



Founders Theatre Future Options Consultation

Performing Arts Focus Groups

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Focus Groups

Executive Summary



Background

In February 2016, Hamilton City Council suddenly closed the 54-year-old Founders theatre due to health and safety concerns related to its flying system and seismic strength. Hamilton City Council called for general public feedback based on three options for the future of the theatre – refurbishment of the existing facility, construction of a new theatre for the city, or demolition of the existing theatre. An engagement document outlining the issues with the theatre and the three options was distributed to the community.

Hamilton City Council requested that Creative Waikato conduct a series of focus groups with users of the facility from the local creative sector. The objective of the focus groups was to better understand the challenges and aspirations of the sector that inform their preferences for future development. Creative Waikato was selected to undertake this piece of work in the context of its role as a regional arts capability-building organisation. Its staff has expertise in group facilitation, in-depth knowledge of the sector and extensive relationships and networks within it.

Methodology

1. Identified key groups:
Orchestras, Choral, Theatre, Musical Theatre, Music, Youth, Toi Māori, Kapa haka, Ethnic Groups, Dance Schools. Also Front of House Staff to supplement understanding of the audience perspective.
2. Invitation to targeted participants to attend either a lunchtime or evening 1.5-hour session, clustered by genre. Sessions involved between 3 to 12 participants.
3. Session format:
 - a) Welcome and explain purpose
 - b) Introductions
 - c) Overview
 - d) Rules
 - e) Outline the 3 Options proposed (reading from Council document)
 - f) Discuss REFURBISH option
 - How do people feel about this option?
 - Why would this be a good idea?
 - Why would it not be a preferred option?
 - What should Council be considering for your sector if they chose this path?
 - g) Repeat for DEMOLISH and REBUILD
 - h) Ask if there is anything else anyone wants to add
 - i) Remind how to make submissions
 - j) Thanks and goodbye
4. Recording
Multiple scribes were present at each group and combined notes were sent back to participants to check for accuracy.

Context

The closure of Founders Theatre significantly affected the performing arts community in the Waikato, along with its audiences. Groups felt immediate impact with bookings cancelled and venues changed. In some cases, no alternative venue was available or suitable. Now all groups are considering their medium to long-term activities without Founders. They are dealing with less than satisfactory (or no) alternative venues, impacting upon creative, audience, and financial development and social wellbeing.

Participant uptake for focus groups was high. Creative Waikato initially planned 5 focus groups, but eventually ran 12. This was due not only to strong interest but also the recognition of needing to drill down deeper by each genre.

A handy analogy to help consider the feedback

The performing arts sector is made up of genres. Just like ball-based games in the sports sector is made up of codes. Each genre, like each code, has particular equipment and environments it requires for practicing and performing. They also have different audiences who have different preferences as to how they wish to spectate.

Asking the all performing arts groups to agree on one solution for the Founders issue is a bit like asking rugby, cricket and netball all to agree on one field they can all play on, and for their supporters to like it. Fortunately, no one is asking them to agree. What we have asked is what they think of the options presented for Founders and what do they see as the solution for sector. The job is to then understand each specific genres needs so we can consider what the solutions could and shouldn't be.

Findings

What we discovered is that there is unlikely to be 'one solution' that will work for the whole performing arts sector. This is neither surprising nor unreasonable. These differing needs and wants of the performing arts sector reflect exactly what you might find in any other developed city with a thriving cultural scene. There are however common themes and groupings.

At the risk of over simplifying the sub-sector feedback, our take out from the whole process is:

1. There is a preference (but not unanimous) for a new theatre in central city location (river).

New build preference is driven by:

- a. The need for a more sophisticated and higher performance standard venue. Vastly improved acoustics and technical capabilities
- b. The need to diversify the venue from a 'one space does all' and accommodate the different requirements of classical performance (concert chamber acoustics) and theatre performance (proscenium arch and fly tower). Either as two separate buildings, two separate spaces within a new building, or the introduction of new technology that can effectively accommodate both acoustical treatments in the same space.
- c. For a new performance venue to become an iconic arts centre for the city and make a significant contribution to the cultural life and reputation of the city and region
- d. The belief that investment in the existing building is putting good money after bad
- e. The need to increase the size and scale of the venue (audience capacity), particularly noting rapidly growing participation in Kapa haka, large scale ethnic community events and musical theatre.

There is however a strong counter (but not mutually exclusive) view to this:

2. A preference for refurbishment particularly by community, youth and dance schools.

Refurbishment preference is driven by:

- a. The fact that the venue was suitable (more or less) as it was for these groups
- b. That the length of time it would take to construct a new facility is seen to be a fatal blow to youth arts development as it is equal to the career development lifespan of an emerging artist.
- c. That by the time a new facility is built, professional development, touring routes, and audience engagement will have declined so significantly that it will have a catastrophic impact of the city's cultural wellbeing.

Preference Overview

Below is a high level overview of key issues by sub-sector.

	Preferred Option	Key Themes				
Classical & Choral	Build new	Improve acoustic performance	Need for stand alone concert chamber	800 seats and stage for large collaborations	Build quality to last and grow regional culture	Accessibility for players and instruments
Dance Schools	Refurbish	Youth cannot wait for new. Too many will miss out	Poor alternatives mean the interim will be damaging	Refurbishment priorities focus on backstage facilities	Career starter – new industry techies often learn trade here	Community impact – close to 9,000 ppl affected
Ethnic groups	Build new	Urgency for interim. Large events have nowhere to go	Size and scale – need 1,500 to 1,800 seat auditorium	Parking facilities need significant improvements	Improve acoustic performance	
Front of House Staff	Build new	Toilet amenities need significant upgrade and expansion	Food and hospitality and woefully insufficient	Seat comfort improvement – width and length	Founders is in a great location	Parking facilities need significant improvements
Theatre & Musical Theatre	Build new	State of art technology throughout	Arts hub by the river to drive cultural heart of the city	Consultation with local user experts essential during design	A Create a top class total audience experience	Question if multipurpose is really achievable
Toi Maori – Kapa Haka	New OR affordable access to Claudelands	Sector growth. Kapa haka is growing rapidly	Big business. Teams and audiences are huge	Catering for Māori – space to meet and share kai important	Collaboration. Get Māori key stakeholders in on the conversation	Inclusive space – through design and language
Future Users - Youth	Split	Youth cannot wait for new. Too many will miss out	Skepticism that it will deliver in timeframe or budget	Aspiration, want a high quality venue in their city of choice	Loss of talent. Emerging youth wont stay in Hamilton without a venue	Improve acoustic performance

Key Themes

Some recurrent themes emerged across almost all genres:

- Aspirations for a burgeoning arts centre that everyone can be proud of
- Like for like? – don't just build a new version of the old theatre, that's not what is needed
- Improve customer experience - parking, toilets, catering, hospitality, sightlines
- Parking inadequacies at Funders and essential in planning for new facility
- Acoustic treatment of the auditorium needs to accommodate both amplified and classical or preferably provide separate venues for both
- Quality in everything, particularly technical capabilities
- Seating is increased and/or more comfortable
- Back of house facilities requirements (dressing rooms, toilets, access, technology etc.)
- Interim – regardless of build new or refurbish, a plan to support the sector in the interim must be put in place

Weighting

Given the range of preferences, it may prompt the question, 'how do we weight the feedback by sub-sector'? And the response is, you can't. All art forms, just like all sports codes, play different, important and specific roles. Each has their own specific community profile involved and produces different benefit, whether they are cultural, social, economic or educational. The sum of the parts makes up the rich diversity of a vibrant arts sector that can support and grow a healthy community.

KEY QUOTES

REFURBISH

"Refurbish NOW – add on if you want new, or plan for the future to rebuild, but we can't be left without a suitable facility now"

"With the growing population in Hamilton, the city deserves better, we have long outgrown the current building and its facilities.

The acoustics are bad and wall shape in auditorium just doesn't work. We can't overcome the problem for major orchestral and choir works with just refurbishment; the sound goes straight into the fly tower"

"You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear"

"We need to be heard, we are at the front line of customer experience"

"Refurbishment at \$20m is dressing up a sow's. If it includes all of our needs then a refurbishment may possibly be acceptable – but we know this building inside out and its hard to believe all the necessary changes can be accommodated"

"Do the bare minimum and allow the city to invest in a 'kick arse' event space for the future"

"None of the options really cater for Māori events we have on a huge scale"

"If it's funded by the community, it must be affordable for the community"

"We really need more information to make an informed decision. However refurbishment may be the most sensible option"

"This is a golden opportunity to have a new location and creating an arts culture/space vibe in the downtown area that would give the 'dying' city a heart again"

DEMOLISH

"We would like to think that when we've retired our creative community has something to aspire to performing in"

"There was a need for Founders 50 years ago, and there's a far greater need for a Founders now. We have so much talented youth in our region, this will be debilitating to our communities to not have somewhere local to perform and aspire to use."

"A large facility is essential for our ethnic communities to gather and celebrate"

"Losing Founders would be like a death in the city"

"Unthinkable"

"Economic and cultural loss would be significant"

"Do you want Hamilton to be a shit hole? We would leave"

"It's not about going to other centers to watch. It's about our own communities being able to watch our community"

BUILD NEW

"If we are not working to put on a performance in a theatre then what do our dancers have to aspire to?"

"Think beyond to the next generations. Think about the future of the city"

"If you build something build it with love"

"What does it say about our community? Maori is everywhere, open it up, make it for everyone"

"Key stakeholders and partnerships, give new meaning to feeling about Founders"

"The timeframe is too long. It's a long time for young people to be without a theatre."

"Founders needs to go and we need a fresh start so we can move forward and be strong for a very long future"

"Make the building itself a destination. Build an iconic arts venue, three venues in one; this will be the need in 15 years time. If you want a serious regional orchestra you need a serious decent venue. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity here. "

"Over 300 were turned away from the recent event at Clarence St – they came from all over the region. It was distressing"

"Our forefathers had the vision to place Founders where it is"

Summary and Recommendation

Given the complexity and diversity of the arts sector it is not possible to return with a unanimous response to Councils 1, 2 or 3 options question, and this is not unexpected. In other comparable cities, the needs of these arts groups are met by multiple facilities.

However, giving full consideration to the focus group findings, the majority of feedback could be responded to as follows:

1. Build new. Progress investigation and feasibility for an aspirational, fit for purpose, future proofed theatre
2. Consider general theatre and classical music needs independently
3. Identify and implement an interim solution (now to opening), particularly for community groups. Preferably - get existing Founders back to a minimum operating standard (town hall mode) without fly tower apparatus if necessary.
4. Note that with a new build recommendation, there is strong preference that Founders is not be demolished, but remain and be repurposed to support the community.

What Council Can Do Short Term

The sector recognises that getting Founders open again may take time and will be influenced by the results of final seismic testing. The following actions are suggested ways in which Council can alleviate the short-term problem:

1. Supply Clarence St Theatre (and Meteor if appropriate) with technical equipment removed from Founders (lighting, sound equipment, blacks etc.) that will be used by groups that have had to move from Founders to Clarence. Groups currently have to hire in additional equipment at significant cost.
2. Provide an interim affordable community rate for Claudelands for large community events such as Kapa haka, large ethnic events and other large creative events that outsize Clarence but have the ability to be accommodated by Claudelands.
3. Use opportunity to engage in active research. Evaluate the feasibility of an ongoing community based differential pricing model for Claudelands for large community events that would not be accommodated in a new 1200 -1500 seat auditorium.

Sarah Nathan
CEO Creative Waikato
June 2016

Founders Consultation	Group	May 2016
Focus Groups	Classical-Choral-Instrumental	

KEY THEMES

Acoustic Performance	The most significant and dominant issue for choral and orchestral sector is acoustic performance. Founders has not delivered and there is strong skepticism as to whether it can be refurbished to achieve the required acoustic product. The need for 'scalable' acoustics depending on the performance need was mentioned often.
Fly tower	The fundamental issue is that in a theatre with an arch and a fly tower, is that the sound goes up the tower, instead of out to the audience. Orchestral and choral performances require a specifically acoustically designed concert space.
Size (stage and seating)	Stage must be large enough to accommodate full orchestra and particularly choral and orchestral collaborations. Seating between 800-1000 seats.
Longevity and Quality	A new venue that will have leading edge design and content that will serve the community for a long time, rather than a shorter term fix up. A iconic, destination venue with national draw.
Internal Accessibility	Need for appropriate warm up spaces, increased number and size of dressing rooms, increased width of corridors (for people and instrument movement) and wing size.
Stand alone concert chamber	The issue is that that a multi-purpose venue will always compromise acoustic and performance values for classical performances. Strong desire for a stand-alone concert chamber either as part of new development or up at University with Council contribution.

Classical/Choral/Instrumental Preference (majority): REBUILD

PARTICIPANTS

Brooke Baker	Choral
Delwyn White	Cantando Choir
Jayne Tankersley	Singer, NZCF Waikato/BOP
John Wright	Hamilton Civic Choir
Kath Barnsley	Hamilton Civic Choir
Katie Mayes	Opus Orchestra
Robert Johnson	Orchestras Central
Russell Armitage	Classical Music, Theatre
Susan Trodden	Orchestras Central
Sally Rosenberg	Waikato University
Jill Rodgers	Mighty River Harmony
Harold Henderson	Young Singers in Harmony
Warwick McWha	Opus Orchestra and Mighty River Harmony
Bronwyn Albright	Waikato Rivertones Chorus
Tony Antoniadis	President of Mighty River Harmony
Brianna	Waikato Rivertones Chorus
Rupert D'Cruze	TWSO, Conductor, Musical Director
Andrew Buchanan-Smart	Reviewer, life member TWSO, OPUS
Bob Simcock	Orchestras Central

REFURBISH - Classical/Choral/Instrumental

Quotes/Comments

"With the growing population in Hamilton, the city deserves better, we have long outgrown the current building and its facilities. The acoustics are bad and wall shape in auditorium just doesn't work. We can't overcome the problem for major orchestral and choir works with just refurbishment; the sound goes straight into the fly tower"

Acoustics

- ⇒ Youth choir would not consider booking Founders because of acoustic. Pleased to see the poor acoustics will be worked on.
- ⇒ The acoustic need to be scalable. I.e. if the King Singers performed would be better with scalable acoustics. Big space - so ideal to have moveable acoustic panels.
- ⇒ NZSO and APO have always complained about the acoustics.
- ⇒ Acoustics are crucial, Council need a report from Marshall Day.
- ⇒ When you go to the Michael Fowler in Wellington you can experience beautiful sound.
- ⇒ Founder is a community hall essentially. Founders can never be acoustically good with a big arch, can't cater for certain performers.
- ⇒ Would like to see a concert hall facility, Founders refurbishment isn't going to do that.
- ⇒ Perfect acoustics would be standard shoebox shape common for most concert halls, and no fly tower
- ⇒ Problem for orchestras frequently perform with choir with orchestra in rear and choir in front, always have problems with perfect, clear, quality sound.
- ⇒ Ballet needs large stage, but not good if a combined venue as orchestras/choir don't like fly tower.
- ⇒ There are some innovative ideas to block off the fly tower and improve acoustic ability, take a look at other national venues
- ⇒ Don't like winged layout of the auditorium, the shape of the theatre doesn't help the acoustics. Move the risers forward?
- ⇒ Flooring can help with acoustics. Wooden flooring resonates.
- ⇒ If they refurbished and made the acoustics better but not perfect - still grassroots facility.
- ⇒ Audience wants best they can get, not cut down version and augmented sound
- ⇒ No quality resonance of sound, as a performer hard to hear
- ⇒ Dunedin Town Hall, Auckland Town Hall has excellent acoustic
- ⇒ \$20m wouldn't get better quality of sound - fear enhancement of acoustics would be minimal
- ⇒ Shape of fly tower doesn't help acoustics
- ⇒ Would not consider performing because of acoustics, get more choral ensembles going there.
- ⇒ What improved acoustics actually mean? Need more definition in detail please.
- ⇒ Need acceptable, defined scalable acoustics.
- ⇒ Would be good to have control of acoustics depending on the size of a group, something like moveable panels
- ⇒ Wellington Town Hall has a beautiful sound; Michael Fowler Centre caters for one type of concert.
- ⇒ Acoustics are bad – fly tower, wooden floor, wall shape in auditorium
- ⇒ Can't overcome problem of orchestra and choir putting on major works with refurbishment, the sound goes straight up from the choir.
- ⇒ Shortcoming of refurbishment is to large orchestra and chorale groups, a possible idea is to build a custom plywood shell that can be lowered over the fly tower.
- ⇒ Add hydraulic operated walls to the theatre.
- ⇒ Mighty River Harmony hosts the National Barbershop Harmony NZ Convention and Competition over 2 days every 5 or 6 years, and co-hosts the National Young Singers in Harmony competitions over 2 days every 3 or 4 years. We need a theatre like Founders Theatre for these events.

- ⇒ Mighty River Harmony has hosted the Barbershop Harmony NZ Convention and Competition over 2 days in 1995, 2003, 2010 and 2015 in the Founders Theatre.
- ⇒ In 2015 there were 350 participants with 9 choruses and 17 quartets, and a show of champions on the Saturday night.
- ⇒ Mighty River Harmony co-hosted with the Waikato Rivertones the National Young Singers in Harmony competitions at Founders Theatre in 2006, 2010, 2013 and 2015, with a parade of champions show on the final night.
- ⇒ In 2015, 800 high school pupils over the 2 days in 23 choruses and 36 quartets performed on stage.

Stage size

- ⇒ Opus & Choral are squashed on stage at present; stage is too small, RNZ Ballet brings small company. Can't have a full choral ensemble.
- ⇒ It's exciting to have two of the largest Choral/orchestra groups in Hamilton on stage together but the refurbishment won't meet the needs.
- ⇒ Founders is not big enough for large collaborations (choir and orchestra)
- ⇒ You cannot host a full Symphonic Orchestra and choir on that stage – too small
- ⇒ Larger stage and wings are crucial.

Design and atmosphere

- ⇒ The facility needs to be nice, attractive, have an inviting ambience offering the whole experience.
- ⇒ An extraordinary ugly building – a cowshed
- ⇒ It's an ugly building, but it's like the Narnia wardrobe the magic happens when you go inside.
- ⇒ Any symphony hall in the world doesn't have theatre style surroundings
- ⇒ Renovate changing rooms, larger green room where you can sing.
- ⇒ Prop storage, area when competing, easy access to back stage, easy access for large groups of people to move through 60 - 100 + larger/wider corridors.
- ⇒ Changing rooms need upgrading and more of them
- ⇒ A green room where you can sing
- ⇒ Better flow on and off of stage
- ⇒ Wider corridors - Unloading for singing groups arriving by bus, we have a constant stream of large numbers of people.
- ⇒ Better stage access, sightlines are poor
- ⇒ A report from Marshall Day (Auckland) to get authoritative report and look at Vienna shoebox shape, has a ceiling and no fly tower, Paris Concert Hall
- ⇒ People want a total experience;
- ⇒ Good parking, easy parking
- ⇒ Not a crammed ticket collection area
- ⇒ More toilets
- ⇒ L shape makes the bar area difficult to get a drink at
- ⇒ People are using their discretionary income to come to our shows – this project isn't just about our needs as performers, it's about our audience experience.
- ⇒ Want to be a grown-up city, and then need to have a more grown up venue
- ⇒ Would need to expand backspace to put bigger spaces behind
- ⇒ Soloist room an embarrassment for significant visitors
- ⇒ People are coming for a 'total experience' right from the start of the experience such factors like easy/lots of parking, purchasing/pick up of tickets, enjoying a hospitality area.

Seating

- ⇒ Seating size is about right for our audiences
- ⇒ Footprint of the theatre remains the same? Can we sacrifice rows of seats to make stage bigger?
- ⇒ 2 – Dedicated music venue – 800 seats, joining up with the HCC and Uni plans
- ⇒ 800-seater would suit NZ Youth Choir and Voices NZ
- ⇒ Legroom too limited – wider deeper seats needed

Funding

- ⇒ Could they add \$ to the planned University 800 seat hall facility.
- ⇒ There have been large government grants all around NZ except Hamilton.
- ⇒ HCC have a good case to take to central government for a substantial grant.
- ⇒ Maggie Barry just announced a 'pool' of money for arts facility outside Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch
- ⇒ Major facilities fund – Government, 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 agreement.
- ⇒ Government has given large grants to national venues, Whangarei, Len Lye. Hamilton hasn't received one grant, Palmerston North does, and so does Dunedin.
- ⇒ Build new- what is the operating cost and access for community groups, cost is a barrier with current venues, then it gets on charged to audiences through increased ticket prices.

General

- ⇒ It's a waste of time and money and in the wrong location
- ⇒ Refurbishment is more of the same, nothing different.
- ⇒ If closed down for 2-3 years, concern about loss of users
- ⇒ What real value is a refurb going to add? What is the cost benefit ratio, to user/audience?
- ⇒ What are the other viable options for community groups?
- ⇒ Repurpose Founders as a rehearsal space, house all the orchestras and turn into office space
- ⇒ The city deserves better than a refurbishment with the growth of the region.
- ⇒ Fine to be refurbished - BUT will never be a good/perfect venue for choral/orchestras
- ⇒ Multi purpose at the time, but with a refurbishment it can't be a multipurpose venue.
- ⇒ It's clear Hamilton needs TWO venues; a) Presidium arch facility b) Acoustic hall
- ⇒ If the building was refurbished it is not going to be any good for the three groups;
Choral/Orchestra/Performing arts
- ⇒ Too expensive to use and too much paperwork when hiring.
- ⇒ It's unacceptable having the theatre closed too long.
- ⇒ We are the 4th largest city in NZ, it's pitiful we are in this situation.
- ⇒ Only venue for Hamilton Civic/Vox is St Paul's School or Southwell, but they have limited appeal being schools.
- ⇒ For the development of the choir, they need to have pride when performing in a place, need to have something to aspire to perform in.
- ⇒ Rivertones feel like the 'poor relation' as we can't offer a venue fit for purpose. Clarence is only ok when the group numbers are lower but still have the vital importance of involvement with the international 'Sweet Adeline's' competition in the USA. We were offered to host national comp in NZ, but unsure we can find a venue suitable in Hamilton.
- ⇒ What is the timing? Still in the 2012-23 budget? Finished in 2026-27 – is this okay? Not okay.
- ⇒ \$6 million to bring auditorium up to compliance – but not looking any different?
- ⇒ See small concert hall installed in Academy, 800 seat hall was always part of 'plan B'
- ⇒ With the growing population in Hamilton the city deserves better, outgrow the current building.
- ⇒ Multipurpose means it will never be perfect venue for orchestra and chorale; therefore the HCC put money into the Academy's 800-seat venue
- ⇒ What could be done to make a dual purpose venue?
- ⇒ \$20 million refurbish and a \$30 million contribution to a chamber hall?

CLOSE AND DEMOLISH - Classical/Choral/Instrumental

Quotes/Comments

"There was a need for Founders 50 years ago, and there's a far greater need for a Founders now. We have so much talented youth in our city and region, this will be debilitating to our communities to not have somewhere local to perform and aspire to use."

General

- ⇒ Cross it off the options
- ⇒ Gallagher too small for our audience size – need a 800+ seat venue
- ⇒ Orchestra and choir collaboration as a pianist can't fit on stage – Clarence St
- ⇒ Have to fit programme around Clarence if have to use it as a venue option
- ⇒ Choir members have equivalent performance experience as in Auckland. Developing members and audiences opportunities will be lost
- ⇒ Could not host national organisations or national competitions
- ⇒ Cost of going to Auckland and Wellington is out of reach
- ⇒ Without it there is no facility that can contain orchestra, choir ballet or operatic production
- ⇒ Clarence St is too small, small stage size for large scale productions, no accessibility
- ⇒ Clarence St was built for rehearsal space only.
- ⇒ Unacceptable option
- ⇒ Look at Bergen, Norway – 250,000 population
- ⇒ The choir would never be able to perform with an orchestra again
- ⇒ Founders gone altogether the social impact is immense, it will change how people see music as a profession.
- ⇒ There was a need for Founders 50 years ago, and there's an even greater need for Founders now, we are 3 x greater city size, a Founders is needed to be able to attract established professionals to the city.
- ⇒ We have so much talented youth in our city and region, this will be debilitating to our communities to not have somewhere local to perform/use aspire to use.

Economic

- ⇒ Can't miss out on money coming into our organizations from our annual popular concerts at Founders
- ⇒ Attracting CNZ funding needs quality overall product not just the reputation of the group

Reputation

- ⇒ Professional orchestra reputations suffer, and the reputation of the city suffers.
- ⇒ If you want to have serious regional orchestra need serious decent venue
- ⇒ Disgrace as a city to not have this venue; there would be no significant cultural Centre.
- ⇒ Would create a desert. Just look at the vibrant music department at the University.
- ⇒ Makes it elitist to travel to Auckland

BUILD NEW

Quotes/Comments

"Make Hamilton a destination; make the building itself a destination. Build an iconic arts venue, three venues in one; this will be the need in 15 years time. If you want to have a serious regional orchestra you need a serious decent venue. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity here. "

More than just a rebuild

- ⇒ If we build an 'Arts & Cultural Centre' and 'inclusive' space, IF it's placed in an ideal location i.e. the southern end of Victoria St, it could be an iconic centre for all.
- ⇒ Needs more parking – if located at the southern end, build four stories high in the Meteor car park, with a 'air walk/bridge' across the street from the car park into the 'Arts Centre'
- ⇒ Intergenerational building that needs to last for years into our future.
- ⇒ Commerce to subsidize the arts. For example; The Barbican, London. <http://www.barbican.org.uk/>
- ⇒ Esplanade, Theatres in the Bay – Singapore, <https://www.esplanade.com/>
- ⇒ We need a new building, BUT as long as the purpose is clear and the location is vital. Needs a vision.
- ⇒ Council asking the wrong question. What is the purpose, what are we trying to achieve?
- ⇒ Concert hall pro's arch in one. Concert hall could have steep rake, smaller footprint of auditorium.
- ⇒ Singapore example regarding the multifunctional facility can be achieved only if hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent on advanced technology.
- ⇒ Gallagher's is a good acoustic example, one of the best in NZ
- ⇒ Cambridge is growing – there are 80-carded athletes. Where there's a centre of excellence it encourages other centres of excellence. This is a critical time to change and become a city.
- ⇒ Until there is a CLEAR vision making the theatre smaller is a step backwards
- ⇒ The 'crew' entrance could be via Grantham St. The complex would have glass walls over looking the river – an iconic, fantastic, signature building that puts Hamilton/Waikato on the map
- ⇒ Birmingham Symphony Hall links to the central library canal. People want to be there, it's vibrant and full of life. It's a full aesthetic, artistic experience. <https://www.thsh.co.uk/>
- ⇒ It's a no brainer!
- ⇒ People will come from Auckland to the Chamber because of its excellent sound.
- ⇒ Aims of new build are too constraining. Want to consider the whole audience experience. The option hasn't thought through the entirety of the arts experience.
- ⇒ This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to see Hamilton through for the next 50 years of Hamilton growth. Don't muck around now
- ⇒ New venue experience down at the river, proper precinct at the southern end of the city. Look at the current HCC focus on the precinct.
- ⇒ Make Hamilton a destination; make the building itself a destination.
- ⇒ Build a decent venue and the people will come from the greater/wider area.
- ⇒ Not about revenue stream, what could it mean for the beneficiaries outside the region.
- ⇒ Make theatre as good as sports ground facilities the city have which are great.
- ⇒ HCC haven't offered any option 4 – The vision of the city.
- ⇒ Feels like a short term solution, needs to be better thought through
- ⇒ Location, Location, Location
- ⇒ Build an iconic building
- ⇒ Better off with short-term pain for long term gain. St Paul's, St Peter's, Claudelands
- ⇒ Heart is at Founders. But can see sense of going to something new.
- ⇒ New has to be 'Fit for Purpose'
- ⇒ Needs immediate commitment
- ⇒ We need 3 venues: Concert chamber; Small ensemble theatre - no presidium arch (like Uni's theatre); Presidium arch theatre - fly tower

- ⇒ A commitment is needed to build a concert hall
- ⇒ General public don't know the real difference between a concert chamber and fly tower.
- ⇒ The conversation needs to be informed by engineers, sound specialists etc.
- ⇒ Two parts a) Refurb fly tower b) Also add \$ to the Uni concert hall
- ⇒ Guggenheim, Bilbao, Spain great example, the impact on the city is incredible as it's a destination.
- ⇒ General feeling would be to wait 5-10 years to really get it right. \$50 million seems like a quick fix.
- ⇒ Groups that would be attracted to come would be, NZ Opera, possibly Auckland Arts Festival.
- ⇒ Orchestras could commit to a short-term pain for long term gain. We would program accordingly with what venues we've got to use.
- ⇒ If you have a great facility, it will attract use and patronage

Keep Founders going in the meantime

- ⇒ 5 year trial period – fix Founders to safe level, use while new build is happening. Get it up and running and viable in 5 years, if not – then demolish.
- ⇒ There has to be something in the interim
- ⇒ Short term is the problem
- ⇒ Refurbish as a timely option with a view to build new in the future
- ⇒ 'Make do and Mend' will be ok IF there's a solid plan for an iconic facility.
- ⇒ AND - refurb in the meantime with at least some preferred facility to use whilst new venue is being built; new build can't just be a stopgap.

Benefits

- ⇒ Then NZ Opera might come, Auckland Arts festival might come, big chorus from USA might come
- ⇒ People come from all over NZ and internationally like the Chief games and Field Days
- ⇒ People will be drawn to visit and come to the centre as a destination venue.
- ⇒ The NZCF Big Sing Finale

Funding

- ⇒ Commercial funding model – i.e. like a major car-parking owner
- ⇒ In the UK businesses are located in 'Arts Centre' to assist with paying for the public/iconic building.
- ⇒ Government haven't offered Hamilton any funding – time to shoulder tap
- ⇒ Aspiration building vs affordability is a problem
- ⇒ Phased development option across x amount of years.
- ⇒ Fundamental conversation needs to happen about the affordability of hire age of a new facility.
- ⇒ \$50 million! Needs to more like \$100 million – contributions from central govt, business and districts.

Founders Consultation	Group	May 2016
Focus Groups	Dance Schools	

KEY THEMES

Time frame	<p>This is the critical priority. The dance school community cannot wait for a new facility to be built. The timeframe is a lifetime for a child and represents a huge loss.</p> <p>IMPORTANT QUESTION for Hamilton City Council – Dance groups don't have access to the following in the alternate Clarence Street facilities. Can the Council assist them with the following until a solution is delivered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting • Clothing racks • Drops • Blacks • Risers • Port-a-loos
Existing alternatives	None are satisfactory. Clarence is too small and with poor sightlines. Claudelands is unaffordable and unsuitable.
Refurbishment priorities	Increase backstage toilets and change rooms. Improve backstage access and access to auditorium. Upgrade technical equipment for communications
Community Engagement	Dance school reach and support a large section of our community with around 1,500 students, 2,500 family members and over 5,000 audience members
Career Starter	Nearly all the current technical theatre professionals working privately in Hamilton learned their trade working on dance school productions.

Dance Schools Preference: REFURBISH or Refurbish and add on

PARTICIPANTS

Lynne Gabolinscy	Directions Dance School
Anastasia Ponomareva	Russian Dance
Valerie Lissette	Valerie Lissette Dance School
Kerry Mills	Limelight Dance Academy
Aileen Downey	Drury Lane Dance School
Kerry Davis	Drury Lane Dance School

REFURBISH – Dance Schools

Quotes/Comments

"Refurbish NOW – add on if you want new, or plan for the future to rebuild, but we can't be left without a suitable facility now"

Reflections

- Founders has been a second home for many and an important training ground and start in the industry like Aaron from ACLX. PK Sound. It's a training ground for technicians.
- It was community funded, remembered by community.
- Building has a lot of meaning, lots of feelings from community, lots of attachment
- As crew on shows we have listened to the risks of health & safety for years
- Hamilton operatic was the place for Musical theatre very innovative in regards to national view, reputation of Hamilton has decreased.
- Budding dance schools and dancers, audience goers are being introduced to a theatre for the first time, or it's an annual trip.
- If we're not putting on a show then what do our dancers have to aspire to?
- Budding dance and theatre scene mustn't be quashed.

Refurbishment considerations

- 'Rob Guest Room' is big enough for warm up. Mirrors, bars, wooden sprung floor. Wooden over the concrete is ok.
- More space in wings needed as can be quite dangerous. St James in Wellington is a good example.
- More toilets backstage, definitely need more
- Can only get set in from side of stage, going across stage lighting cords even taped down can be a hazard. Need to have 'channels' for the lighting/cables.
- Not sufficient number of dressing rooms, we have to 'hire' Rob Guest room to accommodate more students.
- We have up to 15 volunteers backstage as runners as there are no communications channels.
- Monitors often not working, all tech needs upgrading, including monitors.
- Students who have finished performing need to be able to enter balcony/second section without disturbing audience.
- It's exhausting for staff and volunteers just 'making do'
- Another audience entrance would be nice, entrance to upper level seating.
- Founders rake of seating is very good for viewing a dance performance
- A new flying system would be very important for dance.
- Safety concerns with a 'patch up', will there be other problems
- Needs to be community use, and also not out of town, acts like NZSO, RNZB etc
- Has not been well maintained.
- We have to rely on 'runners' as we have no comms system. Need monitors working properly
- Parking difficult. There's a parking fee on Saturdays
- Dressing rooms insufficient in size
- Some theatres have separate area for performers to watch without disturbing audience
- Safe flying system is important to dance

Cost

- Would cost of hire go up again? Paying for the extra components now makes it expensive.
- Worry about scope creep effecting affordability to complete plan.
- Can hire practice room separately at Clarence St – could be another income stream for Founders using the Rob Guest room.

Current Alternatives

- Clarence Street does not work, doesn't have what we need. Can't see dancers feet, except from the balcony.
- What we've been offered at Claudelands is ridiculous, offered the arena, but no flying system or elevated stage. There's flat seating, offered the same pricing this year only.
- At Claudelands; open ceiling exhibition hall has been offered, it's an open room with partitions and port-a-loos for changing, so will probably go to Clarence St and do more shows.
- Extra costs involved and more help is needed.
- It's a huge change and challenge for us to go into Clarence St. How do we deal with not knowing the extra costs involved. The shows are going to be 'dulled' down because of worry about costs.
- We will adapt a show to fit Clarence St. Toilets are a problem, only 2 with an increased number of performers.
- Exhausting for children and hard on volunteers.
- 200-400 children in these shows. Having access to the warm up, dance studio is fantastic, has same wooden floor while stage is being set up.
- Clarence St visibility is hopeless for dance, sightlines no good.
- Limited at Clarence to what kind of show we can do
- Dressing room space is very limited
- Clarence is good for cabaret
- Most dance schools will use Clarence St in the meantime will just make it work, they will have to hire more toilets though.
- Only going to Clarence St for the Christmas show because of the flying system, will have to put on extra shows to accommodate all of the audience
- At Clarence St, the shows will be simpler; Claudelands can't really work as it's not set up as a theatre.
- High School venues really are too small. No accessibility with schools.
- We have to do double the shows because the seating is halved but parents can't afford to attend 2 shows

Stage size

- Companies have to minimize touring sets to fit them on stage.
- NZ Ballet would visit 3 times per year with a refurbished theatre
- Embarrassing Hamilton is unable to host NZ Ballet.
- Choirs, chorale, orchestra and dance can't fit on stage.
- Embarrassment Hamilton isn't on the national touring route for big productions
- Our shows do fit in, Oliver just about squeezed in.
- Not just NZ Ballet, Russian Ballet can't fit on stage either.

CLOSE AND DEMOLISH – Dance Schools

Quotes/Comments

"We would like to think that when we've retired our creative community has something to aspire to working towards performing in"

"It's not about going to other centers to watch, we do that anyway. It's about our own communities being able to watch our community"

"If we are not working to put on a performance in a theatre then what do our dancers have to aspire to?"

- Permanent closure would affect our business hugely. Our schools are based on the opportunity to perform.
- Theatre experience is essential for children/students
- Not just for dance training, but also to offer training for other aspects like sound and lighting at the same time. This experience has given people training for their careers now, and now they have their own businesses in Hamilton connected to theatre.
- It's not about going to other centers to watch, we do that anyway. It's about our own communities being able to watch our community.
- We feel there is a view of we can just make do and go to other places – but that's a complete fallacy
- Founders is the best stage in town for dance, other venues not large enough.
- If there is a view that people have got to other venues to go to they are missing the point that we need somewhere for locals to perform
- Big shows bring in money – locals watching locals
- Any new option needs to be affordable
- The Arena is cost prohibitive for us.
- Ticket prices have had to rise because of increased theatre costs, which has reduced audiences

BUILD NEW – Dance Schools

Quotes/Comments

"The time it would take to build is concerning, we'd probably be dead by the time it's ready and opened"
"Don't need new, just need now"

- Not required in this current climate at \$50 million - too long to wait up to 5-6 years or even longer.
- Why build on the same site.
- Why build the same size; could build a new 800 seat but should keep Founders or 1600 + 800 can be reconfigured to different sizes.
- Seems to much \$, too long timeframe for build
- Like for like is a worry, but if rebuild then 'go for it'
- A lot of stress waiting for a new build and organising shows for the other venues in the meantime
- We would happily use as is without a fly-tower, even the floor in Founders.
- The kids look forward to the show we simply 'can't not have it'
- Kids must have a chance to dance on a big stage; they are missing the 'soloist' dressing room.
- The time it would take to build is concerning, we'd probably be dead by the time it's opened.
- Don't want the worry of an increase in hire costs.
- The project is time critical, timing is crucial, and the length of time without a facility isn't good. So much added stress to the dance community.
- If a build is like-for-like what about the orchestras, how will they cope?
- One participant said she would produce shows in Founders without a fly floor or even in the foyer rather than go anywhere else.
- The kids, the generations of children look forward to the shows. We can't just NOT DO THE SHOWS, the kids are gutted they won't have a chance to dance in the big theatre. It's a big deal for them, the prestige is what they look forward and aspire to.
- 5-6 years is a long time for kids

Or add onto the existing with additional improvements

- 1600 seat venue is perfect for touring productions and operatic shows
- 800 seater is great for local community shows.
- Have 2 venues; encourage more users with more choices for on venue size
- Extend current facility on same site. Add concert chamber next to Founders.
- Don't build in the CBD. People are happy to drive to town. Comparison to stadium and rugby watchers.
- Make bar/hospitality stand alone, a separate entity, independently run, don't include in hourly rate. Next-door to Founders site.
- At the moment we can't sell our raffles or programmes without on charge to Founders.
- A public square outside Founders where things can happen, a gathering point, and a place to meet, mingle, and enjoy the space.
- Be nice to have a smaller community space, a smaller room for small community works.
- Have the ability to curtain off the space.
- Build next to Founders. People drive from the theatre and go into town afterwards.
- Don't charge us to have the bar left open!
- Have a separate bar/hospitality area. An entertainment hub within the theatre. Add an 'hospitality experience'
- Founders needs a nice external space, a place for people to meet like European style theatre
- New build alongside old building. New and refurb – create a hub
- Foyer with bar and food refurb is good but shouldn't need to be hired by users. Run separately by a contract or council.

Founders Consultation	Group	May 2016
Focus Groups	Ethnic Groups	

KEY THEMES

New and Bigger	Looking for a larger, state of the art building that will accommodate future communities and diversity. 1,500 – 1,800 seats ideal for large gatherings. Support a vibrant, aspirational development.
Urgency for Interim Solution	There must be a facility of scale available in the interim otherwise there will be significant damage to cultural activity which is essential for community wellbeing. The recent Indian community event which had to shift for Clarence St turned over 300 away from the doors. People had come from Tauranga. It was dangerous and distressing.
Acoustics	Founders is not currently coping with the acoustic requirements of large ethnic dance events
Parking	Large audiences result in significant parking issues at Founders

Ethnic Groups: Rebuild

PARTICIPANTS

Jay Randhawa – Indian Cultural Society Waikato & Waikato Punjabi Cultural Club (25+ years)

Rupinder Virk - Indian Cultural Society Waikato & Waikato Punjabi Cultural Club (18 years)

REFURBISH – Ethnic Groups

Quotes/Comments

"You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear"

General

- Can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.
- What value are you adding if refurbished?
- Very important what the audience view is
- If it's made larger – where will people park?

Acoustics

- Poor acoustics for Diwali performers/dancers who rely on the beat of the music for their dance, at the moment we struggle to hear the live beat.
- If changing the acoustics, they'll have to change everything

Location

- No benefit where it is at the moment
- Lacking location appeal
- Parking is an issue

Facilities

- At the moment hardly any legroom and width is poor, change the seats. The possible reduction of seating will lose approx. from 1200 to 900?
- As a club (Indian Club) we can't afford the rehearsal space; constantly let down by community centres
- The building needs a common boardroom and offices for multicultural space.
- 1500-1800 seat venue is ideal, can't break into multiple performance. Claudelands is big enough, but atmosphere isn't there.

CLOSE AND DEMOLISH - Ethnic Groups

Quotes/Comments

"A large facility is essential for our ethnic communities to gather and celebrate"

- Option 3, to close and demolish, is definitely not an option
- It is so important to the Indian and other ethnic communities to have large scale facilities in which to gather a celebrate cultural festival and events
- People choosing this option don't see the value and opportunity

BUILD NEW - Ethnic Groups

Quotes/Comments

"Over 300 were turned away from the recent event at Clarence St – they came from all over the region. It was distressing"

Think Bigger

- It is possible for an 'option 4' and make a strong decision - make an Arts Centre.
- We need a new building, BUT as long as the purpose is clear and the location is vital. Needs a vision.
- Start THINKING BIG – future proof it, do it right this time, and it's the right time to do it.
- For example – think of the Harbour Bridge – they lanes have to be changed all the time to allow for the large volumes of traffic now.
- Hamilton is rapidly changing only 1 hour from South Auckland. People will start to come to Hamilton for shows, as it will be easier to access.
- 300 people came to our Indian community shows; it would have been 700 only due to a clash of programmes.
- Over 300 were turned away from the recent event at Clarence St – they came from all over the region. It was distressing.
- International performers know Hamilton is a hub for Tauranga and Auckland.
- Cambridge is growing – there are 80-carded athletes. Where there's a centre of excellence it encourages other centres of excellence. This is a critical time to change and become a city.
- Multicultural events at the arena are not ideal, sightlines are not good.
- You can't build like-for-like. You have to look to the future to ensure it's future proofed.
- A new build will rejuvenate the city
- For the Indian creative community a 1249 seat theatre is limiting. For Diwali events they are 3-4 hours long. We hold them on Labour weekend so we can have a Sunday performance.
- Build new – be aspirational – BUT with a fit for purpose space in the interim.
- New build must have other revenue
- If you spend \$50 million, you might as well spend more and get something that really works.
- Rebuild AND repurpose Founders – use it as rehearsal / performance venue for orchestras, ethnic groups, dance schools etc
- Fly tower possibly not needed
- Trial it – Trial repurpose, see if it works, if not working then demolish it

Keep Founders going in the meantime

- There has to be something in the interim

General

- For local creative communities we need rehearsal space, office space, and enough parking. The trick with a new build is to gain a commercial return.
- It's not a 3-year election cycle response – it's a generational response.

A New and Growing Industry

- Bollywood moviemakers are now moving into NZ from Switzerland because of the natural light in NZ, the language and driving is easier here.
- NZ make the most Indian short movies in the world. Indian short movies are being made and are very popular – there will be films 'shooting' in the Waikato.
- So this is where will the premieres take place – there will be a need for a prestigious place.

Founders Consultation	Group	May 2016
Focus Groups	Front of House Staff	

KEY THEMES

Amenities	The toilets were the most significant problem for audiences at Founders. Both comfort and quantity. This cannot be under emphasized.
Food and hospitality	Lack of food options for audiences is a significant issue as the venue supplies neither sufficient options while open, and is closed as people leave. People who have travelled from around the region (and locally) find this vastly problematic.
Seat comfort	Seats are too small in legroom and width to be comfortable for the average sized audience member. Some rows in Founders (eg Row I) have poor sight lines.
Good location	Location was seen to be a benefit and a new facility in the same location would be ideal
Parking	A significant issue. From quantity to access. Must be addressed.

Front of House Staff Preference: New build, same location

PARTICIPANTS

Victoria Newton-Smith	15 years working at Founders
Colin Milmine	20+ years working at Founders
Joy Milmine	20+ years working at Founders
Christine Foster	20 years working at Founders

REFURBISH – Front of House Staff

Quotes/Comments

"We need to be heard, we are at the font line of customer experience"

Toilets

- ⇒ The current toilets are 'retro' and that's being nice
- ⇒ Hope it includes toilets. Its cold in the toilets, and cold water. Currently only 9 ladies toilets.
- ⇒ Ladies, who know the interval is coming up, get out of the theatre early to avoid the cueing.
- ⇒ Cues go past the auditorium doors, clash with the bar area ques.
- ⇒ Predominantly female audiences we open up the gent's toilets and direct gents to accessible toilet.
- ⇒ Some people miss out on start of act 2 because of toilet lines
- ⇒ Only one disabled toilet. Depends on type of show. 2 or 3 would be good.
- ⇒ Have to commandeer it back for person with disability, includes elderly, crutches, all disabilities.
- ⇒ Mothers with multiple children need a space to all go. Changing room space is in the disability toilet.
- ⇒ Need to consider the types of audience, number of children, age, gender etc.
- ⇒ 12-15 toilets plus a family room, depends on what happens with urinals, plus disability access toilets.
- ⇒ **Only one other thought about toilets, is perhaps consider two separate locations. Architects would have figures on X amount of patrons per toilet build etc.**
- ⇒

Making Do

- ⇒ We are constantly smoothing out 'rough edges' at Founders to make it work and ensure everything runs smoothly.
- ⇒ Works well with regular good staff, not so good with casual volunteers.
- ⇒ We are expected to be professional, Wardens for volunteers.
- ⇒ Paid staff crucial in use of emergencies, volunteers won't necessarily be able to handle it.
- ⇒ At Founders minimum of 5 staff, volunteers don't know and can't know all the 'nooks and crannies' to look for people in an evacuation.

Seats

- ⇒ Very uncomfortable. No legroom, big seats now at movie theatres to accommodate larger people and provide more comfort. People are paying for entertainment and don't want to be uncomfortable.
- ⇒ Also issues for larger people, need wider seats, width at the moment is uncomfortable. Also uncomfortable for people on either side of that person. Have used seating in the mobility area.
- ⇒ Have received feedback about uncomfortable seats.
- ⇒ Sightlines are dependent on how stage is set up. Can be clear all the way from the back.
- ⇒ Staff has donated cushions to prop up small children.
- ⇒ Row I has a 'kink' in the height, poor sightlines
- ⇒ Row P users are affected by latecomers, getting into the row across them.
- ⇒ One entrance point is not particularly challenging, keep flow going at top of stairs.

Parking

- ⇒ Brisbane has a purpose built building. All parking is under the building.
- ⇒ Parking is a big issue. Especially when the Rugby is on and the Cricket. Rainy weather creates issues.
- ⇒ Buses with patrons from regional cities have difficulty parking.
- ⇒ There is no bus parking. The buses have to go elsewhere to park.
- ⇒ Stadium accommodates buses very well.
- ⇒ Disability parking 2 out front and 2 by stage door.

- ⇒ Better accessibility needed into building. No covered walkway for people, especially for the elderly and vulnerable.
- ⇒ Refurb won't address the parking issues

Visitor Experience

- ⇒ Auditorium could have a new look. Some form of elegance, beauty, not white, carpeted, sterile look, and a theatre look.
- ⇒ People grizzle but no formal complaints.
- ⇒ We work hard to 'smooth' things over and make it a good experience.
- ⇒ Ambience and the whole experience are important to the ticket purchaser.
- ⇒ Fills up foyer, can get everyone in in 20 mins.
- ⇒ Good that bar is outside theatre itself unlike Clarence
- ⇒ Essential to get though refreshments and toilet area easily and efficiently, there are families that travel a long way for some events, especially Kapa Haka and need both of these amenities.
- ⇒ Water fountains please with filtered water.
- ⇒ We have a stack of paper cups, we go to the ushers room to get water for people
- ⇒ If client hasn't booked kiosk then there is no water available at all.
- ⇒ Hospitality in front of house, not enough area if there's a 'drinking' audience. Extension of food offering, look at more elegant food selection, gluten free etc.
- ⇒ Catering contract is important.
- ⇒ We get asked 'where can I go to get something to eat' so we have produced a food map to show people where to go.
- ⇒ Kiosk is dependent on how many Montana staff are on duty. Eftpos slows up the process. Bigger food and bar area needs more staff.
- ⇒ Front of House staff don't have contact with the stage manager. Duty Manager has contact with the stage manager, no real flexibility over interval times.
- ⇒ At Academy staff can control start times based on lines/drinks etc
- ⇒ The city needs a building like Founders.
- ⇒ Claudelands good for big concerts, Netball, Basketball and Clarence and Meteor serve community groups.
- ⇒ Nowhere for the NZ Ballet/Ballet, big Operas, orchestra to go.
- ⇒ Staff has to be very ware of audience members and vulnerable people. Volunteer staff doesn't necessarily have the skills to identify these people.
- ⇒ We are experts in assisting fragile, vulnerable people, the getting them out of the theatre quickly and efficiently.
- ⇒ Spotted a very sick elderly lady in a mid row once, got her out and to the disabled toilet in time
- ⇒ Need to have big operas, ballet, and orchestral. University growth has huge potential for audience. Visiting family, also regional people might have a whole weekend stay.

Hotere Mural

- ⇒ Hotere mural - not recognised, not appreciated, not presented well where it is.
- ⇒ Hotere probably the only thing you'd save.
- ⇒ Where did the Dame Malvina Major cameo plaque go?
- ⇒ I didn't know how important the 'Hotere's, it's never been properly acknowledged or respected, there's nothing saying this is one of NZ's iconic artists
- ⇒ Don't muck around with the Hotere, it can be presented better as a treasured NZ Iconic art work

CLOSE AND DEMOLISH – Front of House Staff

Quotes/Comments

"Losing Founders would be like a death in the city"

- ⇒ Would lose the shows/musicals that people like and want to see.
- ⇒ It will affect my work capabilities, this is my job.
- ⇒ Schools and communities would suffer.
- ⇒ Stage Challenge has grown and grown. Whole it would suffer financially.
- ⇒ People don't want to travel to Auckland.
- ⇒ We'd lose a big part of the city
- ⇒ It would be like a death.
- ⇒ Losing a Town Hall
- ⇒ What?!!
- ⇒ Hamilton would be called a 'cow-town' for sure. Even though it's a multicultural city, we need to grow up.
- ⇒ Building is not old enough to have an emotional attachment. Louis Armstrong performed there and people don't know or care.
- ⇒ City would suffer financially

BUILD NEW – Front of House Staff

Quotes/Comments

"Our forefathers had the vision to place Founders where it is"

General

- ⇒ Preferences new build in same place – a chance to get it right with good design.
- ⇒ Build a larger build but with other venues in the same complex
- ⇒ Bring in the 'out lying' communities in to pay
- ⇒ Feel that there would be a majority of people who would love to keep Founders where it is.
- ⇒ Our fore fathers had the vision to place Founders where it is.
- ⇒ River walkways are slipping – not stable ground
- ⇒ Accessibility in Founders from all directions is good.
- ⇒ Should be building bigger to accommodate everyone, stop missing out on productions.
- ⇒ Academy is an outer limit of city venue.
- ⇒ 5-6 years seems a ridiculous time – too long, why does it take that long?
- ⇒ River location - no way!
- ⇒ Why shift is offsite, lost all the elegance straight away. More parking issues. Bars and clubs, Nana's and elderly people won't like being down town having to negotiate 'town' patrons.
- ⇒ People like to go to venue as a destination

Parking

- ⇒ Theatre and black box, multi purpose spaces (3), put all the parking underground.
- ⇒ Put parking in green area. With some covered parking.
- ⇒ Build car parking underground
- ⇒ BUT the \$50 million doesn't cover parking

Technical

- ⇒ Have to increase stage area to get NZ Ballet in; audience wants them and the NZSO to come to the theatre
- ⇒ Curtain drop to partition off 1300 seater
- ⇒ 800 seater (acoustically treated)
- ⇒ Start with NZSO & ballet, and then anything else should be able to be accommodated.
- ⇒ In new build put in some kind of retractable sound sheet over fly tower.

Founders Consultation	Group	May 2016
Focus Groups	Theatre and Musical Theatre	

KEY THEMES

New new new	This sector advocates strongly for a new build. They have high technical demands on the facility and after decades of working in Founders do not believe it is worth salvaging. The intrinsic design flaws resulting from a 1960's plan are not fixable. Below, they have provided detailed account of the technical and design deficiencies of the building and contents. Does the refurbish plan address all these issues?
Art Hub	There is vision for a vibrant arts hub located centrally next to the river. An integrated facility that links with the city's other cultural and hospitality offerings, providing a total entertainment experience.
Consult	There is disappointment that Council staff has not consulted the technical users of the space as they have developed refurbishment plans
Audience experience	Significant interest in improving the audience experience including parking, hospitality, toilets, seating and access. As well as locating the venue in the centre of a vibrant part of the city.
Multipurpose	Concern expressed over the concept of 'multipurpose'. Founders was not a fit for purpose build and as a result was/is a compromise for all users – impacting on technical and acoustic performance. Be realistic about the different needs of users of a proscenium arch/fly-tower theatre, vs. those requiring a concert chamber. Conversely, a new build has the opportunity to integrate new neutral spaces that may have a variety of uses.

Theatre/Musical Theatre Preference (majority): REBUILD

PARTICIPANTS

Aaron Chesham	ACLX Lighting
David Sidwell	Theatre Director
Jason Wade	Clarence St Theatre
Jenni Murphy-Scanlon	<u>Current Committee member and past President of Musikmakers, past Chair of Riverlea Theatre.</u>
Cecilia Mooney	Children's theatre director and theatre practitioner
Russell Armitage	Arts advocate and Producer
Matt Walker	International actor and director
Jeremy Bell	Academy of Performing Arts
Chris Sidwell	Hamilton Operatic
Nicole Hardy	Hamilton Operatic
Michael Lamusse	ACLX Lighting
Yvonne Milroy	Performing arts advocate, producer, performer

Summary of Technical Issues Discussed for Founders

Loading docks	Need to accommodate 5+ containers
Seating	If you widen the stage, it will adversely affect the sightlines from the auditorium. Needs separate access for audience to upper seating tiers
Flying system	Must be fully automated (not counterweighted) and pre-programmable
360 degree stage access	Need to be able to access stage from side, behind and below. Need to be able to 'fly' under the stage as well as above (set and cloths getting sucked into floor). Improve access from stage to auditorium. Add catwalk.
Communications	Comms systems are antiquated. Require minimum 8 wireless comms headsets. Currently all tethered which is hopeless. TV monitors require upgrading.
Ceiling height back stage	Too low and needs to accommodate touring clothing racks. Doors need to be floor to ceiling
Internal lift	Is required to transport heavy costumes upstairs to dressing rooms
Showers	Need one shower per green room
Toilets backstage	Increase 2-3 times
Fire exits	Increase fire exit access
Dressing rooms	Increase size to accommodate 30-40 people. Improve private dressing rooms for guests and leads
Sound desk	Position of sound desk currently results in 'light spill' for audience members behind. Needs to be moved.
Follow spot	Needs to be more centre of auditorium (currently at back). Current position causes instability and lack of specific control
Dividing curtain	Has not worked for 10 years. Reinstate, but ensure lighting is moved
Lighting Box	Should be at centre of auditorium. Is currently 15m off centre. Stage manager cannot see full stage for cues.

REFURBISH – Theatre/Musical Theatre

Quotes/Comments

"Refurbishment at \$20m is dressing up a sow's ear and isn't palatable. IF it includes all of our needs then a refurbishment may possibly be acceptable – but we know this building inside out and its hard to believe all the necessary changes can be accommodated"

"This is a golden opportunity to have a new location and creating an 'arts culture/space vibe in the downtown area that would give the 'dying' city a heart again"

Don't Refurbish

- I don't think it's an option
- You'll leave yourself with a legacy of what doesn't work
- Deferring the problem. An expensive band aid, not a beautiful old building 'due for refurbishment'
- Concerned the project will run out of money, then not all the items needed will be included
- I've sat on groups for 25 years and still come to this position regarding Founders
- Location can't be fixed
- Refurbishment is a risky option, looks cheaper but could come up to the \$50 million to do it properly
- \$20 million not that far from \$50 million
- It is a good reminder about how much performance we miss out on in Hamilton because the current size theatre can't accommodate the set and team. This is also negative for audience development in Hamilton, and no development for up and coming users
- This seems to be an option not to move forward
- Why is there an option to even consider patching up again, and not putting a marker down as NZ's fourth largest city?
- Here is our fist big theatre? Compared to Auckland's 6th theatre!
- Great opportunity to find the right location and build new, South Theatre precinct. Not Claudelands. Too isolating again, Founders over again.
- What is the lifespan of a refurbished building?
- Consider the ongoing maintenance that may not be addressed in refurbishment budget and continues to breakdown. Will there be money for this? There will still be problems underneath, don't just put a Band-Aid on it.
- For \$20 million are you going end up with the antiquated things like communication systems?
- Not in a great area. The whole location and access issue is not going to be addressed under a refurbishment plan
- Frankly patching up is not a decent option.
- This is a golden opportunity to have a new location creating an 'arts culture/space vibe in the downtown area would give the 'dying' city a heart again, it's not about the \$ it's about the fit for purpose.
- Like for like doesn't cover this adequately.
- Does the city want to provide a first rate facility? The stadium is fantastic – the All Blacks play there!
- What else is not in the refurbishment plan that's not going to break down in the next 10 years?
- Just doing another expensive Band-Aid – feels like 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff'
- Refurbishment at \$20 mill is dressed up as a sours ear isn't palatable. IF it includes all of our needs then a refurb would be acceptable.

Consultation

- What user input has been received about the needs of the refurbishment, who has been asked?
- Key experts in the creative community such as Aaron (ACLX), David, Aaron haven't been consulted.
- Feeling the \$20 million proposal of ideas has come from HCC staff and not from users/experts.

If Refurbish – Important facilities and technical requirements that must be considered

- Storage and loading docks. Pushed for space. Can't unload a fleet of trucks, has effect on touring companies too.
- Plan to rebuild the entire stage house is a massive undertaking
- Sightlines will get worse with a wider stage house and Presidium arch
- Get tech savvy – using automated flying system
- Side, behind and underneath the stage underneath is 'woeful' be great to have the ability to extract through the stage floor (dry ice etc.) like other premier theatres, Founders doesn't have this.
- Access from the stage down to the auditorium is very poor, catwalk around orchestra pit please.
- More dressing rooms, at least 2 more, and dressing rooms essential for paid professionals.
- Green room too small.
- Improve intercom system; Southwell has a great intercom system.
- Dividing curtain to block off audience size has not worked for some years.
- Stage manager calls place from lighting box; it's 15 metres off centre, not good, should be centered
- Calling the show right from the middle, stage manager needs to see when to call the cues.
- Seven packs of wired comms need to come with hire of theatre, need 8 as a minimum. And need wireless comms.
- Wireless comms needed, at the moment we are 'tethered' to mic comms. Much better to have a wireless comms as a capex in the theatre than the \$10k cost of hiring.
- Roof height backstage is too small for standard touring clothing racks
- Put lift in for heavy carting to 2nd floor, costumes can be stored in corridors sometimes
- More showers for performers, one per green room. More toilets for large performance groups, such as the dance school shows.
- More fire exits back stage. Fire exits to green room lacking
- Storage and loading docks very pushed for space in dock, big sets are a struggle, the consortium containers (Phantom), at the moment can only use 4/5 of these types of containers.
- There's no catwalk around the stage, we have to make our own. Val Lissette has built her own.
- Never enough dressing rooms, increase all the small dressing rooms – increase to at least 30-40 people plus.
- Dressing rooms all over the place, there are no private rooms.
- All of the back stage comms like TV, mic's intercoms need to be replaced and upgraded.
- Position of the 'follow spot' need to be improved, somewhere closer to the divider curtain would be good.
- Does refurb include new lights?
- Lighting needs to progress to dimmer switches. The fly floor is manual, should be programmable. Must have pre-programmed systems available. Use modern technology
- View is ok.
- There's a lighting 'spill' from sound desk in back seating area – not good.
- Four rows behind the sound desk were closed for big shows because of disruption from sound spill.
- Stored set pieces up the wall – no space, Napier theatre can hold a set ready to go for a scene change.
- Increased roof heights, space for costume racks, door heights need to be floor to ceiling.
- Costumes have to sit in corridors.
- If refurbished then you need a lift installed to take costumes upstairs, currently being walked upstairs.
- Number of showers for performers is 3. One shower per dressing room- 6 showers needed upstairs
- Not many green rooms at the moment. Not many green rooms, stage access is too far away. ie you need to get 200 kids on stage, need more wing space/hold space.
- Not enough fire exits, upstairs not enough for 100, exiting through stairwells at the moment not good.

Parking

- Parking for access for performers, business hours and when a game at stadium makes it very difficult to find a park and you have to pay for parking.
- Parking is a massive issue. Cast and crew take all the close parks.
- Concerns with safety too, not enough access to disabled parking.
- There's insufficient parking for all patrons, disabled, elderly, staff, cast and crew.
- Safety is an issue. Patron had handbag snatched.
- Need a 3 level car park. Half the problem is it's not a desirable place to go – ie no decent parking.

Seating configuration

- 2/3 audiences sit in top half. Look at easier access into theatre – 2nd level entry
- 4 rows behind sound desk has restricted viewing

Audience Experience

- Create the whole experience for the audience member, make it uplifting, great parking, restaurants, drinks etc
- Change the toilets in foyer? Would be serious mistake to not have refurbished toilets, more female toilets.
- Front of house - needs more accessible toilets for disability users
- Make it desirable for an audience member. No benchmark at the moment, to measure.
- Pre-event space inside foyer for groups would be nice.
- Other theatres have audience access from above, sides, front etc – consider audience access.
- Need modern, decent bathrooms, more female toilets.
- A nice venue next to the theatre as a functional area.

General

- It will just as convenient for the Pokeno community to travel to Hamilton rather than Auckland.
- 'Founders is my favourite theatre out of all', but still has many limitations.
- Hamilton does not get a lot of touring work it goes elsewhere, misses out especially with the NZ Ballet. It doesn't develop audiences.

CLOSE AND DEMOLISH – Theatre/Musical Theatre

Quotes/Comments

“Unthinkable”

- ‘Unthinkable’
- ‘Not an option’
- What then? Where after?
- Disloyalty to the Hamilton community
- People would leave Hamilton because they can’t do what they do or want to do.
- City owes it to the community
- Deserve a flagship building
- We’d lost a 1200 seat venue?
- So ignorant to take away the building
- People need an ‘arts space’
- Promoting Claudelands as an arts space is not an option
- ‘Feel so proud of all the arts genres’
- Mainstream theatre should just be a ‘given’ for the city. As to Garden’s, Stadium and Museum
- Limit opportunities for future generations – have to resort to occasional trips out of town?
- Don’t provide that facility to see the best and practice in it, then you just don’t have it all, people will be forced to go elsewhere.
- Families with talented children will move where their children can grow and flourish creatively.
- Economic impact must be taken into account
- From an education perspective. No performance space then why stay in Hamilton? Just leave Hamilton; there is a natural progress from Riverlea, Clarence St, and Academy to a Founders stage.
- Where is the economic information for the ‘Close and Demolish option’?
- Robbing the city, killing things that are making it buzz with excitement and life.
- City needs all aspects to be fulfilled.
- There are people who want it.
- Claudelands is a Barn’ not a theatre proposal
- It will leave a hole removing a theatre of this size.
- This will forget community, as it’s the right size for the dance school shows.
- Already impacting on the arts community. People are leaving!
- Impact will be in the city community as a whole
- People spoke 50 years ago about the need for this theatre.
- To contemplate not having a large theatre is not an option
- What will our children do they need it.
- There are industries that aren’t in the city, so we don’t have the expertise. E.g. Avanti Cycle Dome has attracted world-class opportunities. No large professional theatre = lost opportunities.
- School productions are so important, the they don’t continue, no theatre, then families and people involved will disappear. There is no incentive for families to stay, they’ll go and study and Vic Uni etc.
- The two-week opera schedule held in Wanganui has massive impact on city, so imagine similar here
- Huge hole with out Founders for grassroots level – ie schools, The Founders is very good size to accommodate parents and children.
- It will impact the whole city, people are already looking to leave.
- Important to note the past heritage to the community. The community spoke 50 years ago to pay for the theatre.
- Lost deficit to the city will go on and on.
- If you remove the hub of performing arts from the economy – there is economic loss.
- How much effect on community – not just \$300,00 – cumulative

BUILD NEW – Theatre/Musical Theatre

Quotes/Comments

"Think beyond to the next generations. Think about the future of the city"

Think big and future focused

- After living overseas for a few years, bringing friends to Hamilton to show them the city – it's a great city and this is a golden opportunity.
- Founders is not a destination or hub – you just go for the show – it doesn't help build an arts culture
- Use NZ architect, someone who understands our environment
- 'An events curator' for the city!!!! START NOW – build the vibe, the atmosphere, and the excitement in arts culture, for the new facility.
- Define what is the main purpose of the venue!
- What are our city's ambitions? The stadium build is a good example - it attracts the All Blacks, lots of local teams and support for these games.
- Exciting place to come to an excellent venue. Some good examples in Hamilton are the Hamilton Gardens, the Stadium, cycle ways.
- The money has come from more than one source.
- Huge civic contribution, people see the opportunity for a change in the city.
- If end game is a much better outcome, then we wait the six years.
- Re establish direction of the city
- Why is it going to take 5-6 years anyway?
- "The most amazing opportunity for the city"
- "This is the chance"
- "Becomes its own thing"
- Part of the heart of the city, and the region.
- Is \$50 million realistic? What is that figure based on? Is it enough?
- Still got to be affordable to community. Don't recoup costs by raising price to hire. It will be out of reach for the community.
- Think tank about how we could afford it.
- This will future proof the theatre. The 2 venues under 1 roof. I.e. make a destination, need Marshall Day expertise.
- Destination example – Karapiro Rowing Club, The Stadium
- A business plan needs to be drawn – money doesn't come from one source. If you create a vision for community buy-in then people start seeing how their lives will change and benefit and will become 'motivated' to look at philanthropic options and trusts etc.
- In terms of build time, definitely short term pain for long term gain - IF we have an iconic building.
- Why does it have to take so long to build?

Location

- Southern end of the city is on the bus loop, Founders is a two-bus ride trip away from Ham east.
- It needs to be a destination that provides an experience; the southern end of town has more appeal.
- Do not build at Claudelands – 'not a destination'
- Build beside the river; show off Hamilton's prime asset to visitors, Knox Street parking is there.
- Experience is town centered, not building centered.
- Already raked ground in the south end of the city.
- It has to be riverside.
- Community arts and hospitality precinct

Multi Purpose?

- Cannot be something to everyone. As Founders was originally built, and didn't work.
- Most attracted events at Founder are musical theatre.
- Founders was built as a concert hall (somewhere for concerts) like Split Enz etc.
- Not built for orchestra or musical theatre small sides, we know better now.
- Musical theatre, NZSO, NZ Ballet end-users that have most influence on what they need – consult all the way.
- Both venues (theatre and orchestra chamber) as part of one, fit for purpose, shared bar & foyer
- Look at audience numbers and usage - orchestral numbers will be lower than musical theatre use.
- Can't put musical theatre into orchestral venue.
- Musical theatre draws most users – most demanding, good benchmark
- Opportunity to create new spaces and be more creative with spaces. Hire opportunities to a variety of users if the spaces were creatively versatile.
- Art Gallery combo
- Rebuild plans need to be discussed with users.
- Doesn't matter how flash building is, if it doesn't work for users.
- Building new is creating opportunity for new build will have more functionality and versatility.
- It's more versatile good hire to out for events, more people will be interested. A room for musical theatre that can be changed into a small concert thus attracting more revenue.
- The first problem with Founders was it was built as a building for everything. Should have 2 spaces;
- 200 seat concert hall and a musical theatre.
- Wasn't built to hold large-scale props, not built for musical theatre, not built for orchestra. Today you'd never build a 'Founders' but now we know better and have the expertise.
- The end users have to be part of the design and overall purpose of a new facility.
- Lots of input from all three main players like;
- NZ Ballet
- Opera
- Musical theatre has to be fully consulted in the New Build process.
- Approx. 1200 seats for musical theatre and approx. 500 for dramatic theatre.
- Look at theatres around the world, look at their designs and then build, don't want to rush the planning for later operational 'niggles'.
- It's not sensible to build like for like when the city's growing so rapidly.
- Like for like is ok if it's well designed. But if it's just another new theatre then we haven't advanced as a city.
- Build for future proof.

Design Considerations

- Loading dock needs to be part of the design. Loading bay in Founders is not good at the moment.
- End users must be involved in design of space, built for purpose, top rate.
- Built on 'St James box' (stage house) model, get advice/consultation from Royal NZ Ballet regarding sizing etc.
- Venue still at 1200 seats or up to 1500 seats with 800 seats plus 400 seats on balcony.
- Side of stage dressing rooms. Easy access to stage.
- Rehearsal space is not needed, this is offsite.
- Decent green room and warm up area big enough for a cast of 50 plus people.
- Adequate orchestra pit and access. Hydraulic orchestra room with access to pit
- Look to Wellington -St James Theatre has Opera, Musical theatre, Ballets; Michael Fowler has the orchestral performances.
- Need an automated flying system built now, a counter weight system will become outdated quickly (20 years) – Hamilton after all is meant to be a 'high tech' city

- If build new then it has to have the right facilities, identify users? Who are the future users? If we have to wait 6 years for a new facility then it can't be outdated.
- Include adaptability for orchestral set up.
- Seats up to 1500-2000 – Dress Circle is desirable.
- A revolving stage would be nice.
- Overseas a lot of cloths fly down through the floor – suck down dry ice through floor, bring people down through the floor.
- Needs modern lighting
- It would need excellent access for 'pack in' access for trucks with 5 containers.
- Users need a car park close by, staff/crew need parking onsite.
- 800-1,000 seats good for larger major productions.
- 800 + balcony, tiered seating
- 1800-2000 people, steeper rake with dress circle
- Hire costs shouldn't go up to recoup costs
- Easy access to stage, not walking upstairs or downstairs for onstage.
- Stage house needs;
 - Decent green room that can house 50+ people
 - Mirrors
 - Warm up area for dancers
 - Need 'pit access'
 - Need orchestra and musician room
- It's absolutely imperative it has to be future proofed regarding technology systems. For example the Academy have seating that can be transformed from a classroom facility to a theatre in 30 minutes, less staff costs involved.
- Sound needs to be considered if it's a like for like, look at sound shell type solutions.

Founders Consultation	Group	May 2016
Focus Groups	Toi Māori - Kapa haka	

KEY THEMES

Sector growth	Kapa haka appears to be our fastest growing arts sector. Uptake and participation in youth continues to grow rapidly due to school programmes and whanau participation. Match that with projected growth in Māori population (particularly in youth) in the Waikato and you are looking at the most popular art form in the Waikato.
Big Business	The scale of the requirements for kapa haka is massive. The stage must be 20m x 20m. There are 40 performers per team. At competition level it is not unusual to have over 20 teams competing. There are many levels of comp – junior, secondary, senior, regional, national. Every competition attracts a massive audience. The ideal seated audience is 3,000 – 4,000 for regionals. Current activity in Waikato is limited by affordability of sufficiently scaled venues.
Catering for Maori Performing arts	Beyond scale there are critical considerations. Kapa haka is not an 'art form' to Māori. It is intrinsic to being Māori. Therefore having places in which to come together around Kapa haka is critical to community wellbeing. This cannot be underestimated. These considerations include affordable accessibility, places indoor and out to congregate, places to share and prepare kai, places to play.
Collaboration	There is a strong sense that a new development, which was inclusive and culturally appropriate for Māori, would gather significant interest from major Māori stakeholders. Such an envisioned partnership is seen to be a massive opportunity for our region.

Kapa Haka – Te Wananga Session: REBUILD or Increase affordable access to Claudelands
Toi Māori – Kapa Haka – Creative Waikato Session: Refurbish

PARTICIPANTS

Te Wananga – Te Awamutu Campus Session

Reo & Tikanga

Paraone Gloyne Tikanga to CEO, Chair of Tainui Waka Cultural Trust

Te Atawhara Collette

Brooke Snowden Home based workers delivering the home-based courses
Kaihaka

Bachelor in Maori Performing Arts

Natasha Henare BM in Maori Performing Arts, High School Performing Arts
Involved in High School performing; Kapa Haka, Theatre, Music

Awhimai Huka Look after Directors at Te Wananga o Aotearoa, Tainui Waka Cultural Trust
Event management side when Wananga graduations moved suddenly

Waimihi Hotere TWoA Student
Kiley Diamond Marketing, Digital, Kapa Haka
BA Maori Performing Arts

Creative Waikato Session

Ata Papa Waikato Matariki
Craig Muntz Tainui Waka Tourism Inc.
Aotearoa Experience Ltd

REFURBISH - Toi Māori - Kapa haka

Quotes/Comments

"Do the bare minimum and allow the city to invest in a 'kick arse' event space for the future"

"None of the options really cater for Māori events we have on a huge scale"

"If it's funded by the community, it must be affordable for the community"

General

- There's a real need for a large theatre in Hamilton
- \$13.8 million for a fly system seems expensive
- The refurb is just not ideal for us to look at
- First option should be to replace fly tower system at \$4 million then confirm if seismic strengthening is needed.
- If you change the fly may as well to the other upgrades.
- Prefer \$ investment in community events, maybe x number of events per year.
- Do the bare minimum and use best resource that will allow the city to invest in a 'kick arse' event space for the future
- Maori performing arts students in the Waikato is strong, support our performers and the arts
- A phased costing model. Look at other ways to bring cost down, don't hit artists and audience.
- Community needs to be able to access and use the facility.
- Founders 'Our kids find it a big deal' somewhere special, intimate, to be proud of.
- More than monetary issues here. More than making a profit, health and wealth of arts
- Claudelands stays as it is but has a community rate (makes adjustments for community to use) 'We don't want to be spending all this money, just be together' – re cost of Claudelands hire
- We want to be able to save money to give back into Maori arts development and invest/give to the performers
- But still need Founders for smaller size events.
- Working together, not in competition. But Claudelands needs to be accessible, synergize the two operations
- Think Founders has had its time. Was the place when young but done its time now.
- Culture and heritage input could revitalise with refurbish or rebuild.

Māori Performing Arts Considerations

- None of these options really cater for the events we have every second year on a huge scale
- Stats show we can pull 500-5000 a day. Capacity needed is big
- Larger stage is needed and refurbish back of house.
- If you are putting in \$20 million then may as well have more seating.
- Integrate outside green space e.g. marquee for back of house capacity e.g. tent for food for performers or changing rooms.
- Currently we can't provide own catering and bar, yet this is where our profit is made.
- Claudelands is sterile and doesn't support community development.
- Give greater flexibility for production costs (catering, bar, ushers) allow the use of bringing people in
- Give ticketing flexibility options for community based groups to keep down the overheads
- There needs to be more provision to support community to use it (affordability of hire)
- Support refurb if it is structurally sound and includes larger back of house production area
- Marley dance floor needed for dancers
- Self-catering facilities for back of house
- Audience needs to be comfy to get them back to facility, small blocks more aisle room to not have to squeeze past, good view from every seat
- Cultural Trust, Te Wananga Waikato Tainui - None of these options cater for 2nd yearly event.

- Capacity and parking no good, 1200 seats not good enough, need bigger
- 4,500 – 5k throughout the day – audience pull for regional Kapa Haka
- Kapa Haka have 17 teams x 40 pax = performers only. Then the teams pull in their audiences.
- What will suit us? It is inevitable that Maori performing arts is going to grow
- 2-3 days of graduation per year (Te Wananga)
- Social behaviours are important (how friends and whanau want to socialize and interact when at the venue)
- Nationals; 42 – 45 team (50 in a team) plus supporters specific stage is shifted around to venues
- Support local schools by providing kai fundraising opportunities.
- Youth in Kapa Haka definitely growing
- 17 teams this year
- 6 x 40+ yr teams, really huge demographic representative
- Primary School, Secondary / and Senior there is huge participation
- Body Building competitions are becoming really big
- TWoA use for graduation

Design considerations

- Changing rooms are in the dark ages – showers would be awesome.
- Wider stair and corridors needed
- Disabled access needs to be better
- Kitchen areas in back of house – Kai is a big one, caring for performers and audience, be more culturally flexible.
- Floor and hanging amplification does have to be adjusted a lot
- Lighting and seating is important
- Breakout rooms for King and VIP's
- Packing in and out of Founder is very easy/ Good size for graduations
- Wheelchair access is a problem
- Can't just be a Band-Aid on top - won't work.
- Build small with plans to go bigger. Next phase to extend.
- Structure needs to understand cultural needs

Alternatives in the meantime

- Waikato - Hopu Hopu is an option
- Te Awamutu Events Centre used for local event but too echoey
- Claudelands good but massive monopoly on the whole pay for every single item.
- Wananga Auckland uses Telstra building in Manukau
- Performances below regionals go to halls, schools, Marae and Hamilton Boys High School
- Secondary school nationals at Mystery Creek
- Founders has an existing shape. In Claudelands have to set stage up and pay for each additional increase in size, 20.4 x 16.2 stage size
- We will find somewhere in the meantime. 'Prepared to wait for the right time'
- Claudelands – we pay over \$100k for one day, \$50-\$60k for the venue.
- Event Centre in TA is not as good for sound, kids are at the back
- We never fit anyone in at one time for regionals at Founders (Kapa haka)
- They have a massive monopoly at Claudelands

Parking

- Usually not enough carparking, limited parking, dark crossing the road, parking down side streets
- Refurb would have to consider parking
- Car parking - not enough – ever
- Feels a bit dangerous for young and old
- Have to consider extending parking - go down? Or where?
- Big parking spaces for buses

CLOSE AND DEMOLISH - Toi Māori - Kapa haka

"Economic and cultural loss would be significant"

Quotes/Comments

- People would move or go to wherever people are going
- Means a lot of people wouldn't come into the city anymore or Hamilton
- People have to change structure to accommodate venue
- Economic loss would be significant
- Want events to be able to grow into those spaces, progression and development of events
- A space that can cater for all different kinds of stuff feeds into audience development

BUILD NEW - Toi Māori - Kapa haka

Quotes/Comments

"If you build something build it with love"

"What does it say about our community? Maori is everywhere, open it up, make it for everyone"

"Key stakeholders and partnerships, give new meaning to feeling about Founders"

General

- I want a venue where I can enjoy the arts
- Use a new build to rebrand Hamilton
- Encourage new Maori Theatre. 'Grandeur of a theatre. A Magic space.
- 'Like the idea of it being down by the river'
- Parking concerns, Knox St would be okay.
- Need good dock. Accommodate out the back for larger show load ins
- What does it mean? What does it say about the community? Maori is everywhere, open it up.
- An audience participation experience.
- Claudelands feels cold, clinical venue, it does have space, but its hard to create atmosphere there
- 5-6 years of building will probably be 10
- People will go wherever it is; it's about the right services being available.
- New build next to Claudelands. All that space is there already. Become a multi-use build and space
- One big hub. Package. Come with the venue hire.
- Current buildings are boring, uninviting.
- New build needs to be visually strong; design of building needs to be exciting.
- Founders should be indoor/outdoor. Awesome productions come to Hamilton but have some innovative outdoor space. Amphitheatre type space. Cool to go somewhere to facilitate or perform. All arrive there as a hub.
- Not everything has to be inside under lights, outdoor platforms for communities to engage with.
- Something permanent outdoors.
- Get a decent sized billboard up, sense of place and pride when an event is coming.
- In town is ideal to bring people into the city, anyway they need to have better parking, and lots of it
- Have option for community groups to tender for catering providers
- Maori performing arts has a strong following
- Have all services but give options - don't clip the ticket on everything
- Social behaviours centre around kai – so accommodate that in the design
- Phased 10 yr costing for groups who use it continually, allowance for large, continuing bookings, flexibility around infrastructure ie bring in own caterers, ushers etc. Let the school come to do a fundraiser.
- Look at other ways to bring costs down, not hitting their performing artists or audiences.
- Ensure Ralph Hotere's mahi has a safe place
- We don't want to spend all this money just to be together, not just spending all the money on the facility, we could use the money saved in a discount to invest back into the kapa haka groups
- Christmas in the Park could be there
- Location to allow for traditions
- Needs to be accessible to all parts of society – comfort for the community, ie a playground is to far from Claudelands
- Tainui Kapa Haka will eventually host Te Matatini nationals so they will start thinking where it could be held – huge audeinces
- River - worried about our CBD directing energy away from it instead of attracting it
- If you build something build it with love
- Our kids are kinetic. Textures in the building. What happened to 'City of Fountains'?

Collaboration with Māori Organisations

- Māori Performing Arts will grow and can bring on other partners to come up with really good arrangements for a new one if we collaborate with; Council - Cultural Trust - Waikato Tainui - TWoA
- Collaborate on funding and reduce wait time, please start conversations with Te Wananga
- Rebuild and extend to what we need
- Rebuild with good partnerships. Some MOU before building in place.
- Key stakeholders and partnerships, give new meaning to Founders.
- Takes time, new connections, relationships, could change the face of the Waikato
- Maniapoto would want to be involved in discussion for regional facility.
- It will be a good conversation started to Tainui Waka Cultural Trust is to grow the arts, which could be a good opportunity too

Needs of the Sector

- Min 2,000 seat auditorium between 3k-5k capacity
- Bilingual signage please in venue
- Really good opportunity. Have a place where community feels comfortable, families bring their children. Room for runaround.
- Access and affordability important.
- Needs a flagpole, for hosting Kingitangi and notifying King is present.
- Something in the middle of 500 of Clarence St and 5000 of Claudelands, 3000 seats for build new.
- 20m x 20m minimum for Kapa Haka stage.
- 2,000 will be minimum

Founders Consultation	Group	May 2016
Focus Groups	Youth – Future Users	

KEY THEMES

Timeframe	The timeframe estimated for a new build is a long time for youth. A generation of youth who will be without a facility of its kind for their school years. Not acceptable.
Skepticism	High level of skepticism that timeframes and budgets would be met. Youth are concerned about how costs will be transferred to them in future and how affordable the venue will be to use
Aspiration	Young people want to be proud of Hamilton and have a venue that draws people in, not repels them away. They want to see a solid commitment to the cultural development of their city.
Loss of talent	Talented youth will leave the city and find opportunities where there is decent infrastructure. Other youth would be embarrassed to live in a city that gives low priority to arts
Acoustics	High emphasis on the poor acoustics in Founders and the requirement to fix these for a variety of sound situations

Youth – Future Users Preference: REFURBISH/REBUILD - [mixed](#)

PARTICIPANTS

Jonathon Wilce	Theatre technician
Hannah Grant	Dancer
Daphne Araipu	Kapa haka
Ross McLeod	Independent theatre
Michael Moore	Kapa haka and Slam Poetry
Conor Gyde	Hamilton Operatic
Ruby Lyon	Singer and professional actor
Gwen Lyon	Classical singer and vocal tutor
Jeremy Mayall	Conductor and composer
Theadora Allison	Theatre practitioner
Dave Taylor	Theatre practitioner
Yoshi Tatsumi	Music Director, United Youth Orchestra

REFURBISH – Youth – Future Users

Quotes/Comments

"We really need more information to make an informed decision. However refurbishment may be the most sensible option"

General

- ⇒ Preference is to upgrade if it can be all thing as stated.
- ⇒ Limitations on physical space can expand into. Location works fine now, building is good.
- ⇒ Not spend on something shiny and new, just to have a new shiny and new building.
- ⇒ As a performer the venue needs to be adequate, but with all the bells and whistles.
- ⇒ Don't want a budget blow out on new build
- ⇒ What does changes to dressing rooms actually mean?
- ⇒ What will be the effect on cost of use to the community?
- ⇒ Venues are of huge importance to music managers in the music scene. Hamilton is not attractive to tour through, audience numbers aren't good.
- ⇒ The idea of 'we build it and they will come' is not a good idea.
- ⇒ The theatre provides a platform for local artists, which will lead to holding shows with well-known artists with the support from local artists.
- ⇒ How it's branded is important. Venue can be place that caters for all things, needs to reflect this.
- ⇒ Founders has a 'snobby' reputation, dress up only type vibe.
- ⇒ Dance school held its fundraiser at Founders as it is the best venue, but becoming too expensive
- ⇒ Founders fits the larger show niche. Good spread of seats/audience size for the city is important.
- ⇒ Claudelands is not serving local performing communities.
- ⇒ Think current location is perfect
- ⇒ Good locations for family affair events
- ⇒ Location is a 'prime spot'
- ⇒ Communications and planning between venues, so users can select what is best for them.
- ⇒ A place to go to find comparison data on size, price, cost, all detailed info of all venues on one site.
- ⇒ Refurbish is the most sensible option - need the size, Clarence too small and retains a tie to the original footprint and history.
- ⇒ Is it throwing more money after bad? Will we get another 50 years projected life?
- ⇒ Look at the length of time between New Build vs Refurb.
- ⇒ The 'stuff' that doesn't get fixed- what happens to the rest of the building.
- ⇒ What does \$20 million include – too vague?
- ⇒ Musical theatre are prime users
- ⇒ Bruce Mason Centre, Takapuna, North Shore, Auckland is a good example of a multi purpose venue with great sound.
- ⇒ Refurb is not good strategically for future generations
- ⇒ Other cities have older theatres, so why has the building only lasted 50 years?
- ⇒ Founders is a bit 'Frankenstein' with its add-ons etc.
- ⇒ Election year is a concern; they will make it someone else's problem.
- ⇒ Needs to specify a decision date.
- ⇒ We need more information – i.e. finished plans to seriously look at what refurb means. Before we can make a decision.
- ⇒ Need to 'experience the whole package', dining, drinks, good parking, central parking
- ⇒ Do we want to continue the history of the building?
- ⇒ Not a great location
- ⇒ This is a great opportunity to really look at the benefits of refurb versus new build
- ⇒ My concern would be we have a new build just for the sake of the new build.

Upgrade requirements

- ⇒ Downstairs - more lights in rooms, bigger mirrors, decent size bench space, better TV communications, need sound and better cameras.
- ⇒ Quick-change rooms near stage are really good and essential.
- ⇒ Stairways and hallways larger - enough to move through.
- ⇒ Plenty of space backstage to allow large groups to come in and work.
- ⇒ No reduction to current number of dressing rooms.
- ⇒ Founders backstage space makes it best theatre we have to accommodate large groups
- ⇒ Can space be made to become more adaptable, be able to close in/ transform space?
- ⇒ Usability and versatile spaces in the dressing rooms, stage and audience areas.
- ⇒ Flexibility and affordability, be great to aspire to use it for shows like the 'Laughing Samoans' who sold out Clarence St. Shows like single comedian shows.
- ⇒ For contemporary music, be good to be able to reduce the seat numbers if needed.
- ⇒ Keep listening to arts practitioners during design process, essential to keep conversation open.
- ⇒ Please more than the fly tower it leaks, have seen rain dripping on very expensive NZSO instruments
- ⇒ The stage bounces – hence the ballet won't dance on the stage
- ⇒ Problem is it's a multi purpose venue; so it's a 'Jack of all trades – master of none' type scenario.

Acoustics

- ⇒ Event managers really look at acoustics of the theatre, vocal quality has to be good,
- ⇒ People pay to see gig, then they want good quality sound. (Spoken word, contemporary music)
- ⇒ Very poor acoustics for orchestra; past 25 years nothing improved, worst in NZ
- ⇒ Each genre has it's own specific acoustic requirements
Certainly options like; moveable wall sections, ie fake walls behind the orchestra to help push sound out and a fake roof to stop sound disappearing into the fly tower, large costs involved.
- ⇒ How do you make it work for better acoustics? Sound shell, harder
- ⇒ When there's heavy rain – lots of noise of roof, hard to hear your instrument as a player. So exterior noise needs to be addressed. Architectural problem. Can hear fireworks at the rugby!
- ⇒ Other theatres like the Gallagher Academy has the correct sound proofing. The acoustics budget was blown out – however it's the BEST and people come from all over nationally and internationally.

Parking

- ⇒ What about parking issues?
- ⇒ If moved into town, even greater car parking problems
- ⇒ Current car parking is insufficient
- ⇒ Parking is crap, especially when rugby is on
- ⇒ Improve parking – not a nice area to walk to and from theatre at night.

CLOSE AND DEMOLISH – Youth – Future Users

Quotes/Comments

"Do you want Hamilton to be a shit hole? We would leave"

Why you must not demolish

- ⇒ A venue of that capacity is currently needed
- ⇒ Benefits the arts community as a whole
- ⇒ We cannot travel to other cities
- ⇒ Development opportunities for young local practitioners are crucial
- ⇒ More young people will leave town, particularly in the arts.
- ⇒ You want to retain young people in the city, talented people would not move to Hamilton
- ⇒ Removing inspiration for local artists. No Ballet, No large scale shows to inspire. Not a \$ cost to this but a real benefit.
- ⇒ Opportunities for local artists to work in with national companies touring, e.g. the Ballet workshops from NZ Ballet for dance schools.
- ⇒ Founders closed, the shows will not move to Claudelands? No way. Claudelands not set up for theatrical performance.
- ⇒ Will leave us a gap
- ⇒ Dance school will cope for a few years but not a long-term consideration.
- ⇒ Clarence St not a suitable venue for moving 5-7 year olds about.
- ⇒ A city without any Council run theatre? What would our national reputation be? Council would need to be seen to be putting that money into other theatre venues.
- ⇒ Hamilton is a 'shit hole'
- ⇒ 'No go'
- ⇒ Need a theatre this size
- ⇒ Need a town hall anyway for this city
- ⇒ Hamilton Op would not have any consortiums shows
- ⇒ Will lost immense talent like David Sidwell, where would he work?
- ⇒ We would leave Hamilton
- ⇒ Passion of people like David that bring together a top class local and international creative community
- ⇒ Will lose Am-Pro creative
- ⇒ To get rid of the theatre – the reputation of Hamilton will be gone.
- ⇒ Way too many people involved with Founders

BUILD NEW

Quotes/Comments

"The timeframe is too long. It's a long time for young people to be without a theatre."

"Founders needs to go and we need a fresh start so we can move forward and be strong for a very long future"

General thoughts

- ⇒ 5-6 years for something the same? Don't trust this option. This would be a risk
- ⇒ Snowball into something that isn't useful.
- ⇒ Costing lots for something we're not going to use
- ⇒ Why demolish what is there to rebuild on same site?
- ⇒ Would the benefits compared to refurbish be much different?
- ⇒ What's on the inside of the venue is much more important than what the outside looks like.
- ⇒ All the current flaws can be fixed by refurbishment don't see the need for a rebuild.
- ⇒ Spending \$50 million to get new, may out hold on any further spending in 5-10 years to upgrade for any technical upgrades/changes, then not looked at for at least another 10 yrs. for any more money.
- ⇒ 5-6 years as a dance company we'd be struggling, it's not appealing.
- ⇒ Get money - a little now, and a bit more spread out over the years for later upgrades.
- ⇒ Community backlash possible on a \$50 million spend on a building that may not be used.
- ⇒ Don't want this situation happening again. Have some money for ongoing R & M.
- ⇒ Run a proper, robust maintenance schedule. No more Band-Aid fixes. Not another Municipal pools.
- ⇒ The building new or refurb has to be 'sexy', good sound, good looking
- ⇒ Ham Op have sold shows at the 900 seater mark
- ⇒ If new build, with new seats etc. and new stage, will we have more seats?
- ⇒ The timeframe is too long - it's a long time for young people
- ⇒ Can older seating be gifted to the Meteor?
- ⇒ Bit gutted with the option of like-for-like, build a multipurpose arts centre
- ⇒ Students at University have no real idea that Founders is there.
- ⇒ Southern end of city is away from rugby
- ⇒ A good theatre here so people don't have to travel
- ⇒ 'Copy and paste' a successful theatre/multi functional model, then rebuild quickly
- ⇒ Close safe parking, parking even built in – 100+ parking
- ⇒ If build new - then lots of education around using the new space
- ⇒ Get a champion for the theatre and in the 5 years start educating the community at large about the 'theatre complex project'
- ⇒ Barbican programming is awesome look at their model.
- ⇒ Have a 'Sheila Winn' type event/prestigious event to aspire to
- ⇒ The set up/marketing needs to be built up over the years
- ⇒ Regardless of refurb or build new what is going to be the affordability if using it? It has to be viable.
- ⇒ The Meteor pricing structure or similar/a community sliding scale of use, like Gallaghers offer school/community rate.
- ⇒ The new or refurb building has to have a development of audiences.
- ⇒ If there are any gaps in the programme, then offer groups access to come in and use it, It's imperative it's a busy and buzzing hub/venue as this attracts activity and vibrancy.
- ⇒ A theatre hub would offer different shows; lots of variety; therefore building a culture
- ⇒ Maori culture in the design needs to be respected and involved, ensure total Maori involvement.
- ⇒ That is what we need for this new building. People wanting to come and perform - to build a reputation for the venue and for the city.

Technical

- ⇒ Some backstage/rehearsal areas a front of stage footprint.
- ⇒ Green room facility that is sound proofed, so people can rehearse, not concrete.
- ⇒ Floating or wooden floor.
- ⇒ The rehearsal space needs to have good height for dancer lifts and needs mirrors.
- ⇒ Internet/technology needs up to date comms for a theatre.
- ⇒ Big large screens outside advertising shows
- ⇒ Use knowledge of users, the local expertise
- ⇒ Bruce Mason Centre, Takapuna, North Shore, their facilities are excellent, check their facilities.
- ⇒ Look at 'Home' in Manchester UK. <http://homemcr.org/>
- ⇒ It's a destination, it has a vibe, and it has a beautiful acoustic set up

"Every time my sister and I walk into Founders for the first rehearsal for a show or performance, we turn to each other, take a deep breath in and say wow, it's so good to be back home. That building stores so many of my memories growing up, following my dreams, and helping shape me to be the person that I am today. But even with all of those emotions attached, I still strongly believe that this building needs to go and we need a fresh start so that we can move forward and be strong for a very long future. A new location is what I feel most strongly about as where it is now is hurting it as a theatre due to all the reasons that were brought up in the meeting - sports areas all around, no culture, no food, transport issues, hard to get in to, terrible parking, and it looks ugly. That sounds so superficial, but it is meant to be a building of the arts and culture! It needs to be presented as one.

It's not often that we get the chance to start anew and create something amazing, so now that we have the chance, we should embrace it and use it while we can to make something that is the best"