

## REPORTS

### DUNEDIN THEATRE NETWORK UPDATE REPORT

Department: Executive Leadership Team

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a final update on the work of the Dunedin Theatre Network (Playhouse Theatre, Athenaeum Theatre and the Mayfair Theatre) and their community led proposal for a networked approach to Dunedin's performing arts venues.
- 2 Staff have worked with the Dunedin Theatre Network (DTN) to support progressing their venue concepts to a consistent costed concept design stage across all 3 venues. This work is now complete and a final DTN Stage 3 report is attached as Appendix A.
- 3 The work to progress the DTN concepts was determined by a resolution of Council during the 2023 Annual Plan deliberations. This decision stems from previous decisions of Council directing staff to engage with the performing arts community on options for a performing arts venue.
- 4 Staff have also worked alongside other key performing arts community stakeholders who have developed performing arts venue concepts for consideration, including Stage South (New Build Concept) and the Regent Theatre (Stage on a Stage Concept). Staff have worked to bring these groups together to discuss a future collective vision for Dunedin's performing arts venue requirements.
- 5 As next steps, a Performing Arts report with options will be presented to Council as part of the 9 year plan.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council:

- a) **Notes** the Dunedin Theatre Network Update Report.
- b) **Notes** as a next step, a Performing Arts Venue Report will be presented to Council in January 2025 for a 9 Year Plan decision.

#### BACKGROUND

##### Performing Arts Venue Context

- 6 In May 2018, the DCC and Creative New Zealand (CNZ) jointly commissioned a study into the future provision for performing arts in the city. This study was delivered by theatre consultants Charcoalblue in three phases between 2018 and 2021.

- 7 Phase one included stakeholder engagement that was completed and endorsed by Council in April 2019. Phase two focussed on identifying viable options for flexible, mid-sized sites. Four sites were shortlisted for consideration and included the below options:
  - The Athenaeum – partnership development with Lawrie Forbes of Zeal Land Ltd.
  - Mayfair Theatre – redevelop the existing theatre, noting it is currently owned by a Trust.
  - 231 Stuart Street (Fortune Theatre) – redevelop the building.
  - 65 Crawford Street (Sammy’s) – use the existing footprint to build a stand-alone theatre.
- 8 At a Council meeting held in December 2020, Council resolved to continue work on developing the Athenaeum (as the preferred) and the Mayfair as a potential alternative. Both venues were included as part of the 2021-2031 10 year plan consultation document for feedback from the community. In addition, at this time Council resolved that \$17m would be included in the draft capital budgets.
- 9 Phase three of this work involved business modelling and analysis of the suitability of two venues, the Athenaeum (as the preferred) and the Mayfair (as a potential alternative).
- 10 In March 2021 as part of the 2021-2031 10 Year Plan consultation process, the community was asked if it supported the development of a mid-sized theatre and presented with the two options: a preferred option of the Athenaeum, and a second option of the Mayfair Theatre.
- 11 Of the 1,878 submissions expressing an opinion, 1,052 (56%) were in favour of the DCC developing a mid-sized theatre, with 826 (44%) not in favour. Of the two options, 759 (53%) supported the Athenaeum as the preferred mid-sized theatre option. 502 submissions (40%) were in favour of the Mayfair Theatre option.
- 12 A report was presented to Council in May 2021 that summarised the community feedback received during the 10 Year Plan consultation relating to a theatre venue. At this meeting Council resolved that further engagement be undertaken with the performing arts community on options for the draft 2022/23 Annual Plan meeting.

### **Engagement with the Performing Arts Community**

- 13 Following this decision of Council, staff undertook further engagement with the performing arts community. A Round-Table Performing Arts group was proposed to bring the sector together to continue discussions on the issue of the performing arts venue. This approach was successfully undertaken with the Music community to work together to develop the Live Music Action Plan. However, on the back of the extensive CharcoalBlue engagement, the performing arts community determined their desire to focus on leading their own discussions from within.
- 14 Staff continued to meet with individual performing arts stakeholder groups including the Playhouse, the Mayfair, the Atheneum, Stage South, Regent Theatre, PolyFest, Amateur Theatre Production and Dunedin Fringe. Staff have also continued to meet with theatre practitioners.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Dunedin Theatre Network – A community led proposal**



- 20 Following Council’s 2023 resolution, regular meetings were established between staff and DTN. Information pertaining to the three buildings was shared with staff to assess the levels of work required for each building. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was finalised between the DCC and DTN. Site visits for each of the venues were undertaken.
- 21 DTN had previously worked with architects and consultants to develop concept designs and indicative costs to refurbish the three properties. However, each property was at a different stage of the process and had used differing methodologies.
- 22 Over 2024 DTN has been supported by DCC to work with Feldspar Associates to develop and scope this community led proposal. Prior to that Feldspar were engaged to complete feasibility studies for both the Playhouse and the Athenaeum. Feldspar identified a team of professionals to deliver concept design and development work based on the brief from the DTN and DCC.
- 23 A comprehensive summary report of the Dunedin Theatre Network project produced by Feldspar Associates is attached to this report as Appendix B. There are a range of professional reports that form the appendices to the Feldspar Summary Report. These are all available on the Dunedin Theatre Network website at [Resources | Dunedin Theatre Network](#).
- 24 The following table provides a high level summary of the DTN Stage III Report.

	PLAYHOUSE	ATHENAEUM	MAYFAIR
<b>VISION</b>	Character theatre with a focus on children and youth, available to a range of smaller scale and community hires	Creative hub with literary roots. Dual centrepieces of a large live music venue and a black box theatre	Larger theatre for plays and musicals –touring and local, professional and community
<b>PERFORMANCE SPACES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 120-seat character auditorium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 225m2 / ~120-seat black box</li> <li>• 330m2 / 600-pax live music / performance space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 342-seat auditorium</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL SPACES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large lounge above the auditorium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theatre foyer in library space</li> <li>• Café/bar/reception area with commercial kitchen</li> <li>• Coffee shop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large social space on upper floor</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER SPACES</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recording studio</li> <li>• Offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop, scene dock</li> <li>• Retail shop</li> <li>• Additional building provides further options for future</li> </ul>
<b>PRICE TAG</b>	\$5.79 million (2026 start)	\$15.48 million (2026 start) \$16.27 million (2027 start)	\$13.32 million (2026 start) \$15.00 million (2029 start)

- 25 The DTN Stage III report outlines in detail the concept designs for each of the three theatres.
- 26 For each theatre, comprehensive work has been undertaken to understand the history, current configuration and use, heritage status, building condition and challenges.
- 27 The report also highlights remedial works and refurbishment planning that has already been undertaken.

- 28 The report provides a future focus of what each of the refurbished venues might look like and the needs of the performing arts community, each venue would potentially support.
- 29 Each venue provides a cost estimate based on construction starting in 2026 or with construction starting late 2027. In addition, the report highlights alternative plans for each venue if Council funding cannot be achieved.
- 30 The table below sets out the QS estimates of the capital costs of the redevelopment concepts presented in the DTN Stage III report.

CAPITAL COST ESTIMATE BY PROJECT			
PROJECT	REDEVELOPMENT COSTS (\$M)		
	Concurrent projects, <i>construction starting early 2026</i>	Staged approach	
Stage 1: Playhouse	5.790	5.790	<i>Construction starting early 2026</i>
Stage 2: Athenaeum	15.480	16.270	<i>Construction starting late 2027</i>
Stage 3: Mayfair	13.320	15.000	<i>Construction starting early 2030</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34.590</b>	<b>36.920</b>	

- 31 The DTN project goal is to work with Council on the possibility of the three venue refurbishment projects being part-funded by Council as a cornerstone investor. DTN have stated in their report that this would then enable them to facilitate further applications and secure funding from other sources.
- 32 Operation modelling, costings and business planning work has not yet been undertaken and will be considered as part of the January 2025 report to Council.
- 33 The information in this report and the information included in the appendices are presented to Council for noting. This report finalises a resolution of Council for staff to work with the DTN on their networked venue concept and to fund DTN \$100,000 toward costed design options. This work is now complete.

**OPTIONS**

- 34 As this is a report for noting, there are no options.

**NEXT STEPS**

- 35 As mentioned earlier in this report, staff have also worked alongside other key performing arts community stakeholders who have developed community led proposals for performing arts venue concepts for consideration. These stakeholders include Stage South (New Build Concept) and the Regent Theatre (Stage on a Stage Concept). Staff have worked to bring these groups together to discuss a future collective vision for Dunedin’s performing arts venue requirements.

36 As next steps, a Performing Arts report with options will be presented to Council in January 2025 as part of the 9 year plan.

**Signatories**

Author:	Jeanette Wikaira - General Manager Arts, Culture and Recreation
Authoriser:	Sandy Graham - Chief Executive Officer

**Attachments**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
<a href="#">↓A</a>	Dunedin Theatre Network Stage III Report Nov 2024	12
<a href="#">↓B</a>	Feldspar Associates Summary Report for the Dunedin Theatre Network Project Nov 2024	40

**SUMMARY OF CONSIDERATIONS**

***Fit with purpose of Local Government***

This decision promotes the cultural, social and economic well-being of communities in the present and for the future.

***Fit with strategic framework***

	Contributes	Detracts	Not applicable
Social Wellbeing Strategy	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic Development Strategy	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environment Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
Arts and Culture Strategy	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Waters Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
Future Development Strategy	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrated Transport Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
Parks and Recreation Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
Other strategic projects/policies/plans	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The performing arts is a key part of the city’s arts and culture ecology and supports delivery of the Ara Toi Social Wellbeing and Economic Development strategies, Te Taki Haruru – The Māori Strategic Framework and the Ōtepoti Live Music Action Plan. The development of a new performing arts venue would also help deliver some of the objectives of the Spatial Plan and the Future Development Strategy.

***Māori Impact Statement***

Mana whenua and mātāwaka are partners in Te Taki Haruru, the DCC’s Māori Strategic Framework, which includes supporting the cultural, social and economic wellbeing of Māori in Ōtepoti Dunedin. Mana whenua have been included throughout the life cycle of the Performing Arts Venue work. Mana whenua were represented on the original steering group for the feasibility study. Consultation was also undertaken with Māori practitioners in relation to performing arts venue options.

***Sustainability***

Less theatre and performing arts activity could affect the sustainability of the city’s arts and culture ecology (including amateur and professional practitioners, educators and career pathways) and short and long term access of Dunedin’s communities and audience to theatre experiences in the city.

***Zero carbon***

This is not applicable to this report.

***LTP/Annual Plan / Financial Strategy /Infrastructure Strategy***

This report is providing an update for the development of the 9 year plan.

***Financial considerations***

A further report will be presented to Council in January 2025 as part of the 9 year plan.

***Significance***

The report is considered to be of low significance in terms of the Council’s Significance and Engagement Policy.

**SUMMARY OF CONSIDERATIONS**

***Engagement – external***

External engagement about the performing arts broader project has included working with performing arts venues, organisations, and individual practitioners, Creative New Zealand and mana whenua. For this report detailed discussions have been had with theatre owners of the Playhouse Theatre, Athenaeum and the Mayfair Theatre.

***Engagement - internal***

Engagement has taken place with Ara Toi, Property Services, Finance, Communications and Marketing, Corporate Policy, City Development and Economic Development.

***Risks: Legal / Health and Safety etc.***

There are no known risks identified.

***Conflict of Interest***

There are no known conflicts of interest.

***Community Boards***

The development of a performing arts venue for Dunedin City is of interest to the broader Dunedin community and will be of interest to all Community Boards.





# Dunedin Theatre Network

CONCEPT FOR DISCUSSION: STAGE THREE



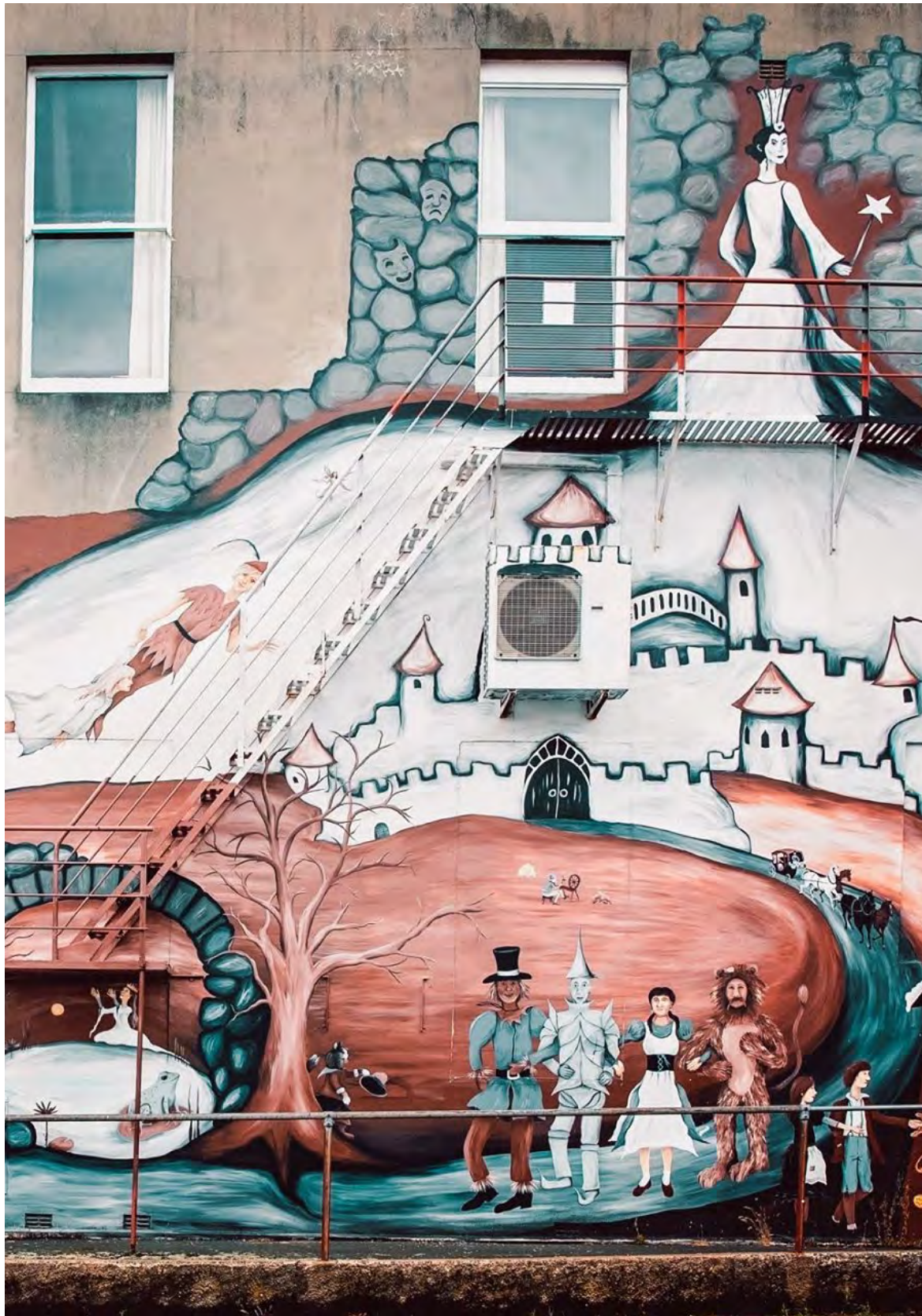


Photo credit: Kevin Hill  
Mural: Filipa Crofskey

# the IDEA

## WITH COSTED CONCEPT DESIGNS

In May 2022 we proposed an idea of a “network approach” for Ōtepoti Dunedin’s theatre infrastructure.

We proposed a staged refurbishment of the Playhouse Theatre, the Athenaeum Building and the Mayfair Theatre.

We spent 2022 and 2023 developing the idea in more detail and engaging with the performing arts community.

In mid-2023, Dunedin City Council agreed to provide \$100,000 towards costed concept designs for the three theatres in order to enable future decision-making.

The costed concept designs are now complete. This report presents that information to Council, the performing arts community and the Dunedin public, to assist in decision-making about the future of the city’s performing arts infrastructure.

**Ngā mihi,**

Dunedin Repertory Society Inc  
Zeal Land Ltd  
Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust

[www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz](http://www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz)

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# BACKGROUND

In early 2022, the owners of the Playhouse Theatre, the Athenaeum building and the Mayfair Theatre met to compare notes on the common challenges of owning and operating ageing performing arts buildings and trying to refurbish them to ensure their continued viability.

We quickly realised that, put together as a package, our buildings offer an appealing mix of sizes, styles and locations – a mix appropriate for the size and creativity of Dunedin. We agreed to explore the idea of partnering with Council and other funders to refurbish our venues as a network.

Our Stage 1 (May 2022) and Stage 2 (May 2023) reports cover this journey in detail and are essential companions to this Stage 3 report<sup>1</sup>. The Stage 2 report also includes the verbatim and written feedback from our broad consultation with the performing arts community.

Following completion of our Stage 2 report, Dunedin City Council resolved to approve

\$100,000 towards costed concept designs for each venue. We entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Council to govern this work.

## SCOPE OF THIS STAGE OF WORK

Over the past few months, we have been working with project managers, architects, structural engineers and quantity surveyors to have costed concept designs completed for each venue.

We extended the scope of the costed concept design work to include structural engineering advice, at Council's suggestion. This has been a valuable addition to the project.

We are excited to share the costed concept designs with the city, and look forward to the next stage of discussions about addressing the city's performing arts venue needs.

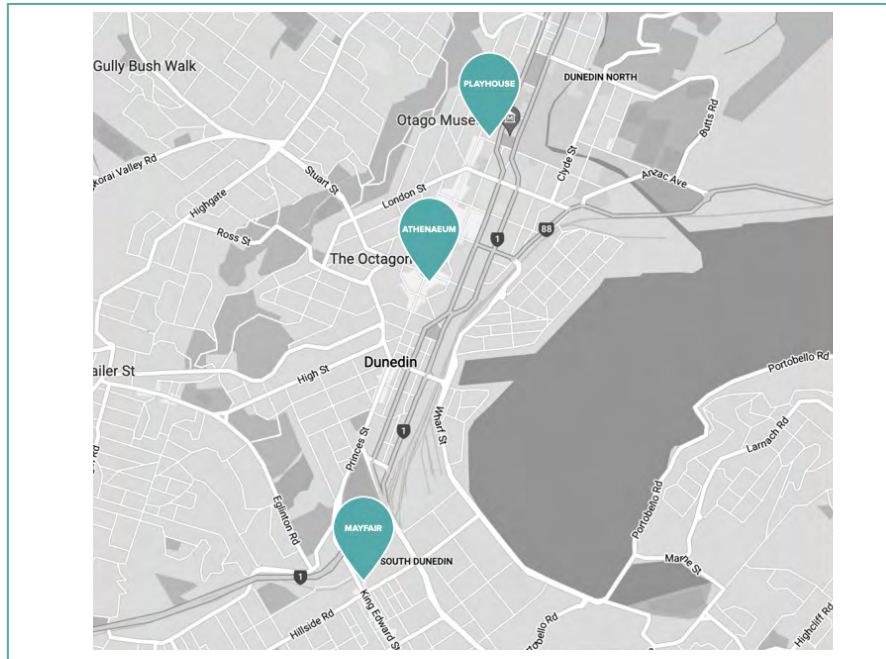
## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We set ourselves some principles as a group when we started this collaboration in 2022. We consider ourselves to be kaitiaki of venues that are important assets to the community. Therefore, we want our venues to be:

- **accessible** – in all senses of the word
- **affordable** – for a wide range of hirers from professional to amateur
- **available** – not exclusively hired by a resident company, but available to be booked by a wide range of organisations and individuals.

<sup>1</sup> All reports are available on our website, [www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz](http://www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz)

# the CONCEPT



	PLAYHOUSE	ATHENAEUM	MAYFAIR
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## CONCEPT DESIGN TEAM



Feldspar are client-side project managers who provide end-to-end service for clients, from project initiation to successful implementation.

*Feldspar have co-ordinated the formation of these costed concept designs by leading the team of specialist consultants.*



William Fulton and Stewart Ross of TEAM Architects are experienced architects, with heritage and theatre projects a specialty. Previous projects include the Ashburton Events Centre and the Court Theatre Addington.

*William and Stewart have provided the concept designs for the Playhouse, Athenaeum and Mayfair.*

**STEPHEN MCKNIGHT**

Stephen McKnight is a well-regarded Dunedin-based structural engineer and developer, who specialises in heritage buildings.

*Stephen provided the structural advice and concepts for the Playhouse Theatre.*

**STEVENSON BROWN LTD**

Peter is a successful Dunedin-based structural engineer, having worked in the city for over 30 years. Peter has a long involvement with the Athenaeum project and recently completed a detailed seismic assessment for the building.

*In this project, Peter provided the structural advice and concepts for the Athenaeum.*



WSP has the largest engineering presence in the Southern Region and is a leading firm within Ōtepoti Dunedin.

*WSP provided the structural advice and concepts for the Mayfair Theatre.*



Rawlinsons are a leading national professional cost management and quantity surveying practice providing independent and impartial construction cost management, cost engineering and financial administration expertise for over 50 years throughout New Zealand.

*Rawlinsons have provided QS services for all three venues.*

The following pages set out information about each building and present the concept plans and costings that we have completed this year. This is a summary only; the full detail of the concept designs and QS estimate is available at [www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz](http://www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz).

# PLAYHOUSE THEATRE

31 Albany Street, Dunedin North

[www.playhousetheatre.co.nz](http://www.playhousetheatre.co.nz)

Owned by Dunedin Repertory Society Inc, a fully voluntary society with charitable status.



Our vision is to restore the Playhouse Theatre, retaining the character auditorium while modernising the facility and vastly improving accessibility and the experience and comfort of audiences, performers and crew.

The Children’s Theatre would remain a fixture of the Playhouse, and the venue would also be suitable and available for hire for a larger range of other performances.

## HISTORY

The building that now houses the Playhouse Theatre was initially an Oddfellows Hall, opened in 1876. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) was a friendly society that provided support and community for migrants to New Zealand. The building hosted the new migrant community to create new social connections and also held gatherings, concerts, balls and fundraisers.

The building was rented and eventually purchased by the Southern Comedy Players in the early 1960s – at that point, the only surviving professional theatre company in New Zealand. Bernard Esquilant and Bill Menlove of the Southern Comedy Players extended the hall to add the stage and backstage area, and built a mezzanine to create the raked auditorium we know today. They named the new theatre the Playhouse.

The Dunedin Repertory Society bought the Playhouse in the early 1970s.

## CURRENT CONFIGURATION AND USE

The Playhouse remains largely the same since its theatre conversion in the 1960s. It comprises two buildings: the 1876 former lodge on the street-front, and the 1960s extension at the rear.

The former lodge building is three stories tall. It houses a box office and toilets in the foyer, a 136-seat raked auditorium, a large coffee lounge space and kitchen above, as well as several wardrobe and prop storage areas.

The 1960s extension to the rear houses the stage and the single-level backstage area. Backstage comprises a green room, three dressing rooms and further storage.

Today, the Playhouse is best known for the Dunedin Repertory Society’s Children’s Theatre, which stages productions each school holidays. These involve about 80-90 local young people annually as cast and crew members, and attract around 5,000 patrons per year (see our Stage 2 report). The Society also presents adults’ theatre productions.

In addition, the Playhouse is available as an affordable hire venue for theatre, music, comedy, improv, festival performances and film screenings.

The Playhouse’s proximity to the tertiary education precinct offers good synergies for casts, crews and audiences.

## HERITAGE STATUS

None, although Conservation Plan assessed the Playhouse as having overall local heritage significance.



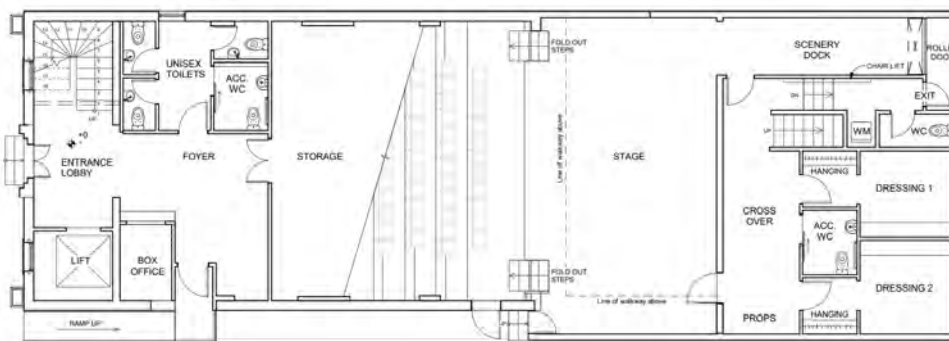
BUILDING CONDITION & CHALLENGES	<p>The Playhouse is in moderate to poor condition, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general ageing – the Playhouse is nearly 150 years old and has had few major upgrades. The roof on the backstage building is no longer water tight and this part of the building is now suffering regular water ingress</li> <li>• a need for seismic strengthening, though it is not “earthquake prone”</li> <li>• environmental challenges, i.e. cold and damp</li> <li>• poor accessibility</li> <li>• does not meet modern standards for public venues</li> <li>• limited theatre rigging; old and limited technical equipment.</li> </ul>
REMEDIAL WORKS & REFURBISHMENT PLANNING PROGRESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Building condition assessments, including general condition, plumbing, electrical, asbestos survey, roof, structural engineering (funded in part by the DCC / OCT Capability Building Fund) in December 2019.</li> <li>✓ New roof on the former lodge building in February 2021 (funded in part by the Dunedin Heritage Fund).</li> <li>✓ Feasibility Study completed in December 2021, including heritage assessment, site planning sketches, fire and accessibility reports, and significant community consultation (funded by Lotteries Community Facilities Fund).</li> <li>✓ Conservation Plan completed 2023 (funded by Dunedin Heritage Fund).</li> </ul>
WHAT MIGHT A REFURBISHED PLAYHOUSE LOOK LIKE?	<p>Concept designs are provided on the following pages. At high level they envisage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demolishing and rebuilding the 1960s extension (the stage and backstage areas). This addresses the poor condition of this building, and enables it to be better configured for modern use.</li> <li>• Internal reconfiguration of the main street-front building (the former lodge), with the addition of a new accessible foyer entrance, lift and accessible toilets at ground level. The curved staircase, which was highlighted in the Conservation Plan, would be retained.</li> <li>• The auditorium would remain of a similar configuration, with an estimated capacity of 120 seats. Space for wheelchairs would be accommodated at the rear of the auditorium.</li> <li>• The top floor would retain its open social space, with a new kitchen able to serve larger functions. A walkway above the stage would give access to the new rear building.</li> </ul>
WHAT WOULD IT SUPPORT?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children’s Theatre to remain a key focus</li> <li>• Youth theatre</li> <li>• Plays in development, smaller-scale plays, festival performances</li> <li>• Comedy and improv</li> </ul>
COST ESTIMATE	\$5,790,000
ALTERNATIVE PLANS	<p>If funding cannot be achieved for the refurbishment outlined above, the Dunedin Repertory Society would make best efforts to make the building generally more comfortable for users for its remaining life.</p> <p>However, the theatre would remain inaccessible to many members of the community and some health and safety concerns would remain unaddressed. The Society anticipates it will become harder to attract volunteers willing to accept the obligations of governing the deteriorating building. It is unfortunately likely that the Children’s Theatre would be wound up and the building closed or sold within 5-10 years.</p>

# PLAYHOUSE THEATRE

## CONCEPT DESIGN SKETCHES

The sketches below have been developed by TEAM architects, with structural advice from Stephen McKnight. The designs take into account feedback from the Playhouse’s Feasibility Study (2021) and Dunedin Theatre Network consultation (2022-2023). The full size concept drawings, structural plans and QS report are available at [www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz](http://www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz)

### GROUND FLOOR



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN

#### ENTRANCE

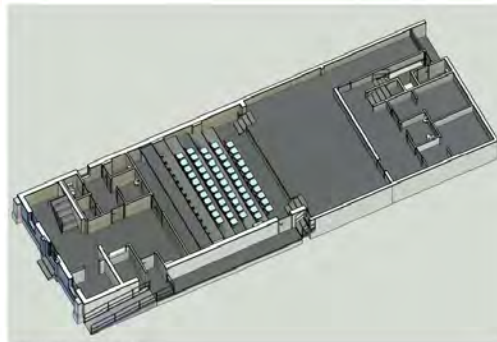
- Dual entrances – existing front door opening to Albany Street, and new accessible entrance from the side
- Existing spiral staircase retained, supplemented with a lift
- New toilets, including accessible toilet
- New small ticket booth
- On the exterior, reinstate some original plaster details, update signage with a canopy, re-paint

#### STAGE & BACKSTAGE

- Demolish and rebuild backstage building
- New exit door through back wall to neighbouring car park (subject to permission) to allow loading access and fire egress
- Cross-over passage, two dressing rooms, accessible toilet and scenery door
- The stage area itself would be rebuilt to approximately the same dimensions, with fold-out stairs at each side, and acoustic treatment to the ceiling

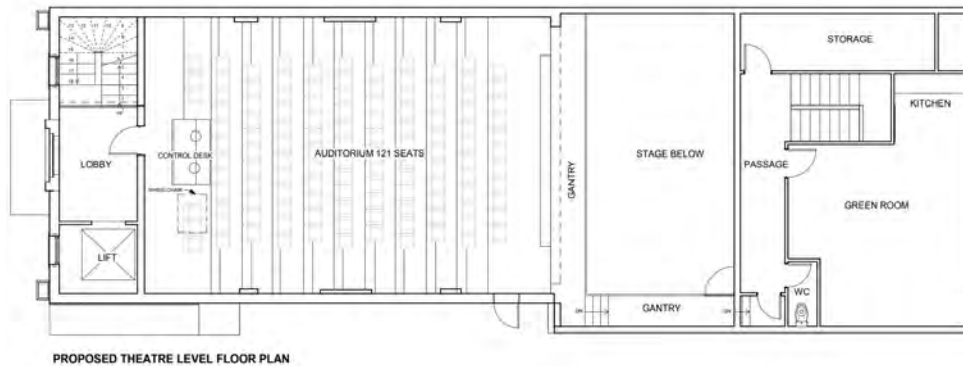


NORTH EAST VIEW



GROUND FLOOR VIEW

**MIDDLE LEVEL**



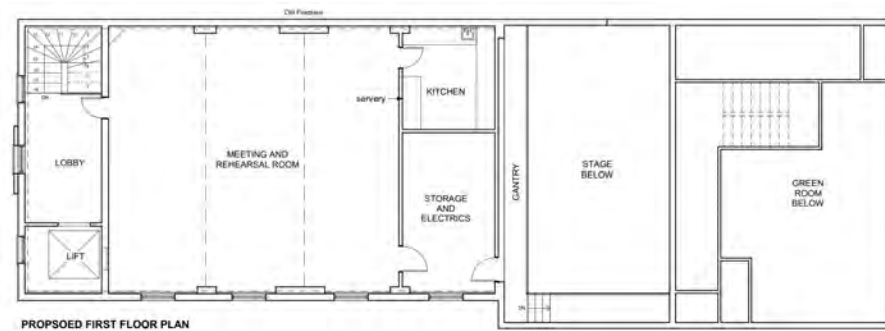
**LOBBY & AUDITORIUM**

- Lift or stair access to back of the auditorium for audiences. Side door at the front of the auditorium also retained.
- Auditorium retains similar size, shape and character as existing, with more comfortable seating for 121 (current capacity 136).

**BACKSTAGE**

- Green Room and small kitchenette above dressing rooms
- Access to a gantry for safe crossing above the stage to the upper floor of the front building

**TOP LEVEL**



**SOCIAL SPACE AND UPPER BACKSTAGE AREA**

- Lift or stair access to coffee bar / social space
- Floor plan similar to existing, retains large light social space
- New gantry over the stage area connects to backstage area

# ATHENAEUM

23/24 The Octagon, Dunedin

Owned by Zeal Land Ltd / Lawrie Forbes

Includes spaces currently leased by:

- The New Athenaeum Theatre  
<https://newathenaeumtheatre.com>
- The Athenaeum & Mechanics Institute  
<https://www.dunedinathenaeum.org.nz/>



Our vision is to create a series of vibrant, welcoming, multi-use spaces in the very heart of Dunedin city.

The venue would contain a showcase of the very best that Ōtepoti's creative industries have to offer, in a building that has cultivated Dunedin's creative talents for over 150 years. The concept echoes performing arts hubs in other cities, including the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne and TAPAC in Auckland, as well as the new Te Atamira arts space in Queenstown.

This idea has been developed as part of a joint feasibility project between Zeal Land and the Committee of the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute, and is sympathetic to the heritage status of the building itself.

## HISTORY

The Dunedin Mechanics' Institute started in 1851, followed swiftly by the Dunedin Athenaeum in 1859. The success of both institutions led to development on their current site in 1870, creating the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute. The Dunedin Athenaeum Institute is oldest of its type still to be in operation.

The original Mechanics' Institute was one of Dunedin's first public spaces and, as such, the first home of the Otago Provincial Council and the Dunedin Town Board. The Institute also played host to meetings which led to the establishment of the University of Otago.

The new building provided space for various reading rooms and library spaces, and held regular lectures, evening classes and social events or 'conversazione'. Over the years, it has also hosted the Dunedin Mutual Improvement Society, the Otago Cine Club, the Fortune Theatre and the Dunedin Fringe Festival.

## CURRENT CONFIGURATION AND USE

The building is approximately 2,000m<sup>2</sup> across three floors. Current tenants include the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute, the New Athenaeum Theatre, a web development business and the Craic bar.

The significant footprint of the Athenaeum building is rivalled only by the neighbouring Regent Theatre and Burns House in the southern half of the Octagon. Its narrow street presence and tiny blue door belies the expansive and elegant former library within.

Today only a small proportion of the building is used. The Athenaeum Institute now only uses a single library room, while the New Athenaeum Theatre operates a 70-seat performance space to the rear of the building. There are also two hospitality outlets which face onto the Octagon.

## HERITAGE STATUS

The Dunedin Athenaeum is a Category 1 registered building. It is also protected in the District Plan and by a covenant with Heritage New Zealand.

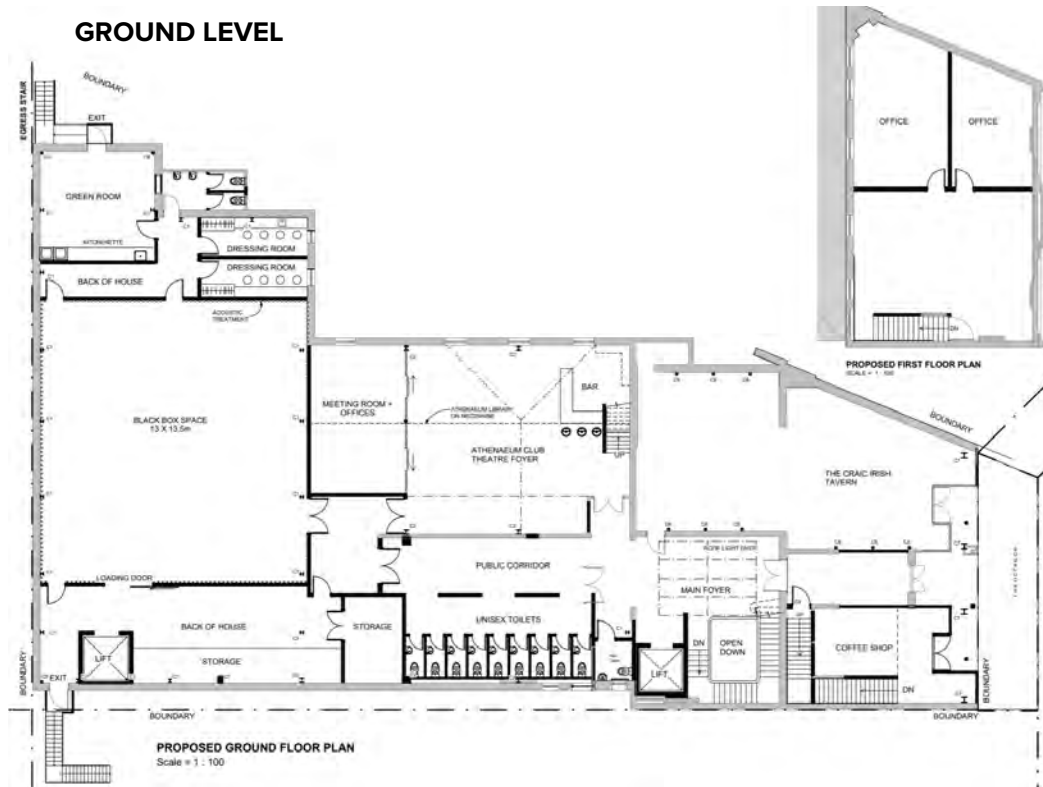
<b>BUILDING CONDITION AND CHALLENGES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Athenaeum is 150 years old and has had no significant upgrades.</li> <li>• Seismic strengthening work is required.</li> <li>• The building needs to be brought up to modern standards throughout, including electrical, plumbing, decorative work, etc.</li> <li>• Poor accessibility. At least one lift, potentially two, is required to improve access and circulation.</li> <li>• Delivery access to the front and the rear of the building. Currently, deliveries for the café and bar on the Octagon are through the front door. The driveway that links the building to the rear accessway of the Regent Theatre is for fire egress only.</li> <li>• Fire egress needs to be addressed through design as the building is constrained on three of its four sides. A recent fire report suggested that the building can be used by up to 1000 people if an adequate sprinkler system is installed.</li> </ul>
<b>REMEDIAL WORKS &amp; REFURBISHMENT PLANNING ALREADY UNDERTAKEN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ongoing repair work to roofs, gutters and downpipes throughout</li> <li>✓ Feasibility study completed June 2021, (funded by the Dunedin Heritage Fund), which included heritage assessment work, site planning sketches, a fire report and community consultation work.</li> <li>✓ Conservation Plan complete (partly funded by the Dunedin Heritage Fund).</li> <li>✓ A detailed seismic assessment has placed the building as being 25% of NBS at Importance Level 2. A seismic strengthening solution has already been developed.</li> <li>✓ A recent asbestos survey has shown there to be minimal contamination.</li> </ul>
<b>WHAT MIGHT A REFURBISHED ATHENAEUM LOOK LIKE?</b>	<p>The proposal is to create a multi-use Centre for the Creative Arts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a newly-created Centre for Writing which could be a hub for Dunedin’s UNESCO City of Literature activities and a celebration of our literary heritage. The Centre will be integrated with the rest of the Athenaeum, and offer literary events, creative writing courses, writers in residence and literacy programmes for young people, as well as a small library space.</li> <li>• Two performance spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o A large, flexible basement venue, with space for 600 people standing</li> <li>o A new black box venue with space for 120 seats, including modular staging and seating for maximum flexibility</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A recording studio, set below ground for great recording quality.</li> <li>• Video recording space.</li> <li>• A cafe/bar at the main entrance, fully integrated with the rest of the building, including reception area / box office, and a small coffee shop facing the Octagon. The development will include a commercial kitchen to provide hospitality options for the whole building.</li> <li>• Substantial back of house spaces.</li> <li>• Flexible meeting and office space.</li> </ul>
<b>WHAT WOULD IT SUPPORT?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live music (on the basement level) and music recording</li> <li>• Larger-scale theatre, dance or other performances on the basement level</li> <li>• Wide range of medium-size theatre, dance or other performances in the black box on the ground level</li> <li>• Office and administration services</li> </ul>
<b>COST ESTIMATE</b>	<p>\$15,480,000 (construction starting early 2026) Or \$16,270,000 (staged approach, with construction starting late 2027)</p>
<b>ALTERNATIVE PLANS</b>	<p>If support for this concept is not able to be found, Zeal Land would either look at an alternative commercial use of the building and/or sell part of the building.</p>

# ATHENAEUM

## CONCEPT DESIGN SKETCHES

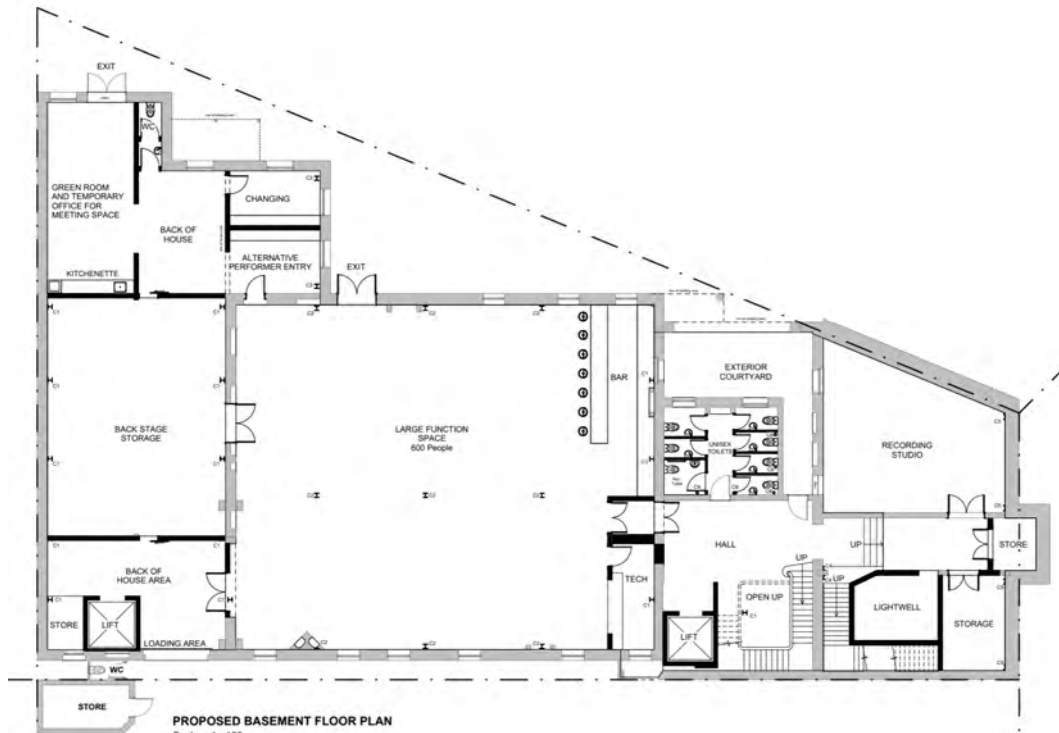
The sketches below have been developed by TEAM architects, with structural advice from Peter Stevenson. The full size concept drawings are available to view at [www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz](http://www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz)

### GROUND LEVEL



- Remodelled Octagon entry, with a refurbished foyer allowing more light and connection to spaces beyond the foyer. Original staircase to lower level retained, plus a new lift.
- New shopfront to the former Thistle bar space, with space for a small coffee shop and a new additional stairwell from Octagon level to lower level
- Retained stairs to upper floor with refurbished and rentable office and studio spaces
- Retain and reconfigure the Athenaeum Library space as a gathering space with bar facilities for literature and theatre events
- Sound lobby provides access to a new 13m x 13m acoustically treated black box performance space
- New back of house spaces and facilities, including green room, toilets, dressing rooms, storage space and service lift
- Exterior: new verandah and sympathetic redefinition of the façade, bringing colour and identity

**BASEMENT LEVEL**



- New large function / venue space with foyer and unisex toilet facilities, a bar and a room for technical services, as well as an exterior courtyard
- Behind the large venue space is a backstage area for equipment storage, as well as a green room, toilet, dressing room and back of house space
- Loading dock, service lift and storage area to the western side
- A recording studio with storage space is created below the Octagon facing building



**3-D IMAGES**



**Proposed façade:**

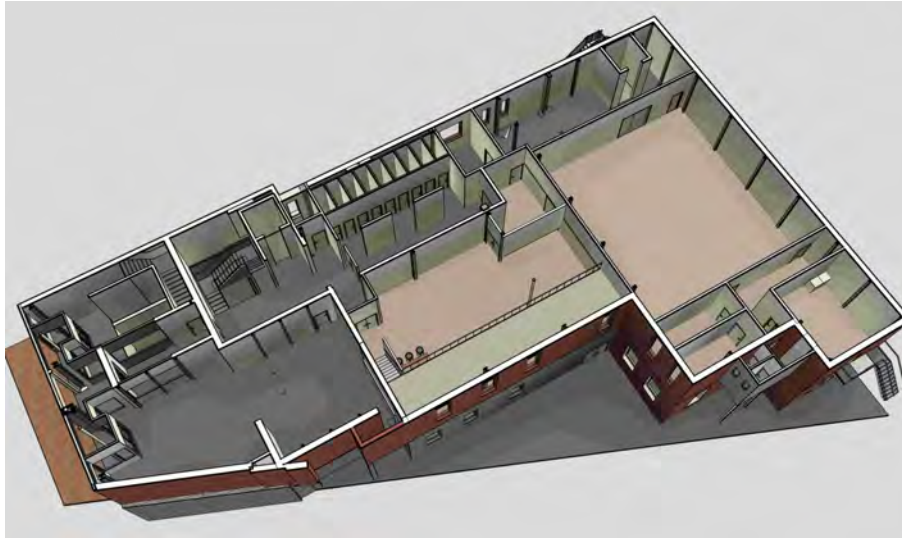
Note reinstated masonry and new shopfront to the former Thistle bar. Remodelled entry to the Athenaeum provides a more welcoming space and better connection to the venues and spaces within.



**North-east elevation:**

This image conveys the scale of the Athenaeum and the potential of the proposed redevelopment.





**Ground floor:**

At the left-hand edge of this image, we see the three entry points to the building (to the former Thistle bar space, the main Athenaeum entry, and the Craic). Also shown in this image is the updated Athenaeum library space (to serve as a foyer for literary and theatre events), new toilet facilities, and a new 13m x 13m black box / flexible performance space, with supporting back of house spaces.



**Lower ground / basement floor:**

The main feature of this level is a 600-pax capacity venue with bar and tech spaces, as well as supporting back of house areas. At the Octagon-end of this level (at the left of this image) is a recording studio and storage space. This level also features an exterior courtyard.

# MAYFAIR THEATRE

100 King Edward Street, South Dunedin

[www.mayfairtheatre.co.nz](http://www.mayfairtheatre.co.nz)

Owned by Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust, a registered and incorporated charity



The Mayfair Theatre envisages a refurbishment that preserves the theatre's mid-size capacity and grand proscenium arch auditorium, modernising it to ensure a great experience for all its users.

The adjoining building is also owned by the Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust. Two thirds of the building are currently leased, providing important income for the Trust. This proposal includes plans for the remaining third of the building (nearest the supermarket). The leased two thirds could be incorporated into future developments.

## HISTORY

The building opened in 1914 as the 840 seat King Edward Picture Theatre. It is one of the oldest, purpose-built movie theatres remaining in New Zealand.

In the mid 1920s, "talkies" became popular and the theatre underwent a modernisation, replacing some of Edwardian features with its current deco style. At this point, the building's name changed to the Mayfair Theatre.

Once television started to take over from the movies, many theatres gradually closed, and so it was with the Mayfair in the mid 1960s.

The Dunedin Opera Company then purchased the building and redeveloped it into a 400 seat live theatre, bringing the circle down to meet a newly constructed orchestra pit, and the original Edwardian proscenium off the back wall to form the stage. Dressing rooms were formed in the old stalls.

In the early 1990s, the adjacent building was purchased to allow for set and wardrobe areas.

In 2014, the Dunedin Opera Company sold the complex to the Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust.

## CURRENT CONFIGURATION AND USE

The 400 seat auditorium has a traditional proscenium arch, and the orchestra pit can be covered with an apron if not required. Below the stage there are two chorus dressing rooms and six smaller dressing rooms.

The building beside the theatre (named Mayfair House) contains a large scenery store at the eastern end, while the remainder of the building is currently leased out.

The theatre is used by a variety of local hirers, including Opera Otago, Otago Scouts, Taieri Musical, Musical Theatre Dunedin, the Dunedin Arts Festival and several schools. Touring performers include singers, comedians, dancers, psychics and actors.

A normal year would see 1,000 performers and crew staging various productions. In the year to June 2024 the Mayfair hosted 13,900 audience members.

## HERITAGE STATUS

The Mayfair Theatre is a Category 2 registered building.

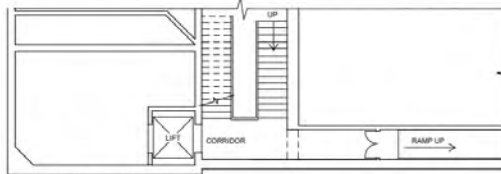
<p><b>BUILDING CONDITION AND CHALLENGES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General ageing – the Mayfair is 110 years old and has had few major upgrades</li> <li>• Although it has a high rating in terms of the current code and is not “earthquake prone”, it needs a small amount of seismic strengthening</li> <li>• Requires a new roof</li> <li>• Poor accessibility</li> <li>• New toilet facilities are required for patrons</li> <li>• Poor access for packing in scenery</li> </ul>
<p><b>REMEDIAL WORKS &amp; REFURBISHMENT PLANNING ALREADY UNDERTAKEN</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Feasibility study completed by Octa included heritage assessment, fire and accessibility reports</li> <li>✓ Conservation Plan completed by Origin Consulting</li> <li>✓ Asbestos survey completed and remediation/removal costs ascertained</li> <li>✓ Concept sketches for a new foyer layout, a passenger lift and new toilet facilities have been created by Origin Consulting</li> </ul>
<p><b>WHAT MIGHT A REFURBISHED MAYFAIR LOOK LIKE?</b></p>	<p>The concept designs for the Mayfair aim to refurbish and reconfigure the existing theatre and adjacent workshop space, providing for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible entry through to the auditorium, and to the social space upstairs</li> <li>• New toilet facilities, including accessible toilets, accessed from the foyer space</li> <li>• Reconfiguring the backstage areas beneath the auditorium to better meet the needs of today’s performances</li> <li>• Creating a new connection between the auditorium building and the adjacent building to the north, providing a workshop and scene store with hoist and stairs to a mezzanine at stage level</li> <li>• Reconfiguring auditorium seating to provide a better audience to performance connection, and adding wheelchair accessible seating</li> <li>• Providing stage-right wing with performer facilities and access to the workshop and scene dock building</li> <li>• The Northern shop is not included in current development plans but has potential to be used as an additional space opening off from the foyer. Mayfair House (the leased parts of the adjoining building) offers future development opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>WHAT WOULD IT SUPPORT?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large-scale plays and musicals, both amateur and professional</li> <li>• Some live music performances</li> <li>• Touring productions</li> <li>• Comedy</li> </ul>
<p><b>COST ESTIMATE</b></p>	<p>\$13,320,000 (construction starting early 2026) Or \$15,000,000 (staged approach, with construction starting early 2030)</p>
<p><b>ALTERNATIVE PLANS</b></p>	<p>If funding cannot be achieved for the refurbishment outlined above, the Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust will continue to operate as long as it can. However, this is likely to become difficult to continue within the next 5 years, at which time the theatre operations would be closed and the building would be sold. The Trust is unlikely to find a purchaser that would operate it as a theatre.</p>

# MAYFAIR

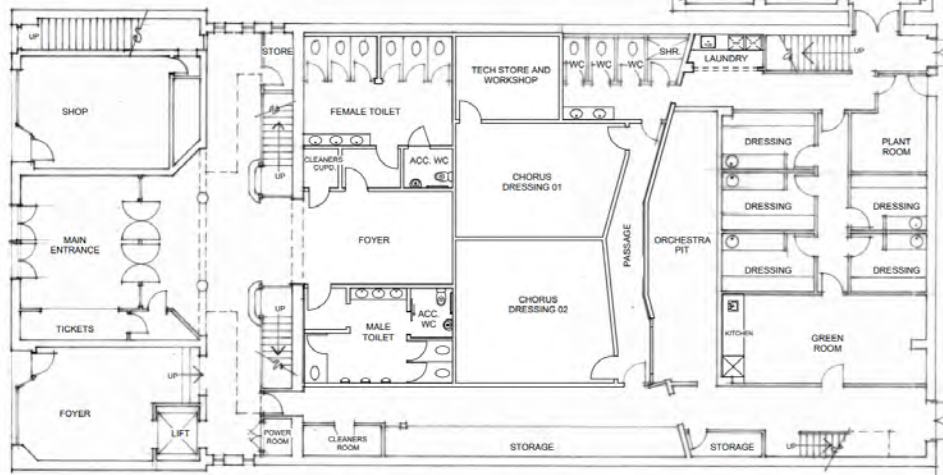
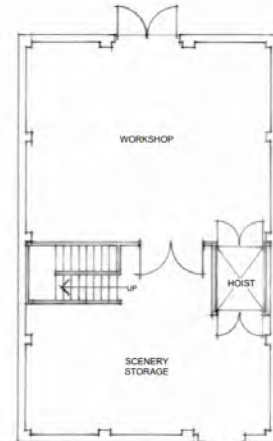
## CONCEPT DESIGN SKETCHES

The sketches below have been developed by TEAM architects, with structural advice from WSP Opus. The full size concept drawings are available to view at [www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz](http://www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz)

### GROUND FLOOR



PROPOSED PLAN- INTERMEDIATE FLOOR PLAN  
Scale = 1 : 100

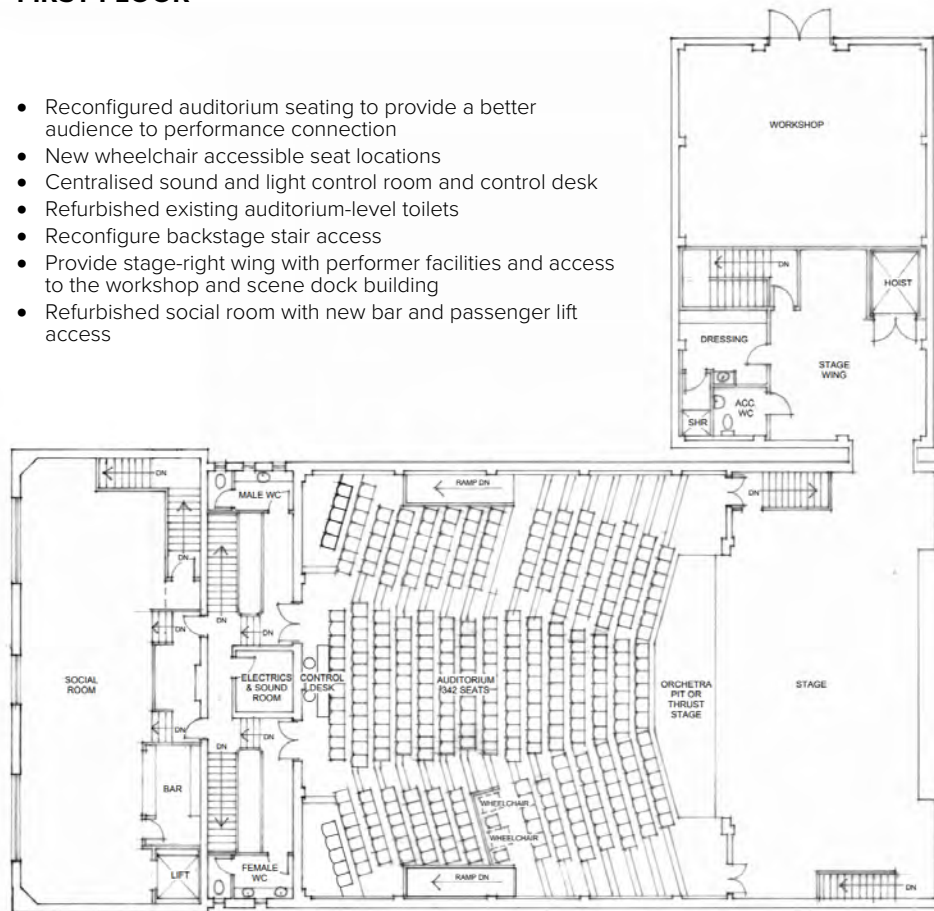


PROPOSED PLAN- GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- Accessible entry and route through to the auditorium, including a passenger lift to an entry foyer providing access to both the auditorium and social foyer above the main entrance
- New toilet facilities, including accessible toilets, in the area beneath the auditorium (accessed directly from the main entrance)
- Reconfiguring the remaining floor area beneath the auditorium with five small dressing rooms, a green room, 2 larger chorus dressing rooms, back of house toilets and laundry facility
- Space retained for storage, plant, electrical services and a workshop / technician space
- New connection with the adjacent building to the north, providing a workshop and scene store with hoist and stairs to a mezzanine level at stage level

**FIRST FLOOR**

- Reconfigured auditorium seating to provide a better audience to performance connection
- New wheelchair accessible seat locations
- Centralised sound and light control room and control desk
- Refurbished existing auditorium-level toilets
- Reconfigure backstage stair access
- Provide stage-right wing with performer facilities and access to the workshop and scene dock building
- Refurbished social room with new bar and passenger lift access



PROPOSED PLAN- FIRST FLOOR PLAN

## WHY INVEST IN PERFORMING ARTS?

Arts, culture and creativity are central to a thriving city. Investment in arts, culture, and creativity is an investment in people and communities, and their social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.

Arts and culture help to create vibrant towns and cities that people want to live, work and play in, and tourists want to visit. They foster a sense of belonging and community connection, and support positive physical and mental health outcomes.

As New Zealand’s Core Cities research puts it, ‘creative industries contribute to the buzz of a city, strengthen brand and identity, and attract talented workers.’

A Massey University-led research project published in November 2024<sup>2</sup> showed that the live performance sector contributed at least \$17.3 billion in social and economic value to Aotearoa New Zealand in the year to 30 June 2024. It also found that:

- For every \$1 spent on live performance, \$3.20 is returned in benefits to the wider community
- Audience spending motivated by live performance contributes 1.4% to Aotearoa’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- Over 2.3 million people attended at least one live performance between July 2023 and June 2024.
- Attending live performance provides an immediate boost to life satisfaction and contributes to a lasting improvement in overall wellbeing.

We believe arts and culture need the same support as other community infrastructure such as transport and schools – particularly in a UNESCO City of Literature.



<sup>2</sup> Carter, D., Hoad, C., Muller, P., Tappenden, A., Wilson, J., & Wilson, O. (2024). [Measuring and Articulating the Value of Live Performance in Aotearoa](#). Massey University.

## OPERATING MODEL

If the Playhouse, Athenaeum and Mayfair were to be refurbished, the operation of the three venues would need to look quite different from today.

We anticipate refurbishment would result in significantly more hire usage, which would need to be managed capably and professionally.

All three venue owners acknowledge that it will make sense to share resources across the three venues to help them operate as efficiently as possible, and to give hirers and audiences a great experience.

At its lightest and lowest cost, this might be a single staff member managing the calendars and hire bookings for all three venues, and maintaining a database of audience members to engage with directly about events. This could be supplemented with a pool of technicians, ushers and fire wardens – volunteer or professional – called in on a casual basis to service hires. This could include collaboration with Otago Polytechnic the University of Otago.

At a more comprehensive level, an operating model could include ticketing and/or marketing support, or other services.

The costs of the operating model would depend on the level of service the city would like to offer hirers, and whether we could collaborate with other venue managers for efficiency.

Hire revenue would go at least some way to meeting operating costs, although this may need to be supplemented annually with external funding (as is the case currently with the Mayfair, for example) – noting our principle that our venues need to remain affordable for a wide range of hirers.

We would like to work on operational costings further with Council, at the next stage of this concept.

Venue owners can confirm we're committed to working together – and potentially with other venues or venue managers – to find the solution that offers the best value for owners, hirers and audiences.

## OWNERSHIP MODEL

Some members of the community are curious as to how a partnership project would work, given our three venues are not owned by Dunedin City Council.

We don't believe this is an insurmountable issue. The Playhouse and Mayfair Theatres are owned by charitable organisations and governed in accordance with objectives of community benefit. The Athenaeum is in private ownership, and Zeal Land is pursuing this project primarily with a community focus, rather than a purely commercial objective.

As venue owners, we are open to discussions about how external investment in our venues can be protected to ensure funders' objectives are achieved and appropriately governed over the long term.

# COSTS & FUNDING

The table below sets out the QS estimates of the capital costs of the redevelopment concepts presented in this report. The full detail of these estimates and their inclusions / exclusions is available at [www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz](http://www.dunedintheatrenetwork.org.nz).

The table sets out two cost options: firstly, a scenario in which all three projects progress concurrently, with design work through 2025 and construction starting in early 2026. The second scenario envisages staging the three projects sequentially (refer the chart below):

## CAPITAL COST ESTIMATE BY PROJECT

PROJECT	REDEVELOPMENT COSTS (\$M)	
	Concurrent projects, <i>construction starting early 2026</i>	Staged approach
<b>Stage 1: Playhouse</b>	5.790	5.790 <i>Construction starting early 2026</i>
<b>Stage 2: Athenaeum</b>	15.480	16.270 <i>Construction starting late 2027</i>
<b>Stage 3: Mayfair</b>	13.320	15.000 <i>Construction starting early 2030</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34.590</b>	<b>36.920</b>

*Potential staged approach sequencing:*

Building	2025				2026				2027				2028				2029				2030				2031							
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
Playhouse					Design - 9 months				Build - 12 months																							
Athenaeum									Design - 12 months				Build - 18 months																			
Mayfair																	Design - 15 months				Build - 18 months											

It's important to note these QS estimates are based on **concept designs**, not detailed designs, so although our QS has allowed for contingencies, there is still scope for some cost movement as plans move through the detailed design process.



### FUNDING

The costs outlined above exceed what each venue owner is able to fund from their own reserves.

Each owner is able to access external funding to varying degrees. As registered charitable organisations, the Dunedin Repertory Society and the Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust are able to apply for philanthropic, community and Lottery funding. Zeal Land has access to private funding. All three venues are also eligible to apply to various heritage building funds.

We have each had initial engagement with several of those sources of funding, as well as an independent fundraising consultant.

We have heard a consistent message that our refurbishment projects align well with funders' objectives and are of interest to them, but that local authority funding is critical.

Jenni Giblin (owner and director of Fundraising HQ) shared her opinion that without DCC funding, our facilities would struggle to secure the required funds. However, if DCC were to contribute, then each facility has a very good chance of securing the remaining funds.

We would therefore like to work with Council on the possibility of the three refurbishment projects being part-funded by Council as a cornerstone investor, with entities raising remaining funding from other sources. This approach could enable Council to make an investment that will leverage a significant further sum of external funds, achieving social and economic benefit for the city.



# NEXT STEPS

Since our previous report in 2023, several other ideas for theatre venues in Dunedin have been put forward. We welcome these new ideas, and the growth in the debate over the past 18 months – this is all about moving the city’s performing arts venue discussion forward, after all!

We’re committed to continued constructive discussions about how best to meet the needs of the city.

For us, this work has been about highlighting the plight of our buildings and sharing the potential they offer the city, if the city is of a mind to invest in them.

We’re excited to present the final piece of this project and hope it is of assistance to Council and the community in making a decision about the future of the city’s performing arts venues.







# Dunedin Theatre Network



## Concept Design Stage – Summary Report

By: Feldspar Associates

Date of this Report: November 2024



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 Purpose of the Report

This report presents the concept designs for the redevelopment of the three heritage venues within the Dunedin Theatre Network, (DTN) – the Playhouse, the Dunedin Athenaeum and the Mayfair.

### 1.2 Project Vision

The overall vision of the Theatre Network is to restore and upgrade three of the city’s existing venues to create a vibrant, inclusive performing arts ecosystem that serves both community and professional needs.

In the longer term, the proposal is for all three venues to develop a shared operational framework, including programming, facilities management and ticketing, to improve efficiency, reduce operating costs and create a collaborative approach to supporting and facilitating performing arts for the city.

### 1.3 Key Asks

The DTN team recognises that this is an ambitious project and that they will need financial and political support to implement it.

This project needs support from the Dunedin City Council, (DCC), investment from the council’s long-term plan would enable the DTN team to work with other funders to develop co-funding agreements. The DTN team are already in discussion with key funders such as Lotteries and Kanoa, but both require council backing in advance of decision making..

### 1.4 Political Relevance

This project supports long-term council and government objectives beyond supporting the arts, including heritage conservation, sustainability, community engagement, and economic development.

#### Key Considerations:

- **Value of the Creative Economy** – the creative economy contributes 5% of GDP
- **Heritage Conservation** – without intervention there is a real risk that these buildings will not be useable and fall further into disrepair
- **Sustainability** – this proposal focuses on adaptively re-using existing venues, rather than investing millions in new buildings
- **Financial Responsibility** – this proposal makes the most of what we have
- **Community Support** – this proposal is community led and has substantial community support, (see previous long term plan submissions)
- **Economic and Social Impact** – this project will bring economic and social returns, including job creation, tourism, and fostering a vibrant arts scene in Dunedin

### 1.5 Concept Cost Estimate

To bring all three venues up to modern standards and create a range of accessible performance spaces, the estimated costs are as follows:

Theatre	Concept Cost Estimate
The Playhouse	\$5,790,000
The Dunedin Athenaeum	\$15,480,000
The Mayfair	\$13,320,000
<b>Total cost of proposal</b>	<b>\$34,590,000</b>

These estimates are based on construction starting early in 2026.

With DCC funding for project scoping and concept design work, Feldspar have been able to improve on the original cost estimate of \$38.2 million which was proposed in the Dunedin Theatre Network’s Stage 1 submission in 2022.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### 2.1 History of the Project and this Concept Design Report

This project proposal responds to Dunedin city’s well documented and long-standing demand for improved performing arts facilities. Following the completion of feasibility studies for all three venues currently included in the Theatre Network, venue owners discussed the possibility of working together to respond to the need for high quality, affordable performance spaces.

The idea of forming a network is predicated on sharing resources rather than working in competition for funding. The network concept also leaves space for other venues to join as the organisation develops.

The DTN team carried out comprehensive stakeholder consultation on the network concept and achieved considerable support, the results of this consultation work were included in the Stage 2 report submitted to DCC councillors in 2023.

Following a council resolution, the DTN team collaborated with the DCC to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which was formalised earlier this year. Through the MOU, the DCC allocated \$100,000 to support venue owners in undertaking early-stage scoping and concept design work.

As part of this process, the DCC requested that structural concepts be included in the scope, and this was funded by each venue owner directly.

### 2.2 Report Parameters

This concept design report is the first step for this project in understanding the scope and costs associated with redeveloping the three venues.

Examining funding options and operating strategies have not formed part of this research but these will be essential to understanding the deliverability and operation of the Network should this project go ahead.

**As such, Feldspar has excluded any discussion around funding and operating options from this report. Operation modelling and business planning have not yet been undertaken.**

### 2.3 History of the Venues Included in the Project

The venues included in the proposed Theatre Network present the possibility of developing performing arts spaces across Dunedin City, providing excellent geographical coverage with varied performance spaces and opportunities for urban renewal.

The following table provides a snapshot of each of the venues, this concept design report will address both the seismic and asbestos related issues as well as working to conserve each building’s key heritage features:

Venue/ Owner/ Operator	Year Built	Approx. Size	Heritage Status	Current Seating Capacity	Seismic Assessment	Asbestos Report
<b>The Playhouse, Albany Street</b>  Dunedin Repertory Society	1875	600m <sup>2</sup>	Currently unclassified  Conservation report in place	130	Yes – earthquake prone	Yes minimal contamination
<b>The Dunedin Athenaeum, The Octagon</b>  Zeal Land Ltd	1870	2,000m <sup>2</sup>	Category 1 Heritage NZ  District Plan scheduled  Covenanted	100 (in New Athenaeum Theatre)	Yes – earthquake prone	Yes
<b>The Mayfair, King Edward Street</b>  The Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust	1914	1,400m <sup>2</sup>	Category 2 Heritage NZ  District Plan scheduled	400	Yes – earthquake prone	Yes – the asbestos roof requires replacement; a replacement and remediation plan has been scoped and costed with contractors



### 2.3. Further Information Regarding Each Building

#### The Playhouse Theatre

Built in c.1875 and extended in the 1960s, the Playhouse Theatre is located in Albany Street, Dunedin. A rear section of the building borders the University Bookshop site.

It is understood that the building originally possessed an ornate façade which was removed as part of an ‘international style’ makeover at some point in the 1960s.

Shown in the satellite photo below, the total site area is approximately 289m<sup>2</sup>, with around 600m<sup>2</sup> of building space contained over three floors.



The building is not registered with Heritage New Zealand and is not protected under the District Plan, but independent heritage advice confirms its high cultural, social, and historic heritage value. The Dunedin Repertory Society are currently considering the possibility of applying for a heritage registration as it is a pre-1900 structure.

The building is used predominantly by the Dunedin Repertory Society to put on theatre productions for children, including rehearsal time. The Playhouse plays an important role in sustaining Dunedin’s performing arts scene and contributes widely to the many arts festivals that take place in the city. The spaces are also used for music events.

The Repertory Society has owned the building since 1971, but insufficient funding has led to much of the building fabric being degraded to a moderate-poor condition owing to damp and sustained water ingress.

#### The Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute

Built in 1870, the Athenaeum is located in the Octagon, in the heart of Dunedin’s CBD.

The discrete façade reveals very little of the proportion and significance of the building behind.

Highlighted in the satellite photo below, it is possible to appreciate the size and complexity of this 1022m<sup>2</sup> site with over 2000m<sup>2</sup> of building contained primarily over two floors.



The Athenaeum building is registered as Category 1 with Heritage New Zealand and the façade is protected under the District Plan.

The building not only houses the Dunedin Athenaeum Institute, but also the Thistle Café and the Craic bar, which front on to the Octagon. There is a small theatre, the original Fortune Theatre, (to the rear of the ground floor), which is used regularly, particularly during the Fringe festival. The remainder of the space is currently unused.

Zeal Land bought the building to save it from further degradation and while they are currently working through a programme to improve the physical fabric of the building, much of the space is currently in poor condition.

In 2018 in a rare move by a private building owner, Zeal Land, working in collaboration with Heritage New Zealand, placed a covenant on the building to further protect it for future generations based on its cultural significance to the city.

#### **The Mayfair Theatre**

One of the earliest surviving purpose-built picture houses in New Zealand, the King Edward Picture Theatre was built in 1914. It was modernised in 1934 and renamed the Mayfair Theatre, the building was then adapted as a 400-seat theatre in 1967.

The Mayfair is located in King Edward Street in South Dunedin and remains a prominent part of the urban fabric of this part of the city. There is also additional office/rehearsal space on the first floor which is linked to the main theatre building.

The satellite photo below highlights the main theatre building, backing on the large supermarket site to the north-east. The Mayfair Charitable Trust also owns the buildings immediately to the north of the theatre, for the purposes of this report, only the theatre and the workshop building to the rear of the site are discussed. The Trust rely on income from the remaining spaces, and these are excluded from the project proposal.



The site is well serviced by car parking both on street and via the Cameron Street public car park.

The Mayfair theatre is a truly community venue, it is used for performances by community organisations from all over the city as well as professional touring companies. This produces some income for the venue but not enough to fund the substantial physical work required to bring the building up to modern standards.

#### **2.4. Current Situation**

The three heritage buildings included in the network proposal, each over 100 years old, have been adapted over time, reflecting both their historical significance and the need for modernisation and improvement to serve the community effectively.

Two of the three buildings are community owned and operated, the Playhouse and the Mayfair. The Athenaeum was purchased by local developer, Zeal Land, in 2013 with the sole aim of saving the building.

Access to capital funding to maintain and develop cultural community assets has always been challenging, but in recent years, pressure on grant funding has increased as New Zealand has faced both the Covid pandemic and significant flood events.

Capital funders expect local councils to be a cornerstone investor before considering applications. In turn, this means that council support is imperative to securing the future of this project.

The following table highlights the current use, condition and major challenges facing each building:

Venue	Current Use	Building Conditions	Major Challenges
<b>The Playhouse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Largely children’s theatre</li> <li>Also used for Arts festival/Fringe festival/music performances</li> </ul>	Moderate/Poor – operational time remaining 5 years max	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seismic strengthening</li> <li>Safety/compliance improvements</li> <li>Heating and ventilation</li> <li>Fire upgrades</li> <li>Full decorative refit</li> </ul>
<b>The Athenaeum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Athenaeum Theatre – not for profit flexible space</li> <li>Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute</li> <li>Some office/hospitality leased space</li> </ul>	Poor – only parts of the building are operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seismic strengthening</li> <li>Safety/compliance improvements</li> <li>Roof replacement</li> <li>Fire upgrades</li> <li>Full decorative refit</li> </ul>

Venue	Current Use	Building Conditions	Major Challenges
<b>The Mayfair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Largely musical theatre performances</li> <li>Community use for schools and local groups</li> </ul>	Moderate/Poor – operational time remaining 10 years max	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seismic strengthening</li> <li>Safety/compliance improvements</li> <li>Asbestos removal/ Roof replacement</li> <li>Fire upgrades</li> <li>Full decorative refit</li> </ul>

### 2.5 Rationale for the Proposal

Following the completion of the DCC’s performing arts feasibility in 2021, there is now a good understanding of the needs for Dunedin’s performing arts community.

From the city-wide feasibility report, there is now a functional brief which identifies the need in Dunedin for the following spaces:

- A mid-size theatre – 350-450 seat auditorium with associated FOH/BOH
- Two large studio spaces
- Design workshops and storage
- Supporting office/meeting spaces
- Community Arts Hub – a suite of small, medium and larger studio spaces

Dunedin already has three key venues that are in run down, underused, heritage buildings which need considerable investment. Some of these buildings are protected heritage properties, they are buildings that we, (as a society), have decided have intrinsic value to our communities and to our urban landscapes, they are not buildings that can easily be adapted to new uses.

No new public theatres have been built in Dunedin since the late 1800s and none of the city's existing theatres were purpose built. But our existing performance spaces have survived, they are run by loyal and dedicated teams of people who have worked hard with very little investment to keep these institutions going and supporting Dunedin's performing arts community.

**The principle aim of completing this concept development work is to demonstrate the viability and value of redeveloping our existing, (and largely protected), heritage venues to deliver sustainable performing arts spaces for the city.**



## 3. STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### 3.1. Consultation Process

There has been widespread consultation on this proposal led by venue owners. Over the past two years, the DTN team conducted a series of workshops, held focus groups and hosted meetings to understand the needs and aspirations of performing arts organisations.

The Theatre Network team are also in the early stages of engaging with mana whenua and will report on this directly.

### 3.2. Key Findings

- Strong community support for upgrading the DTN venues
- Desire for more accessible, functional, and diverse performance spaces
- Affordability of venue hire is extremely important

### 3.3. Support from Key Stakeholders

The proposal has considerable support from performing arts groups, as well as from Heritage NZ.

As part of this concept design stage, the proposal for the Athenaeum has been discussed with Save Dunedin Live Music, who are keen to support the development of a live music venue in the Athenaeum.

The DTN team are also in dialogue with Kanoa with regards to accessing the Regional Infrastructure Fund in relation to this proposal.

Please see the DTN's Stage 2 report for further information about community consultation, the letters of support from Save Dunedin Live Music and Heritage NZ attached.

## 4. CONCEPT DESIGN

### 4.1 Consultant Team

Feldspar Associates have been working with the Dunedin Theatre Network team for the past two years to develop and scope this community led proposal. Prior to that Feldspar were engaged to complete feasibility studies for both the Playhouse and the Athenaeum.

Feldspar identified the following consultant team to deliver concept design and development work based on the brief from the DTN and DCC. This team all have significant heritage experience, and all have won multiple heritage restoration awards:

Consultant	Discipline	Reason for selection
<b>Fulton Ross Team Architects, (FRTA)</b>	Architecture	FRTA are highly experienced in delivering both performance spaces and heritage projects. They were instrumental in the design and development of the Court Theatre in Christchurch, both the temporary facility following the earthquakes and the redeveloped heritage theatre.  FRTA recently designed the Ashburton Events Centre and have a long-standing involvement with the Christchurch Arts Centre. FRTA are part of Team Architects, who also have a local Dunedin office.
<b>Rawlinsons</b>	Quantity Surveyors	Rawlinsons are a leading national quantity surveying practice, they have been providing expertise for over 50 years throughout New Zealand. With offices throughout the country, they are able to provide up to date and relevant cost information in relation to this project.
<b>Steve McKnight</b>	Structural engineering - Playhouse	Steve is a well-regarded Dunedin based structural engineer and developer; he specialises in heritage buildings.
<b>Peter Stevenson</b>	Structural engineering - Athenaeum	Similarly, Peter is a successful Dunedin based structural engineer, having worked in the city for over 30 years. Peter has a long involvement with the Athenaeum project, and recently completed a detailed seismic assessment for the building.

Consultant	Discipline	Reason for selection
<b>WSP</b>	Structural engineering - Mayfair	WSP are a multi-national consultancy with a strong local presence. Further conditions reports were needed for the Mayfair, and WSP were well-placed to deliver a comprehensive approach.

**Given the limited funding available and the challenging programme, the consultant team have worked extremely hard to deliver well considered and achievable design work and cost estimates.**

Feldspar and the DTN team are very grateful for the consultant team's dedication to assisting in the development of this proposal.

The specialist consultant inputs are appended to this overarching summary report.

### 4.2. About the Concept Design Stage

To construction professionals, the concept design stage is the first step in turning a project idea into reality. At this stage, consultants work with clients to understand what they want to achieve and come up with creative ideas to explore. The process focuses on rough sketches and simple layouts to decide on the overall vision and direction for the project. This helps everyone agree on the big picture before moving to more detailed work.

After the concept design stage, the project moves into preliminary design, where ideas are refined, and more detailed plans are created. Then, during developed design, the details are worked out further to prepare for construction. Finally, the detailed design stage produces the refined technical drawings and specifications needed to build the project.



**The concept design stage is a critical starting point, setting the foundation for all these later stages.**

### 4.3 Building Conditions Assessments

The consultant team have been guided and informed by a high number of specialist reports that have already been carried out for the three venues. This has meant that the team were able to produce more accurate design work and cost estimates than you would usually expect to find at this stage of development.

The following table provides an outline of the reports that have been used to inform design development and produce realistic cost estimates:

Description	The Playhouse	The Athenaeum	The Mayfair
Seismic Assessments	✓	✓	✓
Demolition Grade Asbestos Survey	✓	✓	✓
Heritage Conservation Report	✓	✓	✓
Feasibility report	✓	✓	✓
Outline fire report	✓	✓	✓
Outline planning due diligence assessment	✓	✓	N/A
Geotech report	Geotech for adjacent property used for concept stage	✓	Geotech report included in concept design scope, see appendices
Other assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Accessibility</li> <li>◆ Plumbing</li> <li>◆ Electrical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Drainage survey</li> <li>◆ 3D scans</li> <li>◆ Archaeological authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Accessibility</li> <li>◆ Electrical services</li> <li>◆ Mechanical services</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Architectural and Structural Concept Design

Please see appendices for the concept design report which covers each venue in the network.

In addition to this, the venue owners for the Playhouse and the Athenaeum have chosen to commission additional design development work and have the proposals for their building modelled in 3D. This information is appended separately to the main concept design report from architects, FRTA.

A summary of the proposal for each venue is provided below:

The Playhouse Proposal	
<b>Key Spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 120 seat auditorium</li> <li>◆ Traditional theatre format</li> <li>◆ Large rehearsal/break out space above with semi-commercial kitchen</li> <li>◆ Loading access to rear</li> </ul>
<b>Community Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Continuation of children's theatre</li> <li>◆ Facilitate additional hires by professional theatre producers, musicians and community groups by providing improved facilities</li> <li>◆ Widening participation in theatre by providing accessibility measures</li> </ul>
<b>Heritage Significance</b>	Built in 1876 and designed by Mason & Wales, the building has been part of the cultural landscape of Dunedin for almost 150 years.
<b>Current State</b>	The Playhouse is in dire need of investment. Some time was bought in 2021 when a partial roof replacement was funded by the Dunedin Heritage Fund, but the building cannot continue to operate in its current state for much longer, no more than 5 years.

The Playhouse Proposal	
<b>Proposed Upgrades</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Seismic strengthening work</li> <li>♦ Repair of key heritage features</li> <li>♦ Creation of a new back of house/stage area</li> <li>♦ Heating and ventilation improvements</li> <li>♦ Full decorative refurbishment</li> <li>♦ Improvement works throughout to comply with the building code</li> </ul>
<b>Architectural Design</b>	<p><b>Enhanced Accessibility</b> - Enlarged entrance, accessible toilet facilities, a box office, and a passenger lift providing barrier-free access to all levels.</p> <p><b>Improved Facilities</b> - Reconfigured seating for better sightlines and comfort, upgraded meeting and rehearsal rooms, and modern backstage amenities, including dressing rooms and accessible toilets.</p> <p><b>Preservation and Modernisation</b> - Retention of key architectural features like the proscenium arch and stage depth, combined with updates like fold-out access stairs and acoustic stage ceiling treatment.</p> <p><b>Optimised Space Usage</b> - Utilisation of under-croft space for storage, a new gantry for lighting and effects, and additional storage above the green room if needed.</p> <p><b>Enhanced Performance Support</b> - Centralised control desk, updated stage facilities, backstage green room with kitchenette and additional storage for seamless performance operations.</p>
<b>Structural Design</b>	<p>Strengthening concept complete, targeting at least 67% NBS at IL2 for existing building</p> <p>100%NBS for new stage/back of house.</p>
<b>Other Key Areas</b>	The proposed scope of work includes the installation of sprinklers, electrical upgrade, and HVAC improvements.
<b>Concept Cost Estimate</b>	\$5,790,000

The Dunedin Athenaeum Proposal	
<b>Key Spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ 120 seat black box space</li> <li>♦ Highly flexible basement performance venue with capacity for 600 people standing</li> <li>♦ Plans to maximise daytime use (as well nighttime) to attract tourism</li> <li>♦ Recording studio with video capability</li> <li>♦ Centre for Writing and associated library space, (legacy project for the Athenaeum)</li> <li>♦ Two café/bar spaces on the ground floor and further provision in the basement</li> <li>♦ Further hireable event/meeting spaces</li> <li>♦ Loading access to rear</li> </ul>
<b>Community Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Multi-space venue in the centre of the city with great social spaces, café/bar spaces on both floors</li> <li>♦ Smaller/mid-size performance spaces which are affordable and high-quality to meet demand</li> <li>♦ Flexibility to support daytime as well as nighttime uses</li> <li>♦ Adding value to the heart of city, bringing vibrancy and activity</li> <li>♦ Accessibility improvements to widen participation and maximise use</li> <li>♦ Adaptive re-use of a culturally significant building in the city centre</li> </ul>
<b>Heritage Significance</b>	Built in 1870, the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute was one of the first public buildings in Dunedin, hosting many of the city's major events as well as providing a place of learning and entertainment. The Athenaeum is one of the most culturally significant buildings in Dunedin and is Category 1 registered with Heritage New Zealand.
<b>Current State</b>	<p>While the ground and first floors of the Athenaeum are in current use, they are in poor condition and require much improvement work. The basement area is in a very poor state and, while it is used on occasion for special events, it is not useable full time.</p> <p>The building is highly underutilised owing to its current condition and configuration.</p>

The Dunedin Athenaeum Proposal	
<b>Proposed Upgrades</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Seismic strengthening</li> <li>♦ Repair of key heritage features</li> <li>♦ Reconfiguration of spaces to facilitate better utilisation</li> <li>♦ Creation of an improved entrance and café/bar/reception space from the Octagon</li> <li>♦ Creation of a new black box space on the ground floor</li> <li>♦ Integration of the Centre for Writing/library space with the rest of the building</li> <li>♦ Creation of a large multi-purpose flat floor venue in the basement</li> <li>♦ Heating and ventilation improvements</li> <li>♦ Full decorative refurbishment</li> <li>♦ Improvement works throughout to comply with the building code</li> </ul>
<b>Architectural Design</b>	<p><b>Enhanced Entrances and Foyer</b> - Remodelled Octagon entry with improved light and flow, a new shopfront and stairwell (where the Thistle currently is), and a refurbished foyer with added natural light and a passenger lift.</p> <p><b>Modernised Facilities</b> - Modern performance spaces, new unisex toilets, additional coffee shop, flexi-hire office and studio spaces, and upgraded Athenaeum Library/Centre for Writing with hospitality facilities, an expanded mezzanine, and meeting rooms.</p> <p><b>Performance Spaces</b> - A new acoustically treated black box theatre, a large function venue with technical and backstage support, and additional green rooms, toilets, and dressing rooms for performers.</p>
<b>Architectural Design</b>	<p><b>Optimised Support Areas</b> - Back-of-house storage, a service lift for equipment, a recording studio, and dedicated backstage spaces for both performance and function venues.</p> <p><b>Improved Accessibility and Services</b> - Public corridor access to shared facilities, a loading dock for equipment, and streamlined space for technical and operational needs.</p>
<b>Structural Design</b>	Strengthening concept complete, targeting at least 67% NBS at IL3.

The Dunedin Athenaeum Proposal	
<b>Other Key Areas</b>	The proposed scope of work includes the installation of sprinklers, electrical upgrade, and HVAC improvements to all areas.
<b>Concept Cost Estimate</b>	\$15,480,000

The Mayfair Proposal	
<b>Key Spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ 340 seat auditorium</li> <li>♦ Traditional theatre format with significant capacity backstage</li> <li>♦ Large rehearsal space/F&amp;B available with semi-commercial kitchen</li> <li>♦ Associated workshop/storage space with good loading and direct access to stage</li> </ul>
<b>Community Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Redevelopment of a traditional mid-size theatre with good access and parking</li> <li>♦ Continuation of hires by schools and community groups as well as professional performers</li> <li>♦ Facilitate additional hires by professional theatre producers and community groups by providing improved facilities</li> <li>♦ Widening participation in theatre by providing accessibility measures</li> </ul>
<b>Heritage Significance</b>	Built in 1914 and used as a cinema until its redevelopment in 1967, the Mayfair has been part of the cultural landscape of South Dunedin for over 100 years. The building is registered as Category 2 with Heritage New Zealand.
<b>Current State</b>	The Mayfair is in constant use and very much part of the community, but without any significant investment for nearly 60 years, the building is suffering from considerable wear and tear as well as compliance issues. The theatre does not meet modern standards for patrons and performers alike. The building has a Super 6 asbestos roof, which requires replacement.



The Mayfair Proposal	
<b>Proposed Upgrades</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Seismic strengthening work</li> <li>♦ Replacement of the asbestos roof</li> <li>♦ Repair of key heritage features, including the facade</li> <li>♦ Substantial improvement to back of house facilities</li> <li>♦ Creation of a new workshop with stage access and loading</li> <li>♦ Improved toilet facilities</li> <li>♦ Heating and ventilation improvements</li> <li>♦ Full decorative refurbishment</li> <li>♦ Improvement works throughout to comply with the building code</li> </ul>
<b>Architectural Design</b>	<p><b>Accessible Facilities</b> - Accessible entry and routes for people with disabilities, including a passenger lift, accessible toilets, and wheelchair seating options in the auditorium.</p> <p><b>Upgraded Auditorium</b> - Reconfigured seating for better audience connection, centralised sound and light control, and restored plasterwork.</p> <p><b>Enhanced Backstage Areas</b> - Redesigned backstage with improved stair access, stage-right performer facilities, dressing rooms, chorus spaces, a green room, and a laundry facility.</p> <p><b>Improved Technical Spaces</b> - Connection to a workshop and scene dock with a hoist, technician space, and storage for technical and plant equipment.</p> <p><b>Refurbished Additional Spaces</b> - Updated rehearsal/social room with a new bar and accessible passenger lift access.</p>
<b>Structural Design</b>	Targeting at least 67% NBS at IL3.
<b>Other Key Areas</b>	The proposed scope of work includes the installation of sprinklers, electrical upgrade, and HVAC improvements to all areas.
<b>Concept Cost Estimate</b>	13,320,000

## 5. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

### 5.1. Budget Breakdown

The following table provides an overview of the cost estimate prepared by Rawlinsons for each theatre, this is based on the concept design work provided by the consultant team.

Description	The Playhouse	The Athenaeum	The Mayfair
Construction cost	\$2,826,650	\$7,507,765	\$6,492,155
Preliminary and general cost	\$339,198	\$900,932	\$779,059
Margin	\$253,268	\$672,696	\$581,697
Construction contingencies	\$793,235	\$2,306,674	\$1,994,639
Professional fees and other development costs	\$851,000	\$2,047,900	\$1,711,200
Project contingency	\$405,068	\$1,074,877	\$924,700
Escalation and rounding	\$321,581	\$969,156	\$836,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,790,000</b>	<b>15,480,000</b>	<b>\$13,320,000</b>

As this is a concept estimate, the quantity surveying team have made some assumptions with regards to the specification of the building work, they have also included robust contingencies to cover the cost of design development and address any unforeseen work. These are all heritage buildings and unforeseen work is very common.

Provisional sums have also been allocated to enable the DTN team to engage Aukaha to represent iwi in this project going forward and to incorporate mana whenua elements into the overall project design.

Appropriate allowances have also been made for a hydrologist to be involved in design development work for the Mayfair and to incorporate climate resilience adaptations if required.

**The DTN team are determined that this project should create truly accessible performance spaces for the whole community. The consultant team have made every effort to ensure that there is sufficient funding in the budget to secure this vision for this city.**

### 5.2 Project Exclusions

Project inclusions and exclusions are listed in the extensive report from Rawlinsons, which is included in the Appendices.

The main project exclusions are:

- ♦ Development contributions – DCC staff have confirmed that development contributions will not be applicable to this project
- ♦ Temporary accommodation or relocation costs – it is assumed that each venue will close while the redevelopment work takes place
- ♦ Information technology – beyond that included in the theatre technology allowance
- ♦ Principal’s bond, finance and funding costs

### 5.3. Staging Options

Feldspar have considered staging options in order to reduce the burden of paying for the redevelopment of three venues simultaneously. There are positives and negatives associated with a staged approach, and these are explored in the following table.

The cheapest time to build is always right now, but staging can be preferable where demand is high, but funding options are limited.

The following table outlines some staging options.

Option	Description	Estimated Programme Time	Positives	Negatives
<b>Do nothing</b>	No action is taken	-	No funding required	There is a very real risk that the three venues will close.  This would impact Dunedin’s creative community and creative economy, there would be far fewer local venues available for both professional performers and the local community
<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Concurrent Delivery</b> – all three building programmes delivered simultaneously	3-4 years	All three buildings would be redeveloped as soon as possible  Most efficient option in terms of escalation costs	Requirement to fundraise for full redevelopment costs upfront  All three venues would be closed at once
<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Sequential Delivery</b> – one building project is delivered at a time in full	10 + years	Less pressure to fundraise all the money needed at once  Ability to prioritise based on need  Two out of three venues would be open throughout the programme  More time to complete consultation work  Better ability to learn as the programme is rolled out	Least efficient option in terms of escalation costs  It will be a very long time before all three venues are redeveloped  Potential for additional building/ compliance issues to emerge  High likelihood of scope creep

Option	Description	Estimated Programme Time	Positives	Negatives
Option 3	<b>Staggered Delivery</b> – there is overlap between the construction phase for the first project and design phase for the next and so on	6-7 years	<p>Less pressure to fundraise all the money needed at once</p> <p>Ability to prioritise based on need</p> <p>More efficient in terms of escalation costs than Option 2</p> <p>Two out of three venues would be open throughout the programme</p> <p>Ability to prioritise based on need</p> <p>More time to complete consultation work</p> <p>Better ability to learn as the programme is rolled out</p>	<p>Some likelihood of scope creep</p> <p>Some potential for additional building/ compliance issues to emerge</p>

The following table from Rawlinsons reflects the cost uplift associated with staging on the basis described above:

Building	Escalated Cost	Difference
Playhouse	\$5,790,000	\$0
Athenaeum & Mechanics Institute	\$16,270,000	\$790,000
Mayfair	\$15,000,000	\$1,680,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$37,060,000</b>	<b>\$2,470,000</b>

As you can see, it would be just under \$2.5m more expensive to stage the project on a staggered delivery basis.



Based on the analysis above, Feldspar would recommend Option 3 if staging is required, this approach would put less pressure on funders, would enable two out of three venues to remain open throughout the programme, and would enable each venue to be prioritised based on need.

The timescales outlined below are relatively generous and would allow for ongoing stakeholder consultation and learning as the programme progresses.

	2025				2026				2027				2028				2029				2030				2031			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Playhouse			Design - 9 months		Build - 12 months																							
Athenaeum									Design - 12 months				Build - 18 months															
Mayfair																	Design - 15 months				Build - 18 months							

## 6. STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

### 6.1. DCC Priorities

This proposal consistently aligns with the DCC’s stated priorities, it will deliver on key workstreams including:

- ♦ Arts and culture – adding value to Dunedin’s creative economy
- ♦ Heritage Preservation and Sustainability- upgrading heritage buildings instead of constructing new ones
- ♦ Community and Social Impact - increased access to performing arts spaces for local groups and educational programmes
- ♦ Economic Development – supporting the key role that the creative industries play in boosting tourism and supporting local businesses

Indeed, this is what the city council’s website has to say about the creative economy:

*‘Arts and culture is not an optional extra but is a critical part of economic development as creativity underpins the very foundations of Dunedin’s prosperity...*

*...Arts and culture offer ways to build new and exciting relationships with other places and their cultural institutions, industries and people. This both reinforces Dunedin’s profile in the world and brings wide-ranging benefits to the city. We have a legacy of powerful arts and cultural activity... Building value begins with valuing things locally, profiling and celebrating our creative output.”*

The following table summarises this proposal’s alignment with the DCC’s strategic objectives:

	Strategic Objective	Dunedin Theatre Network Alignment
<b>SPATIAL PLAN</b>	An environmentally sustainable and resilient city	This proposal focuses on the making the most of our existing performing arts facilities rather than building new, re-using existing buildings is the most environmentally sustainable option.
	A memorable distinctive city	The DTN proposal is a unique approach to providing and co-ordinating performing arts spaces across the city, the proposal for the Athenaeum will create an accessible and distinctive creative space within the heart of the city.
	A city that enables prosperous and diverse economy	Strengthening and supporting Dunedin’s creative economy is a key feature of the spatial plan.
	A vibrant and exciting city	Creativity is fundamental to creating vibrancy in a city, an edge of excitement. Good quality venues and supporting infrastructure for creatives will support this goal.
	An accessible and connected city	The DTN proposal will provide affordable, good quality spaces with great geographical spread across the city, the proposal will create a diversity of performing spaces to maximise accessibility and provide a range of options to suit a variety of performance styles.

	Strategic Objective	Dunedin Theatre Network Alignment
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b>	A hub of skills and talent	<p>This proposal will support Dunedin's creative industries through providing space and co-ordination activities, the Athenaeum proposal will also champion the development of a Centre for Writing as a flagship of Dunedin's UNESCO City of Literature status.</p> <p>The Athenaeum would be the administrative hub of the DTN and provide flexible office and meeting accommodation, which research has shown is in high demand for creative industry projects.</p>
	Linkages beyond our borders	There are opportunities for the DTN to link to other theatre networks across the world.
	A compelling destination	<p>his proposal is a community led approach to providing quality venues in the city, the proposal will also lead to the redevelopment and improvement of some key buildings in our city, contributing to urban renewal.</p> <p>The Athenaeum proposal will create a variety of unique spaces in the Octagon which can be used for exhibitions, markets, dining experiences and learning as well as performance.</p>

	Strategic Objective	Dunedin Theatre Network Alignment
<b>ARA TOI STRATEGY</b>	Identity pride	This is a unique Dunedin-scale approach, developed by the community and for the community. The proposal celebrates Dunedin's heritage while enlivening existing spaces for the future.
	Access and inclusion	Community access and inclusion are a driving principle of this proposal. The proposal will create a city-wide approach to providing performing arts spaces to variety of audiences, and, with time, more venues may join the Network to create even more options.
	Inspired connections	The strength of this proposal is its connectedness, connecting not just venues but also presenting opportunities to the creative industry. The DTN are already working with Te Atamira in Queenstown and will consider options to link the Network regionally with time.
	Creative economy	<p>Providing space and opportunities to not just accommodate but to stimulate Dunedin's creative economy is a key part of the DTN's ethos. Providing affordable opportunities to connect to other creatives, creating a Centre for Writing and co-ordinating spaces to optimise use will all add up to make a big impact on Dunedin's creative economy.</p> <p>This proposal will support not just live performers, but also artists, aspiring and published writers, playwrights and screenwriters, game developers, tv and movie makers, there is potential to provide space for dance/drama lessons and link to literacy in schools through projects at the Centre for Writing.</p>

	Strategic Objective	Dunedin Theatre Network Alignment
<b>TE AO TUROA STRATEGY</b>	Impact positively on the global environment	This proposal is about recycling our existing building stock to update performance spaces and supporting infrastructure to a key local industry.
	Plan for and adapt to climate change	
	Manage natural resources sustainably	This will be a positive step to improving our urban fabric.
<b>SOCIAL WELLBEING STRATEGY</b>	Connected people	This proposal is all about connection, connection of venues, connection of resources and connection of people. Research has shown that some of the major benefits of community theatre, (and especially children's theatre) are its impact on building the confidence, co-operation, literacy, team working skills and building empathy in performers.  There are also similar noted benefits for audience members. As the project progresses, there will multiple opportunities to build and facilitate more connections.
	Vibrant and cohesive communities	This proposal is entirely community led, it is predicated on a cohesive approach across several different venues to support and further develop a vibrant creative community in Dunedin.

## 6.2. Central Government Priorities

*Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand* (draft) is a national strategy that outlines how the government will prioritise support for our creative and cultural sectors to 2030.

The DTN's alignment with this draft strategy is summarised below:

<b>Investing for Maximum Impact</b>	Amplify emphasises leveraging local government, iwi, and private funding to maximise the value of creative sector investments. The Theatre Network proposal aligns by advocating for collaborative investment to revitalise heritage theatres, benefiting local communities and the regional economy.  The DTN's focus on enhancing cultural infrastructure and driving audience engagement directly supports Amplify's goal of increasing cultural participation and creating vibrant hubs that boost cultural tourism.
<b>Nurturing Talent</b>	The proposal's aim to provide upgraded and accessible performance spaces aligns with Amplify's emphasis on fostering career opportunities and supporting the talent pipeline in the creative and cultural sectors. By enhancing facilities, the Network can offer platforms for emerging and established artists to thrive.
<b>Reducing Barriers to Growth</b>	By modernising and preserving existing heritage theatres, the proposal addresses Amplify's call to streamline heritage preservation processes and make it easier for cultural infrastructure to flourish. It also demonstrates alignment with the strategy's focus on ensuring accessible and fit-for-purpose venues.  The creation of accessible facilities and infrastructure supports Amplify's principle of reducing barriers to engagement, ensuring inclusivity for diverse audiences and performers.
<b>Amplify's Vision of Cultural Soft Power</b>	The Network enhances Dunedin's identity as a cultural hub, contributing to Amplify's vision for New Zealand to be a global creative powerhouse. Restoring and revitalising these venues bolsters cultural heritage while fostering economic growth through increased tourism and events.
<b>Community-Centred Outcomes</b>	The DTN's proposal aligns with Amplify's recognition of creativity's broad social, economic, and cultural benefits. By repurposing heritage buildings as modern performance spaces, the Theatre Network fosters social cohesion, community engagement, and cultural participation.

In addition, Kanoa, who administer the Regional Infrastructure Fund, has a position statement with regards to investment in cultural institutions of regional significance. The alignment of the DTN’s proposal with this policy is outlined below:

<b>Enhancing Regional Economic and Community Resilience</b>	The proposal aims to revitalise heritage theatres, which aligns with the RIF’s goal of developing cultural institutions that support economic growth and strengthen community resilience. By upgrading these venues, the project will attract tourism, boost local economic activity, and create hubs for cultural and social connection during times of need.
<b>Fostering Regional Connectedness and Growth</b>	The Theatre Network’s multi-venue approach connects different parts of Dunedin’s performing arts community, fostering collaboration and increasing accessibility to arts and culture. This aligns with the RIF’s emphasis on regional growth through well-connected infrastructure that benefits the broader community.
<b>Improving Sustainability of Cultural Institutions</b>	By modernising and upgrading heritage theatres, the proposal directly addresses the RIF’s objective of improving the sustainability of cultural institutions. The planned renovations and accessibility improvements ensure the long-term viability and relevance of these venues, both financially and functionally.
<b>Addressing Resilience and Enabling Infrastructure Goals</b>	The proposal enhances resilience by preserving heritage buildings and improving their ability to withstand environmental challenges, such as extreme weather events. This aligns with the RIF’s focus on resilience infrastructure, ensuring these institutions can continue to serve their communities during times of crisis.  It also supports enabling infrastructure by providing well-maintained, multi-use venues that contribute to regional productivity and connectivity, as envisioned in the RIF framework.
<b>Opportunities for Regional Tourism and Economic Growth</b>	The revitalised theatres will become key cultural assets, attracting both domestic and international tourists. This supports the RIF’s recognition of cultural institutions as drivers of regional economic prosperity and contributors to New Zealand’s unique identity.

### 6.3 Risk Management

This project has some complexities, but the risks associated with approval and delivery are not insurmountable. The tables below address the headline approval risks, and implementation risks associated with this project.

#### 6.3.1 Project Approval Risks

Risk	Description	Contingency
Stakeholder Alignment Challenges	Difficulty reaching consensus with competing interests (e.g., Stage South, Regent Theatre) could delay the formation of a single, unified proposal, which the council favours.	DCC facilitate structured mediation sessions early on with a neutral third-party mediator.  Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlining shared objectives and non-negotiable priorities for each stakeholder.
Political Influence and Decision-Making	Shifts in council priorities or political dynamics could deprioritise heritage theatre redevelopment in favour of other projects, affecting the proposal’s chances.	DCC/DTN maintain ongoing engagement with councillors and keep the public informed of the project’s benefits.  Prepare an adaptable proposal that can accommodate shifting priorities, highlighting the project’s alignment with council and community goals.
Inflexible Council Processes	If the council adheres too rigidly to its timelines and expectations, the short time frame might compromise the quality or comprehensiveness of the proposal, leading to potential rejection.	DTN propose milestone-based presentations to demonstrate progress within council-imposed timelines.  Use incremental approvals to show responsiveness while gradually building support.

Risk	Description	Contingency
Lack of Clear Public Support	Limited visible public backing could weaken the project's perceived value. If councillors see lukewarm community support, they may hesitate to commit funding.	DTN launch a targeted community outreach campaign, showcasing the benefits of the project and gathering testimonials. Leverage local media and social media for visibility and plan an open house event to engage with the public and gather feedback.
Funding Constraints	Council budget constraints or reallocation of funds could limit or entirely cut the budget initially assigned to the performing arts spaces, jeopardising the project's feasibility.	DTN identify secondary funding sources early, such as grants or sponsorships. Build alliances with regional partners and explore opportunities for cost-sharing arrangements with private sector entities.
Competing Proposals	Alternative ideas, such as the solution proposed by Stage South, may appear more appealing to the council and could potentially replace or overshadow the Theatre Network's proposal.	Proactively address competitors' strengths by incorporating elements that address their cost concerns. Consider collaborating with Stage South or Regent Theatre representatives where possible to ensure mutual benefits.
Risk of Project Scope Creep	Council or stakeholder requests for additional components, such as a "black box" phase, may stretch resources and complicate the proposal's focus, delaying approval.	Set clear project boundaries from the outset, with stakeholder sign-off. Agree upon optional future phases (like the black box theatre) that can be incorporated after initial approval, without delaying the core proposal.

### 6.3.2 Implementation Risks

Risk	Description	Contingency
Funding Shortfalls	Reliance on external funding (e.g., from Kanoa's Regional Infrastructure Fund) or unexpected funding withdrawals could create budget gaps, forcing project scaling down or abandonment.	The consultant team have included an appropriately sized contingency fund within the initial budget to handle unforeseen expenses.  If needed, Feldspar will work with the DTN team to establish a fallback plan to scale down specific non-essential elements or phase them in over time if funds run low.
Resource Constraints	Shortages in skilled labour or materials could lead to delays, increased costs, or quality compromises, especially given the specialised nature of heritage theatre work.	Identify backup contractors and suppliers in advance to mitigate labour or materials shortages. Negotiate flexible timelines with contractors that allow for staggered phases to align with material availability.
Coordination with Stakeholders	Differing priorities or communication breakdowns among involved theatres may create delays or conflicts, compromising the project's continuity and effectiveness.	Hold regular stakeholder meetings with clear agendas and actionable follow-ups. Develop an escalation pathway so that any unresolved issues can be quickly brought to higher levels for resolution.
Heritage Building Challenges	Unforeseen structural or compliance issues with heritage buildings could add significant costs and delays to the redevelopment process, and may also restrict certain design choices.	Arrange for a heritage building consultant to be included in the design team and establish protocols for adaptive solutions to protect both budget and timelines.



Risk	Description	Contingency
Regulatory and Compliance Risks	Obtaining the necessary consents and approvals for heritage building modifications can be complex and time-consuming, and changes in regulations could further complicate progress.	Heritage New Zealand have been involved with this project since its inception and are a key supporter.  Secure consents and approvals as early as possible and assign a compliance officer to ensure adherence to regulations. Stay informed on policy changes that could affect the project and prepare to adjust the design accordingly.
Scope Creep and Cost Overruns	Pressure to add new features during construction could lead to budget and timeline overruns, impacting project viability.	Implement a strict project management framework with scope change policies requiring formal approvals. Create a decision-making committee to evaluate and approve any additions, ensuring they align with available funding.
Sustainability of Operations Post-Completion	Once completed, maintaining and operating the redeveloped theatres could become financially challenging, especially if long-term revenue generation plans are underdeveloped or lack buy-in.	Develop a post-completion business plan, including long-term revenue strategies (e.g., partnerships, tiered ticket pricing). Engage a financial planner to model various operational budgets and secure reserve funding for unforeseen operational costs.

Risk	Description	Contingency
Reputational Risks	Any issues with implementation—delays, quality compromises, or budget overruns—could damage the Theatre Network’s credibility with stakeholders, affecting future funding or partnerships.	Build a proactive communication plan to keep stakeholders updated throughout implementation. Assign a communications lead to handle project updates, including any delays or issues, transparently to build and maintain trust.

### 6.4 Risks of Doing Nothing

If the council does not provide cornerstone funding for the redevelopment of Dunedin’s heritage theatres, several outcomes are likely, including:

<b>Deferred Maintenance and Gradual Deterioration</b>	Without funding for repairs and upgrades, the theatres will suffer from ongoing wear and tear.  Issues like roof leaks, poor HVAC systems, and structural deterioration could worsen, eventually leading to a need for more significant repairs, or even closures, due to safety concerns.  Similarly, the Building Act requires all earthquake prone buildings to be seismically strengthened within specific timeframes or face demolition.
<b>Closure or Reduced Operating Capacity</b>	Limited financial resources may push venue operators to reduce their operational hours or close certain areas of the theatres entirely. With compromised facilities, audience numbers could decrease, reducing revenue and threatening the venues’ financial sustainability.
<b>Loss of Historic and Cultural Value</b>	These theatres are essential parts of Dunedin’s cultural and architectural heritage. If neglected, the unique features that make these buildings historically significant may be lost. Deferred maintenance can erode decorative or structural elements that are difficult or costly to restore once lost.

<b>Missed Opportunities for Economic and Social Benefits</b>	Heritage theatres contribute to the local economy through tourism, community events, and performances that bring visitors to the area. Without proper funding and revitalisation, these benefits diminish, potentially affecting nearby businesses and Dunedin’s broader cultural ecosystem.
<b>Potential Sale or Redevelopment by Private Entities</b>	If maintenance becomes too costly, the ownership or management may be transferred to private interests, who may have fewer obligations to maintain heritage aspects. This could lead to repurposing or redevelopment, potentially stripping the buildings of their cultural significance.
<b>Increased Costs for Future Repairs and Restoration</b>	As maintenance needs escalate, so do costs. Delaying foundational repairs and upgrades can significantly increase the funds required for future restoration. Costs could spiral beyond what might have been manageable if the council had contributed early cornerstone funding.
<b>Reduced Accessibility for Arts and Community Groups</b>	Many community groups and local arts organisations rely on affordable venue spaces. Without council support, theatre operators may need to raise rental rates to cover their costs, limiting accessibility for these groups and reducing community engagement.
<b>Loss of Arts Sector Talent and Opportunities</b>	Diminishing or shutting down performance spaces impacts the arts sector, leading to fewer opportunities for local artists and performers. This could lead to a “brain drain” of talent to other cities and reduce Dunedin’s cultural vibrancy and creative economy.

**Without cornerstone funding, the theatres will face a gradual decline that will result in their eventual closure or repurposing. It would be a significant and potentially irreversible loss to the community and urban fabric of Dunedin.**

## 7. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES

In addition to the benefits outlined above in affordably meeting the city’s requirements for performing arts venues, this proposal offers wider benefits for the community including:

<b>Cultural Benefits</b>	<p>Increased capacity for community performances and professional productions.</p> <p>Increased connectivity between venues, creating a central point for bookings, enquiries and facilities management.</p> <p>Creating a home for Dunedin’s UNESCO City of Literature in the proposed Centre for Writing at the Athenaeum.</p>
<b>Social Benefits</b>	<p>Greater inclusivity through improved accessibility and more diverse programming capability.</p> <p>Improvements to Dunedin’s streetscape by redeveloping key heritage buildings.</p>
<b>Economic Benefits</b>	<p>The redeveloped theatres will bring economic development, both through tourism and increased local patronage.</p> <p>Support for Dunedin’s cultural industries, a major economic driver for the city.</p> <p>These upgrades will secure the future of Dunedin’s cultural infrastructure for decades to come.</p>

## 8. NEXT STEPS

With the completion of the concept design stage, the Dunedin Theatre Network proposal is in a strong position to move forward.

The immediate action for the DTN team will be to obtain cornerstone investment from the Dunedin City Council in order to facilitate further funding applications. The Network's proposal is being made through the council's long term planning process and as such a funding decision is not likely to be made until mid-2025.

As a second next step, Feldspar would recommend that the Theatre Network team work (potentially with the DCC), to complete the following scope:

- ♦ Identifying a preferred ownership option for the venues
- ♦ Identifying a preferred option for operating the Theatre Network
- ♦ Creating an indicative business plan/operating mode for shared services – for example, staff, bookings, facilities management, programming, etc.

As part of the project approval process, a decision will need to be made about staging and the programme for completion, this will need to take place before any design consultant appointments are made.

It would also be advisable for the Playhouse and the Athenaeum owners to begin the process of obtaining resource consents for the easements required to improve loading access. Feldspar have already sought advice on these easements and understand the consent process to be relatively simple.

Finally, Feldspar recommend that this project would be best served by following a traditional design and construction process, which offers a lower risk path for venue owners. Preliminary/Developed Design will be the next key stage for the project, allowing further consultation with key stakeholders and further refinement of the concepts.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The concept design phase for the Dunedin Theatre Network project has laid a strong foundation for revitalising the city's heritage theatres to create vibrant, accessible, and sustainable cultural assets.

Through collaborative engagement with stakeholders, the Dunedin Theatre Network team have developed a vision that balances preserving the unique character of these historic venues with modernising their facilities to meet the needs of diverse audiences and performers. The proposed designs prioritise accessibility, functionality, and adaptability, ensuring these spaces remain valuable assets for the community for generations to come.

This design phase has also highlighted the significant cultural, social, and economic potential of the project. By enhancing Dunedin's performing arts infrastructure, the Theatre Network is positioned to strengthen regional tourism, support local creative talent, and foster greater community engagement with the arts. The concept designs serve as a roadmap for achieving these outcomes while aligning with regional and national strategic priorities.

Moving forward, the project will advance to the preliminary/developed design phase, where the focus will shift to refining technical details, securing funding, and preparing for implementation.

The momentum established during the concept design phase provides a solid platform to build upon as the Theatre Network team takes the next steps towards realising this transformative vision for Dunedin's cultural landscape.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1

Concept Design Report – FRTA

## APPENDIX 2

Architectural models/3D views for the Athenaeum and Playhouse – FRTA

## APPENDIX 3

Structural design concepts:

- a. Steve McNight – The Playhouse
- b. Peter Stevenson – The Athenaeum
- c. WSP – The Mayfair

## APPENDIX 4

Design Estimate – Rawlinsons

## APPENDIX 5

Letters of Support:

- a. Heritage NZ
- b. Save Dunedin Live Music

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