heritage buildings, including grants, loans, rates relief and fee waivers or discounts. Kāinga Ora and Te Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage also offer some grants for private owners.

While most councils may find it hard to justify and fund large financial-incentive schemes, the value of even relatively modest schemes should not be underestimated. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Even small amounts of funding can be valuable to owners, particularly when the costs of heritage building restoration are typically higher than those of upgrades for other types of building. While financial incentives are seldom sufficient to make heritage building projects profitable, they can help tip the balance and narrow the gaps.
- For many owners, even small financial contributions make a difference, if for no other reason than they indicate recognition of the value of the work they are doing for their communities. This positive reinforcement can be welcomed by owners who are investing significantly in their buildings and value being appreciated.

- Council funding can sometimes assist owners to leverage additional funding from other sources. Their commitment can give other funders, whether private, commercial or public, greater confidence to invest in their projects.
- Incentive schemes offer opportunities to increase engagement with building owners. Application processes allow councils to start dialogues with and look at other ways they can assist owners to maximise the benefits of their projects and achieve good heritage outcomes. Sometimes the value of building a relationship will be far higher in the longer term than the cost of a small financial outlay of a grant in the short term.

### ***Maximising the benefits of financial incentive schemes***

While financial incentive schemes are valuable, there are a number of ways to maximise their effectiveness to ensure councils get the best value from them.

For instance, to make such schemes attractive to building owners they need to be user-friendly. They should also be as easy as possible to access and apply for, responses should be timely, and conditions on grants should not be onerous. While councils need to reduce the potential risks to their investments by way of conditions, it is important that this is done on an appropriate scale that does not discourage owners from applying or infer a lack of trust. For example, simple conditions to pay on completion of work and what was agreed in an application/grant are preferable to those requiring covenants, other legal agreements or complicated claim procedures that can discourage owners from applying for and uplifting grants.



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Another way to maximise the value of such schemes is to use them proactively as well as reactively. Actively targeting buildings and approaching owners and encouraging them to apply can allow a council to focus its attention on at-risk, high-profile or strategically important projects. The proactive use of grants can also be coupled with geographic targeting (see below) to expand the positive effects of individual projects. Approaching owners of neighbouring or nearby buildings with financial incentives can encourage them to bring future plans forward or to initiate works they would not have otherwise undertaken.

Targeting financial incentive schemes to specific geographic areas, rather than spreading funding over a dispersed area such as an entire town or district, is another way to maximise their impacts. Focusing incentives on a small area can amplify or even exaggerate perceptions of change, where multiple, visually connected projects in a street or block are assisted to get underway simultaneously. This can generate a 'buzz' about an area and inspire greater confidence in its future, encouraging investment and building greater regeneration momentum. It provides a bigger 'bang for the buck' for council spending, particularly when the overall amount of funding is low. Coupled with other types of assistance discussed in this section, geographic targeting of incentives can contribute to a more 'place-based' approach.

### **Non-financial incentives**

Councils can also assist owners by offering non-financial incentives. Again, there is a wide range of non-financial incentives that can be offered, ranging from free advice and information, awards and other recognition to exemptions from standards, rules and other requirements, and greater development rights.

Many councils have investigated and instituted development incentives for heritage buildings as part of the development or reviews of their district plans. These have commonly included dispensations from development standards for parking or built-form requirements, the right to develop more intensively or to undertake different activities within heritage buildings, and transferable development rights. Some of these initiatives simply recognise the constraints of heritage buildings' existing forms and their inability to meet particular standards. Others look to create advantages for those buildings to offset potential development constraints.

Outside district plans, exemptions or dispensations for heritage buildings may be applied in other regulations managed by councils, such as policies and bylaws. Questions of public safety, accessibility, health and the overall intent of regulation still need to be considered. However, it is worth investigating how a differentiated approach can benefit heritage buildings, particularly by avoiding penalties for those built characteristics that determine their significance and value to their communities.



### Coordinating incentives and regulation

The key to maximising the benefits of all types of incentive is coordination. Coordinating various non-financial and financial incentives for projects enhances the potential for positive outcomes.

For example, a coordinated, proactive approach to incentives can be used positively alongside consent processes, by encouraging them to apply for funding to offset the additional costs of more heritage-sensitive methods and materials. Owners may be more positively predisposed to consent processes and conditions placed on them when they are also receiving financial assistance for their projects.

Coordinating a range of financial and non-financial incentives to provide as many different 'carrots' as possible for projects should always be investigated. For example, providing free advice, reducing resource consent fees, waiving requirements for car parking, exercising discretion on accessibility matters and providing a grant and/or rates relief could all work collectively to shift a developer's perceptions of whether or not to undertake a project.

More broadly, such coordination can help transform the development community's overall perceptions of how enabling councils are of development in heritage buildings. Establishing a reputation for being enabling, flexible, responsive and innovative can increase owners' and businesses' general confidence in deciding whether to take on heritage projects and invest in certain locations. A more positive reputation in this area makes efforts to stimulate and facilitate heritage-led regeneration more likely to be successful, whether they are led by a council or other stakeholders in a location.

Dunedin City Council has extended its flexibility to trial a range of initiatives to help revitalise heritage areas.

PHOTO CREDIT: DUNEDINNZ

## Case Study 5.1 Horowhenua District Council

Heritage incentive programmes do not need to be offered only by large councils. Smaller councils can also take proactive approaches to heritage incentives on a modest scale.

The Horowhenua District Council is a North Island council of around 32,000 residents, with just over 50 heritage places protected in its district plan in addition to two protected town centre areas. Recognising the financial burden of resource consent applications, it offers resource consent fee waivers for owners of heritage buildings, structures and sites listed in the district plan, and those who own property within the Town Centre Heritage and Character Areas of Foxton and Shannon. Waivers are capped at \$2000 per application and the council sets aside \$20,000 per annum to fund the scheme. To be eligible, resource consents have to be approved by the council.

The council also maintains a Heritage Fund for the same owners. It sets aside \$30,000 per annum for heritage grants, prioritised to projects with high visibility and public accessibility, urgent works and/or essential maintenance, repair or stabilisation.

For more information see:

[www.horowhenua.govt.nz/Council/Plans-Strategies/District-Plan/Heritage-Incentives#section-1](http://www.horowhenua.govt.nz/Council/Plans-Strategies/District-Plan/Heritage-Incentives#section-1)

The Distinction Hotel was the first project to benefit from the Dunedin City Council 'rates freeze' scheme.

PHOTO CREDIT: KELK PHOTOGRAPHY

## Case Study 5.2 Dunedin City Council Rates Relief

In 2013, the Dunedin City Council developed a comprehensive rates relief programme as part of its range of heritage incentives. At the time the council's two rates relief policies were unusual in that they were linked to physical works and upgrades to heritage buildings.

The first policy aimed to encourage the ongoing use and upgrade of Dunedin's heritage buildings by providing rates relief to owners undertaking conservation works or improvements to buildings, such as seismic, fire and accessibility upgrades. The relief recognised the fact that while there was positive heritage value in the works, there were often little or no subsequent increases in building values or obvious financial benefits to motivate owners. Grant amounts came from a contestable fund and were worked out as a percentage of the general rates, proportionate to the value of investments by owners. Relief was typically provided for between one and three years.

The second policy recognised the need for a larger rating incentive for the restoration and adaptive reuse of some of the city's run-down heritage buildings and comprehensive reuse projects. Rates relief in this case sought to neutralise rates increases on reuse projects for an agreed period (normally between three and five years depending on the scale of the projects), where investment in the properties would lead to substantial increases in their valuations and levied rates. These post-development increases were identified by building owners, through the city's Heritage Buildings Economic Reuse Steering Group, as a disincentive to

investing in larger-scale or riskier properties. To support owners, the policy allowed the council to provide an annual grant to the owner for the difference between the pre-development and post-development rates, effectively freezing their rates at the pre-development level for a set period. In addition to the obvious heritage benefits, the council justified the additional grant expenditure through the fact that while it was foregoing increased rates revenue for a short period, it would still enjoy an increase in future that it would not have received if the developer had not undertaken the project at all.

For building owners this incentive was positive, particularly when it could have been some years after completion that projects reached their full earning potential for leasing or other returns. For larger projects with substantial increases in the value of properties, the savings to owners could be quite significant. The programme had considerable success in encouraging upgrades of many vacant and at-risk buildings, where the relief offered substantial additional financial incentives to the building owners, often in addition to Dunedin Heritage Fund grants.

The council ran both relief programmes as grants, which was due to the limitations and complexity of offering rebates or discounts under the Local Government (Rating) Act. Maintaining the programmes as grants by way of council-adopted policies also offered greater flexibility and the ability to tailor grants to specific projects and make adaptations to the policies where necessary.





## Case Study 5.3 Whanganui District Council

In Whanganui, where the identification, restoration and adaptation of built heritage is tied to a broader council-driven strategy to regenerate the Edwardian town centre, incentives are increasingly being used as a tool.

In 2018, the Whanganui District Council launched a Heritage Grant Fund aimed at encouraging owners of historic downtown properties to rehabilitate or enhance their buildings' visual appeal. Although intended as more than a 'facade fund', the \$100,000-per-year scheme nevertheless addresses some of the more egregious updates made to the town's heritage façades in the mid-to-latter part of the 20th century, when in some cases entire frontages were concealed behind concrete tiles and other contemporary add-ons, and original features such as pediments were removed.

The scheme reimbursed owners up to 80% of the cost of projects under \$15,000 (or 50% for more costly jobs), and has helped to fund repainting work, the replacing of windows to match originals, the reinstatement of external heritage features and the removal of modern embellishments. Uptake is strong, and there's evidence that it has galvanised many prevaricating owners to undertake long-delayed work. As a bonus, the new fund has also brought to light buildings that previously were not included in the council's heritage inventory – usually because the original features were hidden – so were not eligible for funding for any other kind of conservation work.



Promoting the projects supported by heritage incentives is important.

PHOTO CREDIT: LAMP STUDIOS

To date, the Heritage Grant Fund has been the only significant financial incentive used to motivate Whanganui's heritage building owners, although there is talk of introducing rates rebates and other carrots in a forthcoming heritage strategy. As well, the council has entered a Heads of Agreement to provide loan funding to the Whanganui Heritage Restoration Trust, a new trust established specifically with the purpose of purchasing, earthquake-strengthening, renovating and repurposing commercial heritage buildings in the CBD. Given that renovating heritage buildings in provincial New Zealand can be economically marginal, the strategy is that the trust can de-risk renovations by obtaining grants due to its charitable status.



Before and after photos of 88 Guyton Street, supported by the Whanganui Heritage Fund.

PHOTO CREDIT: SCOTT FLUTEY



There are also several non-financial incentives in play. The council has become increasingly proactive on heritage matters, running seminars, offering advice and encouraging owners. In October 2019, it appointed a Heritage Advisor, Whanganui native Scott Flutey.

Among his early projects, he has coordinated a joint application by 10 CBD building owners for Heritage EQUIP funding to undertake detailed seismic assessments and planning. (In downtown Whanganui, brick 'party walls' are a particular concern.) If successful, the individual applicants could be reimbursed for as much as 67% of their expenses for work costing up to \$30,000.

Active celebration of heritage also counts. In August 2019, the independent Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust launched Whanganui Heritage Month, with 40 heritage-related events around the city. There are plans to introduce a biannual award to publicly recognise outstanding heritage building owners in Whanganui, and in 2020 the trust intends to launch an awareness-raising 'Blue Plaques' project, rolling out plaques with brief histories of individual heritage buildings throughout the CBD.

– **By Matt Philp**

The substantial adaptive reuse project at 77 Vogel Street required a more collaborative approach between the Dunedin City Council and the owners which became a model for other 'red carpet' projects in the area.

PHOTO CREDIT: DUNEDINNZ

# 06

## THINK ABOUT 'RED CARPET, NOT RED TAPE'

Consent and approval processes can be costly and time-consuming for owners and discourage them from undertaking projects.

Making processes simpler and more efficient can be just as beneficial as providing grants or other financial incentives.

Reducing uncertainty for owners is important.

A more personalised approach to coaching owners through processes can have positive outcomes.

Improvements to consent and approval processes involve empowering and upskilling both applicants and staff.



**A** common criticism raised by heritage building owners is the difficulty and inconvenience of negotiating the various consenting and approval processes for their projects. Owners typically have to obtain resource and building consents for physical works to their buildings, as well as meet a range of compliance and licensing standards related to the use of their buildings.

Dealing with multiple council departments and officers can not only be time-consuming but also lead to confusion and frustration when they have seemingly contradictory requirements for developers to satisfy.

While councils may find it difficult to reduce the range of regulatory requirements, there are a number of ways that they and other regulators can make it simpler for owners to obtain all the relevant approvals. Applicants can find applying for consents and approvals daunting, so the more that can be done to make processes clearer and more user-friendly the better.

The benefits of simplifying processes should not be underestimated. Even where councils cannot implement substantial incentive schemes, improving customer service and streamlining or expediting consent processes can be just as valuable. Delays stemming from consent processes can cost developers significantly, particularly where they are unexpected or unnecessary. Efficiencies and improvements in this area can often be achieved at little or no expense to councils and can lead to significant financial savings for projects. These savings also typically exceed what councils could provide in direct financial incentives, such as grants.

There are a number of potential ways councils can improve customer service and processes for the owners of heritage buildings, to ensure they experience 'red carpet, not red tape'.

#### **A. Information and advice**

Improving the information and advice available to heritage building owners can empower them to make better decisions, particularly in the planning stages of their projects. Around the country, councils have produced a range of brochures and online information on topics such as how to apply for consents and how to sensitively undertake earthquake-strengthening, adaptive reuse, restoration, alterations and additions, and build in heritage areas. These can easily be adapted to local conditions. Heritage New Zealand produces a range of guidance documents that are available to owners. Staff also provide advice to both owners and councils about projects.

Providing owners with free advice from staff or other technical experts is also beneficial. Offering free pre-application meetings and technical advice demonstrates that a council sees value in working collaboratively to find mutually beneficial outcomes. Other forms of information-sharing include workshops, courses and access to other technical experts. Making these accessible by offering them for free or as low cost as practicable is key to reaching as many owners as possible.

Lawrie Forbes pushed the Dunedin City Council to re-evaluate the way it interacted with heritage building owners.

PHOTO CREDIT: OTAGO DAILY TIMES



## **B. Case managers**

Appointing 'case managers' to assist owners and developers through consent application processes can be beneficial. Rather than having to deal individually with various staff and departments throughout the organisation, owners and developers have a primary point of contact for advice and information.

While their role is not to predetermine or pre-empt outcomes, case managers can assist in clarifying processes, identifying the right people to talk to, coordinating meetings and tracking the progress of consent applications. Where different departments have conflicting requirements, a case manager can coordinate, reconcile and resolve these differences internally, so that the council presents one clear, consistent position on the project to the owner and there is a whole-of-council approach that is solutions driven.

Offering such a service to owners can be particularly valuable given the complexity of many heritage building consent processes and the high level of problem-solving or troubleshooting required. Such case managers should be chosen for their strong understanding of processes and commitment to exceptional customer service.

## **C. Consistency in staff**

Dedicating the same council staff to the consent process for the life of a project can also be beneficial. Consistency ensures a developer always discusses the project with someone who knows it well, and assists in relationship-building. Knowing that they are the go-to person for that project also engenders a greater level of ownership and responsibility on the part of the staff member involved, which generally encourages better customer service.

#### D. Exercising discretion

It is common for council staff to work in silos, focusing only on specific approvals or aspects of the consent processes they are working on. For example, building services staff generally work strictly within the confines of the Building Act and Building Code. They may not evaluate the broader local benefits that a project may bring to a place in their assessments. The same is true of other regulatory teams, particularly where they are administering statutes and regulations that have standard, national applications, rather than those tailored to local conditions.

While this challenge cannot be avoided entirely, within most regulatory areas there is some scope for discretion. Encouraging and empowering staff to exercise this discretion constructively is very important. Most regulation is designed for new buildings. Heritage building projects often struggle to meet these standards, creating issues during consenting processes. Whether, and how, discretion is applied can have substantial impacts on the costs and feasibility of heritage projects. Sometimes even exercising limited discretion can influence whether or not heritage projects go ahead.

To address this issue, staff should be encouraged to look at projects more holistically. To do so they need to have a good understanding of the issues and opportunities within the town or city, not just in their technical area. This requires regular sharing of information between departments about the challenges faced by heritage building owners and the opportunities certain types of development may present to the town or city. It also requires regulatory staff to have a good understanding of how they can contribute to (or hinder) the council's broader strategic objectives and heritage goals in their town or city through their work areas.

“ **Most regulation is designed for new buildings. Heritage building projects often struggle to meet these standards.** ”



Upgrading heritage buildings often presents unique challenges with consenting and regulatory requirements. A more collaborative approach between councils and owners is required to get good outcomes.

PHOTO CREDIT: ALAN DOVE



**E. More consistent approaches to challenging issues**

Another way to improve the efficiency of processes and reduce uncertainty for owners is for councils to develop more consistent approaches to commonly encountered issues related to heritage buildings. One method for doing so is for council planning and regulatory departments to develop practice notes.

Practice notes offer a means for council staff to debate issues and establish a common, consistent approach to all similar applications. They can 'standardise' council decisions where officers may otherwise assess them

differently depending on their interpretations of the rules. By establishing standard responses to issues, they reduce processing time for councils, provide greater certainty for applicants and decrease costs for both parties.

Similarly, any other standard operating procedures that can be established to improve consistency and streamline how councils deal with heritage building owners can be positive. More certainty for owners encourages greater confidence for those investing in heritage buildings specifically, and more generally in the town or city.

## Case Study 6.1 Palmerston North City Council – Permission to Act

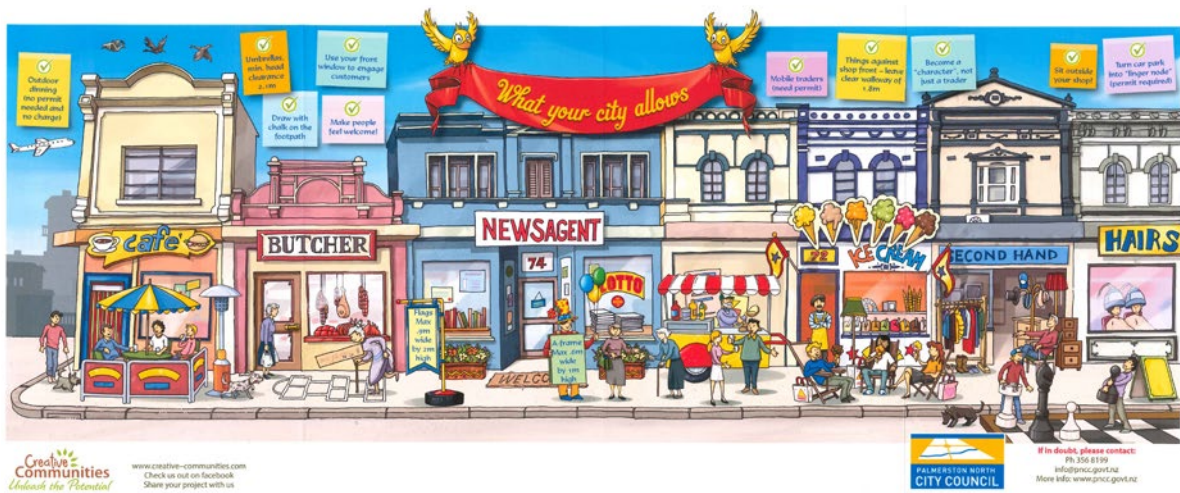
In conjunction with David Engwicht of Creative Communities Australia, the Palmerston North City Council has developed a simple, visual document that explains to community members the types of work they can do in, on and around their properties without the approval of the council. The document was developed as part of a broader place-making project, and aimed to encourage the business community and residents to take more active roles in renewing or reshaping their areas.

Councils elsewhere could benefit by developing similar documents, adapted to their local rules and conditions. These could be targeted at heritage buildings specifically, in a generic or a more area-based approach. By clarifying the types of works that actually require approval from the council, these documents can help to dispel myths about how much control they exert.

Too often the misperception that council approval is required for everything is used as an excuse for owners and businesses to not undertake works on the basis that they will become involved in difficult and costly consent processes. However, the effects of these perceptions can go further than just stifling development activities. Perceptions that councils control everything can lead to an over-reliance on the councils at the expense of communities being engaged in and taking responsibility for their own areas. The active engagement of building owners and businesses is key to successful revitalisation and Saving the Town. Developing a simple document that demonstrates

where there is scope for independent activity can be the first step to empowering and challenging a local community to become more involved.

There is a secondary benefit to developing such documents. Through the process of compiling them, it can become clear to councils just how many rules and regulations they do manage and how few areas there may be for owners to act without some types of approval. Their compilation can be a useful stocktake for councils on whether that level of management is actually necessary. It can help councils identify areas of duplication where, often unintentionally, different departments exercise some types of authority over the same area and where contradictory approval processes exist. Used smartly then, the development of such documents helps to reduce work in silos, streamline or centralise approval processes, and reduce the number of approvals required. In turn, this assists in improving customer service and reducing barriers for owners and businesses.



Palmerston North City Council's permission to act brochure illustrates what owners can do without council approval in a fun way.

PHOTO CREDIT: PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL

## Case Study 6.2 Dunedin Heritage Toolkit

As part of a broader programme of 'Red Carpet, Not Red Tape', the Dunedin City Council has developed a range of information and compiled this into a Heritage Toolkit folder for owners of heritage buildings.

The folder contains:

- Publications on adaptive reuse
- Information on earthquake-strengthening and the Dunedin Heritage Strategy
- A maintenance checklist
- Application forms for the city's various financial incentive programmes
- Contact information for the city's heritage planner
- A covering letter from the Chair of the Dunedin Heritage Fund.

The toolkit is a vehicle for pulling together a range of useful information and advocacy into one convenient package for owners of heritage buildings. It is useful for engaging with new owners in particular, who may be unaware of their responsibilities and the support provided by the council. It has even been picked up by some of the city's real estate agents, who provide it to new and prospective purchasers of heritage buildings as a selling point about the positive support and approach of the council.

## Case Study 6.3 Whanganui's Approach to the Challenge of Earthquake-Strengthening

Whanganui is home to one of the largest collections of heritage buildings in New Zealand. However, given the size of the town and relative values, it is also facing a significant challenge related to the costs and feasibility of earthquake-strengthening.

In response to this challenge, the Whanganui District Council and key community stakeholders have taken a proactive stance in providing better information to building owners and becoming closely involved with research on earthquake-prone heritage buildings.

The council has assisted in convening a number of workshops and seminars to help owners understand the legislative changes and debunk some of the myths around earthquake-strengthening. It is now working on additional public information for owners to support them in making informed decisions.

The council has also convened an Earthquake-Prone Buildings Community Taskforce to provide the community with input from a range of building professionals to submissions on the Government's review of earthquake-prone buildings legislation. Taking such an inclusive approach has helped not only to inform the council's response to the changes, but also to disseminate information more broadly amongst the community by way of these professionals.

The council has also worked closely with universities, and tapped into student and professional research projects, to better understand the challenges facing owners when earthquake-strengthening buildings and investigate some of the potential innovations that could be tailored to small towns. It has supported detailed case studies of the costs of and potential options for using specific buildings as demonstration projects, to provide accurate information for building owners and to illustrate alternative options to demolition. It has also supported research on options for cost-effective strengthening of historic verandahs.

Such a proactive approach to providing technical information to building owners and the community is positive. It assists in building trust and confidence among owners and recognises that there is a shared community interest in finding solutions to the challenges Whanganui's heritage faces.

Napier's Art Deco architecture gives it an internationally-recognisable, distinct identity.

PHOTO CREDIT: ART DECO TRUST

# 07

## THINK ABOUT A POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Branding and marketing of places, towns and cities are increasingly common.

Heritage can provide an important building block to communicating a point of difference.

Think broadly about the features, stories, connections or events that may resonate with potential investors, visitors and residents.

Sometimes the 'hook' will not be connected to a place's heritage – other industries, niches or character may help to differentiate towns or cities from others.

Using a point of difference to develop an inspiring vision or destination can help to find new uses, businesses and industries to fill heritage buildings.



**R**ecently it has become commonplace to talk about places, towns, cities and regions as competing with each other for visitors, investment, residents and talent as technology and other factors change the way we live, work and spend our free time.

In this environment, there has been a growing focus on branding and marketing. Efforts now go far beyond developing simple, traditional slogans. Across the country, sophisticated advertising campaigns and comprehensive branding exercises are visible in traditional and social media, employed to sell places as destinations to domestic and international markets. On a more local scale, many town centres, main streets, business associations and retail areas are taking similar steps to carve out distinct identities to help them compete for shoppers, visitors, new businesses and even residents.

This section does not seek to replace expert advice and it is recommended that specialists in this field are consulted before embarking on marketing strategies. What it does seek to do is prompt thinking about how a regeneration project, heritage area, town or city could benefit from marketing and branding a unique identity.

Certainly a town or city's history or heritage buildings can provide a wealth of opportunities for its marketing as a destination. For example, Napier and Oamaru have built identities that are strongly connected to their unique Art Deco and Victorian architectural heritage, respectively. Dunedin has also carved out an identity strongly linked to its heritage buildings. However, its references to its heritage buildings relate more to their sheer numbers and the character they impart to the city than to a particular, consistent style of architecture.

Other places draw on important elements of their history. For example, the identities of both Russell-Kororāreka and Akaroa remain closely connected to their colonial histories. Places like Denniston, Waihi

and Arrowtown draw on the history of their extractive industries. Others, like Moeraki, Punakaiki and the Whanganui River, focus strongly on their Māori history.

However, a project, town or city does not have to have the architectural consistency of Napier or the historic significance of Russell-Kororāreka to have elements in its heritage that are valuable. There may still be interesting connections, events or themes that can help build a unique story or identity. A heritage assessment or inventory can help inform this thinking.

It is also important to not focus too literally or traditionally when it comes to using heritage as part of an identity. Exploring the quirky, off-beat or unusual historical connections may be a way to develop an authenticity that appeals to visitors and investors. It is worth referring to other consultation that has taken place; important stories, connections or events may emerge from this that can be used to illustrate that point of difference, rather than replicate what others have done successfully elsewhere.

Unexpected combinations or new, adaptive reuses of heritage buildings can also become a point of difference. For example, the revitalisation of Dunedin's Warehouse Precinct and Auckland's Britomart have less to do with direct connections to the past of these areas than with the repurposing of historic warehouse buildings for new clusters of boutique retail, food and beverage, creative and technology industries that have established in those locations. Similarly, historic towns and settlements in Central Otago have become popular destinations as much for the success of the surrounding vineyards, ski industry and adventure tourism as they are for their connections to the historic goldfields and pastoralism.



Arrowtown has become a popular destination due to its proximity to other attractions, as well as its heritage character.

PHOTO CREDIT: TROMP L'OEIL



There is a range of approaches to the question of which elements of a place's identity may prove most marketable. For example, many successful places have chosen to focus on a specific sector, niche or character to differentiate themselves from others. Certain towns and regions around the country have become strongly associated with their food or beverage scenes, their arts, galleries and cottage industries, or their tech industries, cultural attractions or events. These hubs have emerged as a result of either natural clustering or an active strategy of business support and attraction. Others have chosen specific themes and built identities around them, successfully using them as key parts of their marketing strategies.

The point here is that while establishing a distinctive, unique identity and building a marketing strategy around it may be an important component in Saving the Town and preserving heritage buildings, the identity does not have to be based on heritage specifically. It is possible for the identity to relate to an entirely new use or industry not related to either the buildings' or the area's history that creates a unique attraction, selling point or reason to visit.

If those potential new uses or industries are not yet clear, it is worth working with those involved in business and economic development to find out if there are businesses or industries that may be particularly suited to the buildings in a place, might cluster together, or may be able to be attracted to an area or town. Look for industries that already reside in the town or place, but that need assistance to grow to take that next step. New ideas should be incubated and those trying to establish new industries or hubs in a town or place supported.

Wherever possible it is then worthwhile strengthening this unique identity through physical changes to and enhancements of the town or place. Amenity upgrades of public spaces, and even the design of new buildings, can help to build or reinforce the unique identity and

enhance the story. Streetscape and building design guidelines can help to guide changes in ways that positively reinforce the 'brand'. These changes can also make the area more attractive for similar businesses and industries and contribute further to its revitalisation.

Ultimately, the most successful efforts in this area will help reposition a town in the eyes of its own residents and potential visitors and investors. Using a point of difference can tell a story and help in developing an inspiring vision or destination that people want to visit and invest their time, money and effort into. Most importantly, it should be used to find new uses, businesses and industries to fill the vacant spaces and provide incomes that ensure the heritage buildings are retained, upgraded and valued into the future.

Napier has carved out a promotional approach strongly linked to its Art Deco architecture.

PHOTO CREDIT: SARAH HORN

## Case Study 7.1 Napier

Napier is a city that is increasingly using its Art Deco architectural heritage as a successful point of difference. Rebuilt following the devastating 1931 earthquake and fire in a relatively consistent style, the city today has the largest collection of Art Deco architecture in New Zealand. Key stakeholders in the tourism and marketing sectors have realised the value of this Art Deco architectural legacy in differentiating Napier as a unique destination worthy of visiting, in spite of its relative distance from the country's main tourist routes.

Napier's Art Deco Trust is one such stakeholder, promoting the city's Art Deco identity through a diverse range of initiatives, including marketing, tours and numerous themed events. Their Art Deco Festival and Winter Deco Weekend are well attended by visitors from around the world, and provide great opportunities for eye-catching promotional images using the Art Deco heritage buildings as a backdrop, selling a unique image of the city.

Importantly, the Art Deco identity has resonated with locals and provided new economic opportunities for Napier. A growing industry of heritage-related businesses has been established, offering visitor experiences that complement and enrich the built character, strengthening the perception of the city as the country's Art Deco capital and as a place to be immersed in Art Deco culture.

In just one example, the city's architecture has proved a major attractor for the lucrative cruise-ship industry. A survey of cruise-ship visitors found that Napier was the second favourite destination in New Zealand (after Akaroa), and when they were asked what they liked about the destination, the Art Deco heritage buildings came out on top. The subsequent economic impact of this industry on Napier is significant. A 2018 report demonstrated that the cruise-ship industry contributed \$27m to Napier's economy and supported 508 full-time equivalent jobs.

This means that not only are the buildings a key part of daily life in this living city, but in underpinning one of the most important sectors of Napier's economy, their continued existence is a shared responsibility in which numerous stakeholders have an interest. Linking Napier's identity so closely to its Art Deco heritage has increased the collective importance of these heritage buildings, making it more likely that threats to these buildings (either individually or collectively) will be met with a community response. Such a broad engagement with heritage is a positive attribute for Saving the Town when faced with future challenges.



## Case Study 7.2 Oamaru

Like Napier, the small South Island town of Oamaru has focused on a relatively traditional architectural legacy to define its point of difference. However, more recently the town's identity has evolved and an unexpected identity has emerged as a quirky movement has defined an alternative, but complementary, character for the town.

For many years the Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust has worked to secure, restore and reuse the limestone buildings of the town's original commercial and business district.

Since responding to threats to the buildings' survival in the 1980s, the trust has come to own 16 of the buildings in the historic Oamaru Victorian Precinct. The trust markets the precinct, which includes former grain and seed warehouses, stores, offices, shops and hotel buildings, as New Zealand's most complete streetscape of Victorian commercial buildings.

Under the 'Victorian Town at Work' theme, it has encouraged a range of compatible uses in the area. Its events, including the annual Victorian Heritage Celebrations and the Victorian Fete, and the fostering of historic crafts and pastimes in the area also serve to reinforce the Victorian theme.

More recently, Oamaru has become well known as a hub for New Zealand's steampunk movement. One of the largest historic industrial buildings in the Victorian Precinct has become home to 'Steampunk HQ', a large steampunk visitor attraction. The Victorian buildings

provide an interesting backdrop for regular steampunk gatherings and events and the town attracts steampunk enthusiasts from around the world. In fact, in 2016 Oamaru entered the Guinness World Records for the largest gathering of steampunks in the world.

What started as a small group of enthusiasts has become a more broadly embraced movement. It has drawn interest not only from artists and creatives, but also from unexpected quarters like the region's farmers, who have helped repurpose former industrial and agricultural equipment for participants' props and a growing number of sculptures and installations.

Steampunk imagery is now commonly seen alongside the town's more traditional heritage identity. Although not appreciated by all heritage traditionalists in the town, its unexpected, quirky character has put Oamaru on the map and helped to differentiate it from other small heritage towns. Its emergence in a more organic, almost accidental manner, rather than being 'manufactured' or part of a planned marketing strategy, is also worth noting, demonstrating that a resonant and unique idea can be just as effective as an orchestrated professional campaign.



Oamaru's steampunk identity has been forged strongly alongside the town's Victorian character.  
PHOTO CREDIT: MICHELE JACKSON

The Otago Central Rail Trail has linked heritage towns and assets across Central Otago into a successful tourism product.

PHOTO CREDIT: SAM HARNETT

# 08

## THINK ABOUT EXTERNAL CONNECTIONS

Connecting with other projects, towns and partners can offer opportunities to maximise limited resources in a range of areas.

Investigating the potential to work with a diverse range of partners can lead to new ideas and funding and investment opportunities.

Do not be restricted to heritage-specific incentives or funding opportunities only.

Ensure that building owners and other stakeholders know what assistance might be available to them and help them to access it.

Recognise the potential of new developments and non-traditional partners to leverage positive outcomes for heritage buildings and to contribute to Saving the Town.



**T**hroughout this toolkit there has been a strong focus on the importance of cooperation. This also applies to making connections outside a project or geographic area and exploring opportunities to work with a wide range of other partners.

Projects of all sizes can benefit from participants working together. However, the benefits of such cooperation can be even more significant for small projects, towns and cities. There are numerous areas where this cooperation and external focus can be beneficial.

For example, for small towns and projects, cooperation may present the opportunity to share heritage staff or contracted technical experts. A common challenge for small councils is having sufficient workloads and resources to hire dedicated heritage officers. Individual owners also often struggle with the costs of accessing appropriate heritage expertise, particularly given the limited number of experienced heritage professionals outside the main centres. Sharing a heritage officer across a number of councils may be a way for small councils to make the best use of their limited resources. Similarly, packaging up a number of different jobs may be a way for individual owners to secure the technical expertise required at more affordable rates, or to access experts who may not otherwise be available for small, one-off jobs. These types of savings from sharing technical resources may be able to be replicated in other parts of projects, such as in access to heritage-sensitive engineers and tradespeople.

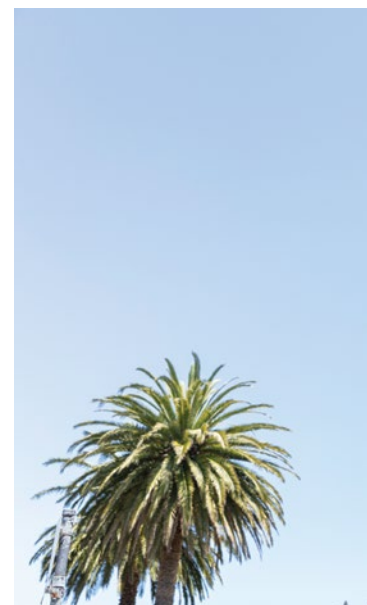
A regional approach can also have other benefits for councils. Developers and building owners often own buildings in a number of council areas. They regularly complain that policy differences and the inconsistent application of rules and regulations between different councils create additional work, costs and confusion for them. In an environment where towns and cities are competing for investment, greater consistency

across councils can make those regions more attractive places to invest in and do business with. While it may take longer to align statutory planning documents like district plans, a more consistent application of building and other regulations can be more quickly and easily achieved through measures such as regional technical forums, practice notes and staff training.

For small places and projects, there may also be value in cooperating in areas like marketing and tourism promotion. Participating in large campaigns or strategies may allow groups or councils to get 'bigger bangs for their bucks' than their individual marketing budgets allow. In places with a limited number of attractions, it may be more realistic to attract visitors to a regional heritage offering than to any one specific destination. Where an individual town or area may not have enough attractions to appeal to visitors from further afield, a broader heritage-themed trail or network may be a more viable proposition to encourage people to visit.

When considering potential external partners, it is also worthwhile investigating external funding sources. While the most obvious sources of external heritage funding are typically councils, Heritage New Zealand, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and the New Zealand Lotteries Commission, it is not advisable

Akaroa has leveraged its heritage buildings to become a key cruise ship destination.  
PHOTO CREDIT: TROMP L'OEIL





to be limited to only considering heritage-specific funding. Thinking about heritage restoration as a secondary, positive outcome rather than as an end in itself may open doors to other funding sources. There is a range of grants, incentives and investment programmes across local and central government that projects may be able to tap into, particularly if they are delivering other social, cultural, environmental or economic outcomes. Accessing these funding sources may actually be just as beneficial as direct, material support to heritage building owners for physical changes to their buildings.

For example, attracting new businesses to reuse heritage buildings as a means of reducing commercial vacancies opens up a vastly different range of potential funding opportunities. Such opportunities may be at a high level, such as regional development schemes that seek to diversify regional economies or to encourage region-wide economic growth in specific sectors like tourism. Alternatively, they may be at a more local level, focused on grants, incentives and subsidies to businesses that are tenants, or potential tenants, of heritage buildings. Less direct than providing grants to specific building restoration or reuse projects, this

type of approach relies on improving the commercial environment in a place, to enable owners to make investments and decisions that support positive heritage outcomes for buildings.

Funding opportunities for community and social development may be able to be used to leverage positive heritage outcomes. These can range from schemes supporting small, one-off neighbourhood projects to more comprehensive funding aimed at supporting broader community-led development. In much the same way as economic incentives, these grants can benefit heritage not only by offering opportunities to support social enterprise and community support activities as tenants of individual buildings, but also by reinvigorating communities. This creates more activity and interest in an area, thereby reducing the number of vacant heritage buildings.

Grants for tourism infrastructure and facilities, and assistance for arts and cultural facilities, may be other potential sources to consider. It is important to remember that such grants and developments do not have to be specifically related to heritage buildings or directly associated with the project to have benefits. There can be flow-on benefits for neighbours, areas or entire towns from the development of new attractions or buildings that bring in more visitors, residents or workers. 'Flagship' projects can become turning points in the fortunes of an area, town or city. While there can be a tendency to view new developments in or adjacent to historic areas negatively, it is important to keep an open mind, as there can be much gained from engaging and cooperating with such projects. Sometimes this will be directly related to any required mitigation associated with the effects of a development on heritage neighbours. At other times it will be about heritage building owners taking a constructive approach to maximise the potential benefits of new developments on their ability to tenant, adaptively reuse and restore their own buildings.



Even at the level of direct material funding for building owners, it is important to investigate funding opportunities as broadly as possible. While the options for private heritage building owners may initially appear limited, both local and central government agencies offer a range of grants and subsidies in areas like energy efficiency and waste minimisation for which building owners may be eligible. Such incentives can offset other costs of restoration and reuse projects for owners, despite not being specifically targeted at heritage buildings.

This toolkit does not seek to identify all the funding schemes that may be available for Saving the Town, but it does encourage thinking more broadly about the types of assistance that could be available. An important role for those seeking to promote or support revitalisation projects can be connecting with different funders and ensuring heritage building owners are aware of what they may be able to apply for. Incentives and grants change as governments and councils focus on different issues, so it is important to review what is available regularly. Assessing the funding available from central and local government and other community bodies, the eligibility criteria for owners, buildings and works, the likely size of grants, and the application deadlines will assist greatly with the planning and staging of projects. Assisting owners with applications can also be valuable as these can sometimes appear daunting to those who are not familiar with such processes.

The key point here is to consider the opportunities for partnership and cooperation as widely as possible. The more imaginative people can be about uses or potential partners to connect with, the more likely they will be to find ways to tenant the heritage buildings and sources of investment for upgrading and restoring them. For example, in the United States there has been success in heritage building preservation/reuse and the revitalisation of downtown areas by offering tax credits and incentives for providing

affordable housing. Similarly, 'Living Over The Shop' schemes in the United Kingdom provided financial incentives to building owners to turn previously under-utilised upper-floor space into residential accommodation, in recognition of the benefits for urban regeneration and the housing affordability of doing so.

While it is not something that has commonly occurred in New Zealand, some councils, community providers and private owners have started investigating opportunities to work together to provide affordable and/or social housing in more urban settings. These could include repurposing heritage buildings for community housing, as has been undertaken around the world. Although upgrade costs have generally seen most residential conversions of heritage buildings in New Zealand tend towards the higher end of the market, the involvement of local or national providers and partnerships with heritage building owners could make affordable housing options more feasible. While social housing might not be a realistic option in all locations, there may be other partners and uses that will work, particularly when there is broad, lateral thinking about the range of potential uses.

“ **Consider the opportunities for partnership and cooperation as widely as possible.** ”

## Case Study 8.1 Otago Central Rail Trail

The Otago Central Rail Trail is a good case study of a collaborative, regional heritage initiative that has successfully drawn on external sources to maximise benefits to the individual small towns and communities along the route.

First proposed in the early 1990s, the 150-kilometre trail was developed and funded by the Department of Conservation and the Otago Central Rail Trail Charitable Trust following the closure of the Central Otago Branch Railway. Officially opened in 2000, the trail stretches between Clyde and Middlemarch, taking in the communities of Alexandra, Ophir, Omakau, Lauder, Ranfurly and Hyde and the unique landscapes in between. The trail attracts more than 16,500 visitors a year and brings millions of dollars into the region's economy.

Despite some early local opposition and cynicism, the trail's success has seen it gain strong local support. It has been widely credited with revitalising the small towns and communities along the route, where new businesses, services and industries have established (often in heritage buildings) to cater to the growing number of visitors, helping local economies diversify from their traditionally agricultural focus. Being part of a collective initiative has increased the viability of these small communities and delivered benefits they would have been unlikely to achieve had they acted independently.

The Otago Central Rail Trail features a variety of heritage infrastructure and places.

PHOTO CREDIT: JAMES JUBB

This revitalisation and investment has had positive outcomes for heritage buildings and other assets in the towns and settlements along the trail, where communities have come to better appreciate the value of the region's heritage and its unique landscapes and their attractiveness to visitors. A growing number of heritage buildings and structures have been restored, reinforcing the heritage character of both the trail and the individual communities along the route. Heritage has now become a key part of the identities of these places.

In addition to these positive economic and heritage outcomes, the Otago Central Rail Trail has been credited with a range of other benefits, including an enhanced sense of pride, place and identity, increased social interaction, and expanded recreation opportunities for local communities. It has been so successful as a way of revitalising small towns and communities that it influenced the Government's decision to construct the New Zealand Cycle Trail in 2010. It is a model being emulated by many other communities around the country.



The heritage White Hart Hotel reflected in the facade of the Len Lye Centre.

PHOTO CREDIT: MARK HARRIS

## Case Study 8.2 Len Lye Centre, New Plymouth

The Taranaki city of New Plymouth has made a name for itself as one of the country's more progressive and innovative provincial centres. Developments like Puke Ariki (the coastal walkway) and a focus on cutting-edge public art and infrastructure have seen New Plymouth develop a reputation as a unique destination, with attractions that would typically be expected in larger, more cosmopolitan locations.

Most recently, the development of the Len Lye Centre has again brought significant attention to New Plymouth. Housing exhibitions by and about the experimental sculptor, the \$11.5m museum was funded through a range of external funders including the TSB Community Trust, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage's Regional Museum Policy Fund for Capital Projects, the Lottery Environment and Heritage Fund and private donors. While the development has not been without controversy, particularly around ongoing costs to ratepayers, it has generated a huge amount of national and international attention. It is also reported to be delivering substantial economic benefits and is a drawcard for visitors.

The development has also strengthened the burgeoning arts and culture hub and provided further energy to the positive revitalisation occurring in the area. A new West End Precinct ([www.westendprecinct.nz](http://www.westendprecinct.nz)) has been formed by local businesses, many of which are located directly opposite the Len Lye Centre in the adaptively reused White Hart Hotel, or nearby in other restored heritage buildings.

The West End Precinct heavily uses imagery of the new Len Lye Centre and the previously restored White Hart Hotel in its promotion and marketing. It juxtaposes the old and new in its efforts to establish the area as a vibrant hub for creativity and high-end food and retail, transforming perceptions of this part of New Plymouth and creating a more vibrant neighbourhood with actively used heritage buildings.

The Len Lye Centre has also taken a brave approach to design. The building is starkly modern, with a rippling mirrored façade that reflects the grand heritage-listed White Hart Hotel opposite. It was designed to be iconic and has not attempted to 'blend in' with the surrounding area or any of its heritage buildings. While this may be challenging for some, it has meant the building has become an attraction in itself. It stands as a strong statement about New Plymouth's creativity and confidence, adding a bold, contemporary layer to the city's architectural heritage.

The White Hart Hotel.

PHOTO CREDIT: MARK HARRIS



Oamaru has a range of heritage events to showcase its identity and celebrate its architectural heritage that attract many visitors to the town.

PHOTO CREDIT: OAMARU WHITESTONE CIVIC TRUST

# 09

## CELEBRATE SUCCESS AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Celebrate all the important wins and milestones reached.

Share information freely and as widely as possible.

Give people an excuse to feel positive about the changes and build a sense of momentum.

Encourage people to join in the success.



**T**he final tool in the toolkit relates to celebrating the wins of a project and ensuring that people remain well informed about all the good things happening in that space. While it can be easy for those working very closely on a project to become so focused on the work that they rely on people noticing the physical changes taking place to demonstrate success, there is significant value in taking a more proactive approach.

Cultivating good relationships with a range of media and issuing regular media releases, keeping social media updated, encouraging stakeholders to develop and maintain contacts and a media presence, using the influential figures associated with the project to bring attention to key developments, regular newsletters, open days, tours and parties are all avenues to ensuring that as many people as possible know about the project and its successes, no matter how small.

Importantly, success breeds success. Regularly celebrating the positive developments of a project not only helps to affirm the value of the contributions of stakeholders and funders, but can also encourage their continued and even enhanced engagement in the future. It can also bring new players on board, whether these are building owners who earlier resisted participation, cautious institutions or departments, funding agencies or even ratepayers who may have earlier questioned the value of council investment.

People want to be associated with successful projects and to hear good-news stories. Although it may not be a typically New Zealand approach, publicly celebrating success is something that helps a project to get noticed and gives people the opportunity to feel good about it. As this toolkit has demonstrated, successful heritage-led revitalisation relies on the participation of a wide range of people and organisations. Their efforts deserve to be celebrated regularly. Doing so recognises the value of the entire community investing time, effort and money in some way to Saving the Town.

Another way to celebrate success is to recognise those doing the hard work. Recognition is one of the simplest and cheapest ways that councils and others can encourage good outcomes. Building owners and developers, like everyone else, tend to appreciate and respond well to encouragement. However, councils in particular are typically not good at demonstrating gratitude or providing positive feedback. It is worthwhile considering more regular acknowledgements of owners and professionals through thank you letters, certificates, awards, media and other forms of public recognition, by either the council or other organisations. This recognition can be used to reinforce positive behaviours.

Public recognition through award schemes and other public acknowledgements can also encourage a healthy dose of competition between owners and developers. Where this competition leads them to try to outdo each other's projects, there can be benefits for heritage and regeneration.





Auckland's Wynyard Quarter has become a popular location for events, exposing visitors to its distinctive industrial maritime character.

PHOTO CREDIT: TODD EYRE

## Case Study 9.1 Canterbury Heritage Awards

The Canterbury Heritage Awards recognise excellence in heritage retention and conservation and heritage tourism and education in the public and private sectors, promoting the values of best-practice heritage retention and conservation to the wider community ([www.heritageawards.co.nz](http://www.heritageawards.co.nz)).

The awards are held biennially and administered by the Christchurch Heritage Awards Charitable Trust. They comprise six sponsored categories and an overall winner selected from one of those categories. While the winners receive trophies, commendations may also be made. The awards are formally awarded at a ticketed ceremony, which has become an important event in the region's heritage calendar.

Importantly, the Canterbury Heritage Awards have been tailored to the specific needs of the Canterbury heritage environment following the earthquakes that devastated the region's built heritage. While the inaugural awards were held in 2010, the trust re-launched and adapted the awards in 2012 following the earthquakes. The geographic scope was expanded to include the other areas most affected by the earthquakes, and new categories were introduced to take into account the impacts on heritage of the natural disaster.

Consequently, within the six categories there is now a strong emphasis on repair, restoration and the needs of the recovering region. The Saved and Restored Awards recognise those undertaking important repair and restoration works on the region's buildings and

also include the public realm, acknowledging the significance of these landscapes and spaces in an environment where so much of the built heritage has been lost. The Seismic Award recognises the demonstration potential of good earthquake-strengthening work and the importance of inspiring others to undertake this valuable role. The inclusion of an award recognising a new building that shows sensitivity to the streetscape and landscape, and secures a cultural legacy for the future (the Future Heritage Award), reflects the importance of the design of new buildings in Canterbury and the impacts they can have on the region's remaining heritage buildings and streetscapes. Combined with awards recognising outstanding contributions to heritage and heritage tourism, these categories acknowledge Canterbury's distinct challenges and opportunities and the areas in which appreciation and inspiration can be of value.



Canterbury Heritage Awards: Awards evenings provide a great opportunity to publicly celebrate the efforts of owners, professionals and volunteers.

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTCHURCH HERITAGE AWARDS TRUST

## Case Study 9.2 Dunedin Heritage Reuse Awards



Dunedin Heritage Awards:  
Matt Sloper collects the award for  
Distinction Hotel in 2016.

PHOTO CREDIT: OTAGO DAILY TIMES

The Dunedin City Council also runs a heritage awards programme that has evolved to reflect the city's heritage priorities, with categories that specifically recognise earthquake-strengthening, interiors and overall adaptive reuse. These categories align with the priorities of the council's overall heritage programme.

A naming-rights sponsor is associated with each award. Winners and commended projects receive certificates. The winners also receive bespoke trophies. The overall winner hosts the original trophy, etched with the names of the winners each year, for the year. The winners are announced at an annual heritage awards evening, well covered by local media, creating more ceremony and status around the awards. The awards have become a widely respected badge of honour for projects and the local development community has become surprisingly competitive in trying to win the awards.

The council has also experimented with a heritage-building design competition for tertiary students. Each year a building is chosen for which students design adaptive reuses. Students are encouraged to consider building regulations, financial constraints and tenant demand, and to think creatively and push the boundaries in the innovative use of the building. Winners typically receive cash prizes, although in some years internships have also been offered by sponsors of the awards.

Although the number and quality of entries have varied from year to year, depending on the support and interest of architecture schools around the country, the initiative has created a wider conversation in the city about the potential of heritage buildings and the myriad ways in which they can be used. Although as yet no building owners have implemented the designs wholesale, elements have ended up in completed buildings, demonstrating that owners have been inspired and influenced by the designs put in front of them. The initiative has also worked to engage a younger generation with heritage in a more constructive manner, allowing them to explore heritage in a way that resonates with them through immersing themselves in design and creative thinking.

The heritage character of George Street in Dunedin makes it an attractive environment in which to spend time. Businesses are increasingly capitalising on this in how they present their premises and what they offer their customers.

PHOTO CREDIT: DUNEDINNZ









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