

Founders' Theatre: what should we do?

Submitter: Judy McDonald, 29 Claude St, Hamilton

As a life-long Hamiltonian I have frequently wailed in the wilderness, along with many others, as HCC spent money in ways I didn't agree with: the V8s, the Claudelands arena, the Hood St refurbishment, the ongoing alterations to Garden Place...

Therefore it's odd to find myself in a position of urging the council to take on the expensive option in this case; one that might have very good outcomes for the city, and rejuvenate an ailing CBD in the process. **Please, demolish the existing theatre and build a new one, in the CBD.** My reasons are:

1. Demolition and non-replacement of what is essentially our town hall would mean the fourth largest city in New Zealand (population 150,000) lacked the facilities enjoyed by towns as small as Bulls (population 1500) and the vision of vibrant cities like New Plymouth (population 75,000). While the Arena could take up some of the slack left by the Founders' closure, the lack of a fly tower severely limits its use for theatrical productions, and a city the size of Hamilton should have a fully functional theatre. If we want to look like a hick town – an image Hamilton has been trying to escape for decades – demolition and non-replacement is the way to go.
2. By HCC's own admission, the Founders is an old building that has already exceeded its design life of fifty years. It's not a heritage building; it's a 1960s nonentity that's been fiddled with several times to no great gain. Let's return the land to its original use as part of the city's now-decimated green belt.
3. The defects of the building and its location are legion: it has bad acoustics, poor sightlines, horrible backstage facilities with limited exits available in the event of emergencies (very concerning when events such as dance school end-of-year shows are held there, with literally hundreds of children involved) and is too small to accommodate the NZ ballet or the symphony orchestra in comfort. There is also no sensible parking at the current location: elderly and disabled Hamiltonians have to find their way to and from the theatre, often in the dark and the rain, from parking places in dimly lit side streets – not a good look or an encouragement to attend events.
4. Because of the age of the building, no-one can be certain how expensive earthquake-proofing and structural upgrading is likely to be. The estimated \$20 million could easily become \$40 million or even more, and we could end up with a compromise that is still unfit for purpose.
5. Starting again gives us the chance to take advantage of modern acoustic and auditorium design, and to incorporate an underground carpark so that theatre users can access the facility safely and without getting wet. If HCC is serious about reinvigorating the CBD, then put the new building in Victoria St. My suggestion is the north end, perhaps using the large vacant space previously occupied by Les Mills Fitness, and if necessary acquiring the properties on either side. There is a range of accommodation available nearby for those visiting from out of town, and the local cafe and restaurant scene would benefit from likely increases in trade from people eating out prior to a show. Rebuilding in the CBD is the option that allows the prospect of the longed-for reinvigoration, and offers something more than either going backwards (demolition only) or the status quo of renovation/replacement on the current site.

FOUNDERS THEATRE
HAMILTON

ACCESS TO
UNDERGROUND
CAR PARK

ACCESS
TO
UNDERGROUND
CAR PARK



DRIVE WAY



TRISTRAM ST



DAVID
WATSON-BRINDS

DAM
7/7/16

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Hamilton City Council
Founders Theatre Review.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the future of Hamilton's Memorial Founders Theatre. Hamilton has much to be proud of—its city parks and riverside paths, the world renowned Hamilton Gardens with its magnificent structures & buildings, its University, NZ's biggest hospital and the beauty of its surrounding countryside.

We now have the opportunity to build a new Founders Theatre to meet the cultural needs for the next 100 years or more. Should it cost \$100 million then let it be financed as I understand like the Sydney Opera House was entirely funded by lotteries. Hamilton can do the same by Lotto grants and other Fund raising schemes and the generations of users during that period and thus would not incur any further City debt.

With judicious financial and imaginative planning combined with the determination & will to achieve that aim—to build a new Founders Theatre to reflect the cultural aspirations and pride we all have in our City of Hamilton.

With the assured growth & expansion of Hamilton over the next 100 years it warrants the planning to meet that growth now with a building on the present site with the style of a world class theatre of sufficient size to accommodate the physical & mechanical facilities required for an auditorium of significance and substance. Ease of access and underground parking is essential.

I would respectfully suggest the building style could link with the style of the Hamilton Gardens Renaissance Gardens Pavilion with the same timeless Mediterranean architecture and with a curved drive way entrance area and forecourt flanked by gardens of a similar design leading into a foyer of practical size and elegance. An alternative facade style could be the Neo-Classical style favoured by many capitals around the world for the timelessness and dignity for their Opera Houses and cultural establishments such as Paris and Vienna and other world cities.

We now have the opportunity to demonstrate for generations the acknowledgement of our Founders and our confidence in the future of Hamilton City with the same desire and imagination that created our world renowned Hamilton Gardens.

David Mannering

Hamilton City Council hearings

Founders Theatre: What should we do?

Peter Walls ONZM



Music Director, Opus Orchestra 2004-
Chief Executive, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra 2002-2011
Chief Executive, Chamber Music New Zealand 2015-
Occasional guest conductor with the Hamilton Civic Choir



FOUNDERS THEATRE

- Acoustics: terrible
- Location: far from ideal
- Potential for contributing to the wider welfare of Hamilton city: minimal

AN ALTERNATIVE VISION FOR HAMILTON

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At

Concert Hall Acoustics: Art and Science

The shape we're in



Over the centuries, trial and error had established the 'shoe box' shape as good for concert halls because of beneficial side reflections. The shoe box is long, tall and narrow. An example of a shoe box shape is the Royal Festival Hall.



The influence of amphitheatres, theatre and early cinema can be seen in fan-shaped halls, but this design can lead to problems due to a lack of side reflections. Examples of fan-shaped halls are the Barbican Hall, London and the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall.

*and proscenium arch
with a stage too narrow to
accommodate a full-size
symphony orchestra*



“The highest rated halls were rectangular, while the lowest rated halls were fan shaped.”



SUITABILITY OF NEW ZEALAND HALLS FOR CHAMBER MUSIC

Janne Sanders, Marshall Day Acoustics, Auckland

Table 1— Ranking of Halls

<i>Hall</i>	<i>Average Overall Acoustic Impression</i>
Auckland TH	9.1
Nelson SoM	8.8
Concert Chamber, Auckland	8.6
Dunedin Town Hall	8.5
Wellington Town Hall	8.1
Great Hall, Arts Centre	8.1
St Andrews	7.5
Century Theatre, Napier	7.5
Hopetoun Alpha	7.3
Christchurch SoM	7.3
Glenroy	7.3
Old St Pauls	7.1
Basilica	6.9
Christchurch Town Hall	6.6
Michael Fowler Centre	6.4
Wanganui	6.4
Bruce Mason	6.3
Conservatorium	6.0
Wellington State Opera	5.9
Regent Theatre, Palmerston Nth	5.7
Illott Concert Chamber	5.5
Marlborough	5.2
Maidment Theatre	3.9
Founders Theatre	3.5



Chamber Music
New Zealand

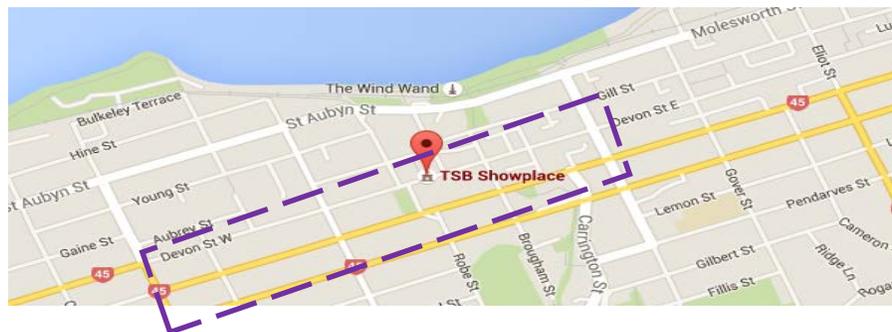
average audiences for CMNZ concerts

Hamilton: Gallagher Academy 178
Population 150,000



Dr John Gallagher Concert Chamber

New Plymouth: TSB Showplace 237
Population 74,000



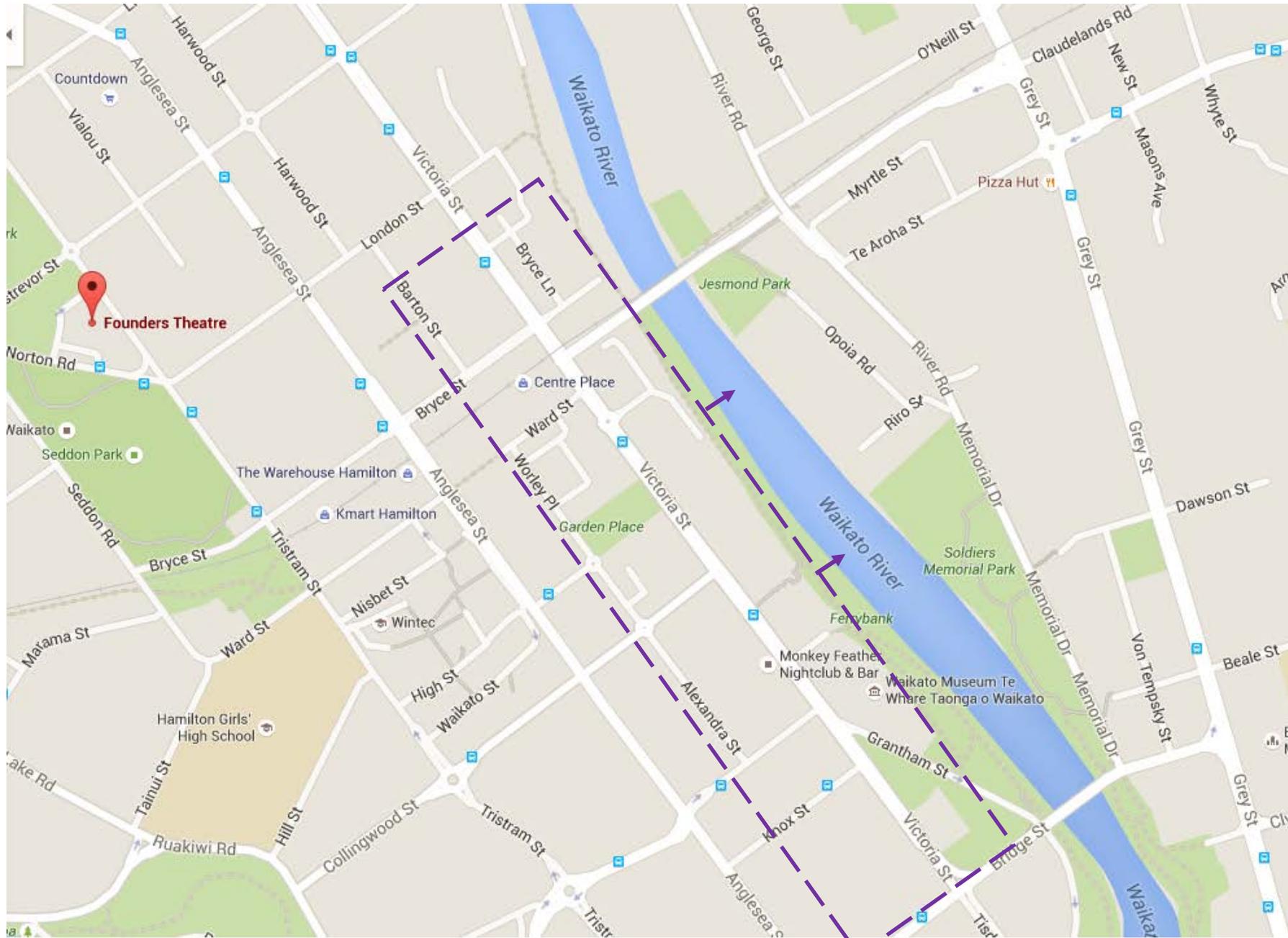
Napier: MTG Century Theatre 280
Population 60,000

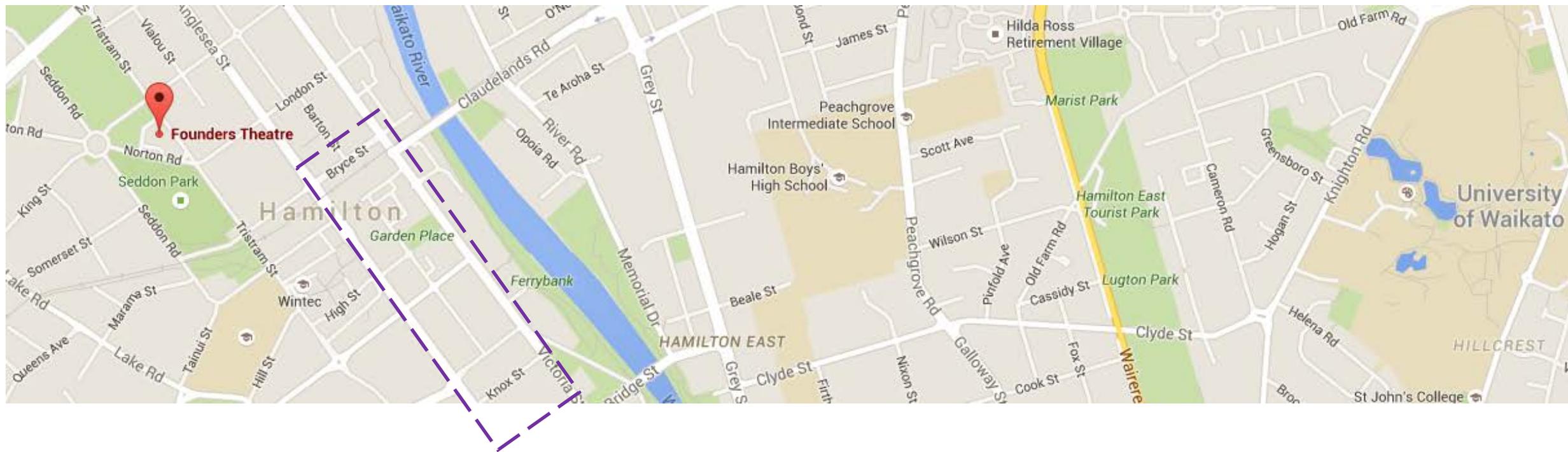


LOCATION

LOCATION

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Fast Fact: there is no good symphonic/large choral venue in the Waikato/Bay of Plenty

POTENTIAL

What a good concert venue can do for a city

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IN FOCUS

In Focus » New Zealand Festival continues to deliver dividends for Capital

In Focus

New Zealand Festival continues to deliver dividends for Capital

Wednesday May 25, 2016

The New Zealand Festival generated an economic impact in excess of \$100 million for the capital in early 2016.

New Zealand Festival Executive Chair Kerry Prendergast says the Festival "created a bumper month" for Wellington, hosting both the biennial international arts Festival and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in a four week period (18 February – 20 March).

"With total 180,000 tickets sold for just four weeks of New Zealand Festival activity across February and March 2016, the sense of buzz and buoyancy everyone felt around Wellington is now well supported by the latest Economic Impact figures from BERL. Estimated to be around \$105* million, the total economic impact of New Zealand Festival activity for Wellington across February and March 2016 is impressive", Prendergast said.

Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency Chief Executive, Chris Whelan, said there was no doubt the Festival had made a positive contribution to the regional economy in a number of ways.

"The New Zealand Festival and Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo brought well over 100,000 people to Wellington, contributing to a record quarter for commercial guest nights in the region (January – March). This provided a significant boost not only to accommodation providers, but also to the hospitality, retail, transport and entertainment sectors. These events also contribute to Wellington's culture, vibrancy and quality of life, helping us attract and retain the kind of smart, innovative, talented people who will power Wellington's future growth."

New Zealand Festival's Executive Director Sue Paterson said, "with 95,000 tickets sold to Festival shows, and a whopping 84,500 tickets for the four night run of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo at Westpac Stadium, the Festival produced remarkable results this year".

A Nielsen Festival Audience Survey also confirmed the New Zealand Festival continues to be loved by audiences – with 91% of respondents confirming they had either a 'good' or 'very good' opinion of the Festival, up from 87% in 2014. The iconic Pina Bausch Tanztheater Wuppertal dance double-bill and the Jazz at Lincoln Center with Wynton Marsalis' week-long residency were both particularly big hits with audiences in 2016.

The 2016 Festival programme was slightly smaller than 2014, resulting in around 95,000 ticket sales compared to the 116,000 in 2014, and the Festival also programmed more free events in celebration its 30th year, with the Contact Festival Playground and free performances such as Sila and the opening night mass dance of, Le Grand Continental, partnered by Kiwibank. This

A fine concert hall in the heart of Hamilton's CBD, one that helps open up the city to the Waikato River, would revitalise the city. There is a symbiotic relationship between excellent venues and nearby cafes/bars etc – all contributing to the experience of a great night out.

It is not only concerts that a fine venue would attract to the city. Conventions and conferences use such venues for plenary sessions.

More than just the arts benefit from developments of this kind.



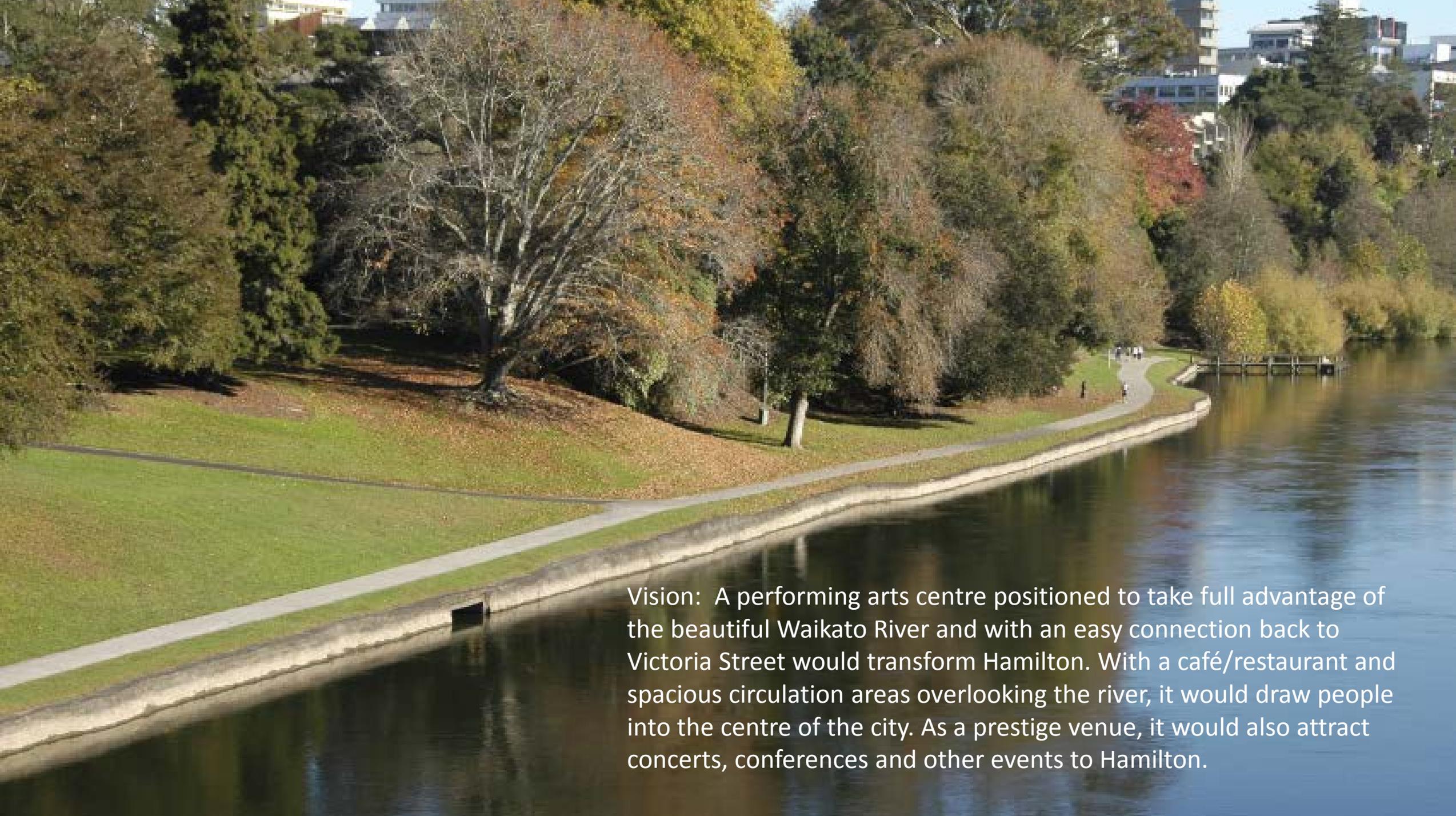
INDEPENDENT

Could this be Birmingham?

It boasts "more canals than Venice", **has a new and much-admired Symphony Hall**, plans to re-develop large sections of the much-derided 1960s centre in the next five years, and comes top of a list of "desirable locations" for businesses. The city leads the way in Britain in business tourism - **income from conferences and their spin-off opportunities for local hotels, restaurants and leisure** - and has won new investment from BMW and Jaguar in its traditional manufacturing base. Suddenly, Birmingham is the place to be.

The Independent Friday 15 August 1997





Vision: A performing arts centre positioned to take full advantage of the beautiful Waikato River and with an easy connection back to Victoria Street would transform Hamilton. With a café/restaurant and spacious circulation areas overlooking the river, it would draw people into the centre of the city. As a prestige venue, it would also attract concerts, conferences and other events to Hamilton.