BALLARAT CIVIC HALL

WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

KEY FINDINGS FROM ENGAGEMENT 14 JULY 2012

Prepared for: City of Ballarat
By: Village Well
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT THE PROJECT
In March 2012 the City of Ballarat embarked on a process to work with the community to identify options for the Ballarat Civic Hall. Council invited the whole Ballarat community to share their ideas for the future of the Civic Hall and the precinct through a traditional engagement process. Over 270 submissions were received by mail, email, Facebook, and in person. The process was a blue sky exercise, to enable the community to be unencumbered from constraints and to bring out all of their ideas, visions and aspirations. The level of detail and work that had gone into many of the submissions was extraordinary, revealing the community’s strong passion and desire to see the Civic Hall come back to life.

To facilitate the engagement process, Village Well was commissioned by the City of Ballarat to steward a community forum and workshop process to share views and ideas, and to provide an opportunity to review all the submissions received to date. Following on from this, the key ideas filtered from the workshop and submissions are intended to be used to inform Council’s visioning team with concept design scenarios to present back to the community on August 5th and to test and refine the ideas that have the greatest support. Council will then present a book of final ideas to be considered by the new incoming Council and how to move forward with the re-use of Civic Hall.

1.2 ABOUT THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP PROCESS
The community workshop process was an opportunity for the community and Council to review the submissions received together and to start refining the ideas into key uses/activities and directions for future development of the Civic Hall. Workshop activities and exercises carried out by Village Well were designed to encourage the community to think creatively and move towards a positive direction for the future of the Civic Hall and the precinct.

Key activities and exercises carried out on the day of the workshop included:
- Sharing the community’s aspirations for the day
- Sharing opportunities and challenges for the Civic Hall and precinct, theming and collating ideas and presenting back to the group
- Personality exercise for the Civic Hall and the precinct
- An opportunity to review and reflect on community submissions, using heart and star stickers to vote on favourite ideas
- Postcard visioning exercise
- Small group work activity – using a variety of icons that represent uses and activities for the Civic Hall, participants were asked to articulate their vision and detail their top priority uses and ideas for Civic Hall and the precinct and present back to the whole group
- Summation of top ideas and uses
- What would make this project successful

1.3 ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT:
This document is a summary of key findings from the Ballarat Civic Hall community workshop process undertaken on Saturday 14 July 2012 at the Mercure Hotel in Ballarat.

Two workshop sessions were held:
- Workshop 1 from 10am-1pm and was attended by approximately 65 people
- Workshop 2 from 2pm-5pm was attended by approximately 55 people.
I’d like to see it become a unique park with horticultural significance, the park would not only provide relief from the built-up city environment, but become a major tourist attraction for Ballarat.

My vision is to have a world class music & concert hall or auditorium, call it what you like. Over time it would pay for itself over the years by attracting top class acts from around the world, people would come from Melbourne to attend as would people from all area’s of Australia...

I believe the civic hall site could become the new green space for Ballarat central.

The recent development of New York’s obsolete above-ground rail the Highline into parklands shows how living green spaces are in demand in cities around the world...

At very least the front entrance foyer must be kept at all costs! It is unique and says something about Ballarat...
TEN YEARS OF DISGRACEFUL NEGLECT ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH! DO SOMETHING WITH THE CIVIC HALL BUILDING AND SITE.

CIVIC HALL IS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE, BRING IT TO LIFE

REFURBISH IT

RE-USE IT

AN ICONIC & MAJESTIC PLACE

GET RID OF IT

NEEDS A FACELIFT

I BELIEVE CIVIC HALL SHOULD

CIVIC HALL IS...

THE CIVIC HALL SITE COULD BECOME THE NEW GREEN SPACE FOR BALLARAT.

THE RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF NEW YORK’S OBSOLETE ABOVE-GROUND RAIL THE HIGH LINE INTO PARKLANDS SHOWS HOW LIVING SPACES ARE IN DEMAND AROUND THE WORLD...
2.0 ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

2.1 KEY FINDINGS

Throughout the workshop process and from the submissions received by Council, the community reiterated a number of key sentiments about how they envisioned the Civic Hall and precinct to be in the future.

MEMORY OF PLACE
Although the overwhelming majority expressed their desire to retain and re-use the Civic Hall, there were still a few comments about demolishing the building and starting from scratch. This may have been attributed to a number of older participants holding fond memories of the Civic Hall in its heydays where it was known as the ‘people’s common’ as one participant stated.

RESPECTING THE HERITAGE & LEAVING A LEGACY
Even though the Civic Hall building is not of state heritage significance on the Victorian heritage register, the building has social and historical significance as expressed by a high number of people who commented on respecting the Civic Hall’s architectural heritage. Leaving a legacy and being a place that services the needs of the future generation was also reiterated a number of times.

A VIBRANT & ACTIVE PLACE
The most commonly expressed use for the Civic Hall was first and foremost being a destination and place for the community of Ballarat, specifically uses that promote and support the following:
- Arts and cultural activities
- Entertainment opportunities
- A gathering place that includes shared public spaces that help to foster community connection
- A state of the art multi-purpose and multi-functional venue that is interactive, flexible, adaptable.

A PLACE FOR ALL TO ENJOY - INTEGRATED, CONNECTED & ACCESSIBLE
The community also articulated the importance of it being a place where activities are affordable and accessible to all people regardless of age, gender, social ability but also to be commercially viable so it pays for itself. Things like keeping the soup kitchen going and attracting social enterprises was also favourably mentioned. There was also a lot of comment about activating the site whilst still in the transition process through temporary uses and installations, revealing the desire to keep the momentum about re-use of the site alive and going forward. Being centrally located, but just a little off the main drag of Ballarat, there was a strong desire to connect Civic Hall to the wider precinct, in particular the existing library as well as the surrounding areas of Mair St, Armstrong St, Doveton St and Market St.

“CIVIC HALL WAS KNOWN BACK IN THE DAY AS THE PEOPLE’S COMMON.”

People were generally very positive and inspired by the opportunity to participate in the workshop process and at the end participants of both workshops thanked Council and Village Well about undertaking an engagement process around the future of the Civic Hall.
2.2 SAMPLE OF ASPIRATIONS

Participants were asked to offer their aspirations for the Civic Hall Precinct and also from this process with Council. The responses expressed were in favour of retaining and bringing the Civic Hall back to its former glory and being a community meeting place and hub.

"Process is important, I hope the process is owned by the community."

"Value added space, low cost, high use, programmed and managed well."

"A place for all, and a sense of belonging and meaning."

"Creating a multicultural hub."

"Creating a green, welcoming and inviting place."

"Making our future generations proud, leave legacy."

"Retaining the heritage values."

"A place that reflects the modern community values."

"The site has a history of being a place where the community come together... recreating this experience, a meeting place for community would be magnificent."
2.3 PERSONALITY OF THE CIVIC HALL AND THE PRECINCT

At both workshops, participants were asked to imagine both Civic Hall and the precinct as people, and then describe the personality characteristics both for now and also into the future. Village Well uses this exercise to discover the intrinsic qualities of the place, qualities often not easily seen or discussed. It enables participants to use their senses, apply their values and express their individual experiences of the place.

IF CIVIC HALL WERE A PERSON....
Participants described the current personality of Civic Hall as having lost its way, being broken or a neglected character. Participants also noted the hall’s underlying potential, strength and resilience.

The future personality of Civic Hall was envisioned as being an energetic and creative person who is vibrant and community minded.

The future personality of the Civic Hall precinct was described as being warm, connected and community orientated person, along with being welcoming and affordable.

IF CIVIC HALL PRECINCT WERE A PERSON....
Workshop participants currently view the Civic Hall precinct character as being dishevelled, unloved and disconnected. Despite this seemingly negative description participants were able to recognise the potential of the site due to its central location.

PERSONALITY TRAITS NOW
Lost Love | Mature
Cold | Eye sore
Unloved | Disrespected
Broken | Potential
Sad | Helpless
Neglected | Stressed
Abandoned | Resilient
Lonely

PERSONALITY TRAITS IN THE FUTURE
Diverse | Community
Active | minded
Colourful | Local, Vocal,
Welcoming | Focal,
Memorable | A model
Exciting | Respected
Vibrant | Busy
Energetic | Relevant

PERSONALITY TRAITS NOW
Inhumane | Liability
Ugly | Potential
Rundown | Eyesore
Mistreated | Dysfunctional
Unattractive | A good skater
Deserted | Lacking integration
Disconnected | Dead/broken

PERSONALITY TRAITS IN THE FUTURE
Connected | Spontaneous
Magnetic | Knows its history
Innovative | Artistic
Attractive | Popular
Focused | Fascinating
Inviting | Affordable
Heart warming | Democratic
Colourful | Inclusive
Dynamic | Commercially
Eco-conscious | minded
2.4 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Workshop participants were asked to provide their top opportunities and challenges for the redevelopment of the Civic Hall and the Civic Hall precinct.

This exercise helps to understand the many voices within the community and their views and opinions regarding the future vision for the site.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CIVIC HALL

This section details the opportunities identified by the community for Civic Hall building itself.

Opportunities have been put in order of what was most expressed by participants:

A PLACE FOR COMMUNITY
- A multi-purpose, multi-functional space for the community
- Vibrant hub and central meeting place for people of Ballarat
- A cultural, civic and community resource centre
- Place where large numbers of people can gather for meetings, shows, eating, exhibitions, and dancing
- Significant public space and public realm as part of new proposal

MIXED USE AND MULTI FUNCTIONAL
- An affordable and accessible place
- A place that has multiple uses and functions including civic, retail, commercial and recreation
- A cluster of informal and formal dining including cafes and restaurants
- Includes offices or commercial activities
- Potential for apartments in adjoining development

ENTERTAINMENT & GROUP ACTIVITIES
- A place for entertainment including live music shows, performances, dance recitals, debs, craft markets etc
- Group classes and activities from fitness and yoga to art classes

ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
- A place for the arts – exhibitions, a gallery and studio workshop spaces
- A creative hub where people learn, and make things
- A business incubator for start-ups and social enterprises

TOURIST INFORMATION HUB
- A place for tourists to find information on Ballarat with associated facilities for visitors and locals
- With its centrality the site is ideal for a tourist info centre with public amenities

HONOUR HERITAGE & RE-USE
- Preserve the heritage of the building
- Adaptive re-use
- Retain/restore and create a contemporary building
- Be a demonstration project – new architecture co-existing with the old
- Make it beautiful

INTEGRATING OPEN & GREEN SPACES
- Public green space
- Open space and park areas to play, picnic on and rest

LEGACY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABLE
- Create a space that will become a legacy for future generations
- Create new memories for the community
- Modern green sustainable building we can take pride in

DEMOLISH OR PARTIALLY DEMOLISH
- Demolish site and move forward to a new development
CHALLENGES FOR THE CIVIC HALL
This section details the various challenges identified by the community for the Civic Hall building itself.

Challenges have been put in order of what was most expressed by participants:

HIGHER COSTS & LACK OF BUDGET
• To achieve maximum use with minimum cost
• Cost of refurbishing the building
• Delivering within an agreed budget
• Managing the ongoing costs of the site
• Making it workable and commercially viable

LACK OF VISION
• Ensuring principles of sustainability are applied, not do business as usual
• Getting the courage to invest and commit to something, to not be narrow minded and conservative in thinking which has happened to date

ABILITY TO AGREE ON A USE FOR CIVIC HALL
• Reaching consensus but also satisfying the needs of the community
• Community apathy
• Funding constraints and balancing private vs. public interests

DESIGN & UPKEEP
• Trying to create an attractive building whilst retaining heritage of character
• Utilising the whole site and precinct
• Its deteriorated and dilapidated state
• Some perceive the building as out of date and should be demolished

ENSURING IT IS A PLACE AND A FUTURE FOR THE COMMUNITY
• To make it a place that people want to actively use
• Not excluding the youth of Ballarat in its uses

PARKING/TRANSPORT PROVISIONS
• Overall access and parking considerations were questioned – multi-storey vs. underground

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CIVIC HALL PRECINCT
The section below highlights the opportunities this project could potentially bring to the overall precinct.

Opportunities have been put in order of what was most expressed by participants:

BEAUTIFICATION OF THE PRECINCT
• Enhancing Civic Hall and the precinct through improvement to the streetscape, built form and activation of the space.

• Connecting other parts of the precinct to the hall and streetscape with improved pedestrian linkages, signage and wayfinding.
• Improving the appearance of the hall will help to improve the overall look and feel of the precinct.

CREATING A MIXED USE PRECINCT
• Opportunities for entertainment, relaxation and community use.
• Creating an attractive, flexible and welcoming space that can be used for small or large gatherings.

BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS AND OWNERSHIP
• Improving community connectedness through involvement in this engagement process and as a result of the physical space.
• Creating a place for the community to gather in the heart of the city.
• Creating a space which shows the modern Ballarat values, shows the community is moving forward and is sensitive to the history.

INCREASING THE AVAILABILITY OF GREEN AND PUBLIC SPACE
• Complementing adjacent areas (library) with green areas and places for public space.
• Reducing car dominance in the area and increasing sustainability.
• Incorporating green space into the surrounding precinct.

ACTIVATING THE SPACE
• Making a safe and lively place to visit in the CBD on a weekend or of an evening.
• Bringing the precinct to life and increasing the opportunities for business and economic development.

PARKING AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT
• Redesigning car parking to reduce the visual and physical impact of parking and traffic congestion in the precinct. Suggestions included:
  • Putting the carparking underground
  • Creating drop off and pick up areas that are accessible and undercover for mobility-impaired visitors
  • Increasing the amount and availability of parking.

CREATING A PLACE FOR VISITORS AND TOURISTS
• Making it a place for everyone to visit and use, the precinct has typically been associated with commercial and business use.
• Attracting a variety of uses and users to the precinct. Connecting the user groups through music, information and other activities.

THE HALL IS LOCATED IN A CENTRAL LOCATION
• Central location to a variety of services (railway station).
• Availability of space in close proximity for redevelopment.
• Close proximity to arts and culture precinct.

CHALLENGES FOR THE CIVIC HALL PRECINCT
Challenges have been put in order of what was most expressed by participants:

BALANCING NEEDS OF THE PLACES FOR VISITORS AND RESIDENTS
• Creating a space that appeals to a wide range of people, so that it is well activated and financially viable.
• Having a balance of commercial and community activities and the many voices of the community.
• Ensuring that all of the community is welcome.

DIFFICULTIES IN WORKING WITH THE CURRENT DESIGN AND BUILT FORM
• Redeveloping existing structures to meet future needs.
• Difficulty connecting the Civic Precinct into the town and streetscape, currently isolated by carparking.
• Integrating sustainability or water sensitive urban design elements into the surrounding non-permeable surfaces.

• Size of the space and the cost involved with redevelopment works.

LACK OF INTEGRATION AND CONNECTIONS
• Limited (current) access by pedestrians (roads and lack of pedestrian crossings).
• Encouraging the community to walk and ride around town, community currently used to driving and parking in town.
• Perceived safety and security issues preventing people from using the space.

PARKING AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT
• Lack of carparking in the area.
• Current congestion in the CBD due to poor traffic management.
• Impaired pedestrian mobility and access.

GETTING COMMUNITY AND COUNCIL OWNERSHIP
• Developing a plan of action that is accepted by the community and Council.
• A conservative approach to development and progress in the community.
• Indecision and inability to follow through with decisions from consultative process.
• Some members feeling excluded
from the process and project.

COST AND COMMERCIAL VIABILITY OF THE REDEVELOPMENT

- Budget constraints restricting or compromising the redevelopment.
- Balancing the amount of private investment needed to redevelop the site so it continues to be used by the community.
- Making a space that is commercial viable.

CONCERNS ABOUT GOVERNANCE AND ONGOING MAINTENANCE

- Managing the space so that it can be used and accessed equally and fairly.
- Ongoing maintenance and funding for repairs.
2.5 POSTCARD VISIONS

A postcard visioning exercise was conducted and participants were asked to address it to a loved one or a person they knew, and to write to them from Civic Hall in the future. This exercise helps to articulate a detailed vision for the future of a place and to support in the creation of a Place Story or narrative for the Civic Hall.

Here are some examples of the visions and stories people wrote:
2.6 CREATIVE PLACES EXERCISE

We asked participants at the workshop to describe in one or two words what Civic Hall means to them and to write it on a chalkboard.

Here were some of their responses we recorded through photos:

- Potential
- Revitalised for community
- Future Proofing
- Commune
3.0 KEY IDEAS, USES & PROGRAMMING

3.1 KEY IDEAS AND USES FOR CIVIC HALL & THE PRECINCT

During the small group work activity, participants were asked to brainstorm and articulate their top ideas and concepts for the Civic Hall and Civic Hall precinct. These ideas and uses helped to inform Council’s visioning team with key directions for the development of the concept scenarios for Civic Hall.

The following section summarises the key uses and activities that emerged in order of popularity, followed by the top programming ideas that came out of the group activities.
## Civic Hall Ideas & Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caravan parking</th>
<th>Artisan studios and workshops</th>
<th>Association headquarters</th>
<th>Community gardens</th>
<th>Performing arts centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment venue</td>
<td>Convention and conference centre</td>
<td>Car parking</td>
<td>Lots of green space</td>
<td>Public spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skate park</td>
<td>Observation deck</td>
<td>Community resources</td>
<td>Cafes</td>
<td>Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared workspaces</td>
<td>Playground</td>
<td>Public piazza</td>
<td>Exhibition and art gallery space</td>
<td>Public transport interchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail shops</td>
<td>Commercial businesses space</td>
<td>Temporary and pop-up structures</td>
<td>Community access computers and wifi</td>
<td>Business incubator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist information and services</td>
<td>Undercover areas</td>
<td>Stage for performances</td>
<td>Youth centre</td>
<td>Community meeting rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market spaces</td>
<td>Learning and education centre</td>
<td>Functions space</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>Studios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elderly citizens centre</th>
<th>Indoor market</th>
<th>Student accommodation</th>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>Museum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sporting facility</td>
<td>Homeless shelter</td>
<td>Cheap/backpackers accommodation</td>
<td>Bus terminal</td>
<td>Restaurants and Bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fly tower</td>
<td>Amphitheatre</td>
<td>Dance space</td>
<td>Soup kitchen</td>
<td>24/7 access hub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural/Multicultural centre</td>
<td>Multi-story parking</td>
<td>Health and wellbeing services</td>
<td>Residential village</td>
<td>Underground parking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-end/hotel accommodation</th>
<th>Underground powerlines</th>
<th>University Outdoor public pool</th>
<th>Gallery (new premises)</th>
<th>Government offices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers centre</td>
<td>Indoor public pool</td>
<td>Helipad</td>
<td>Apartment block</td>
<td>Archival storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pokie venue</td>
<td>Archaeological dig</td>
<td>Council offices</td>
<td>Ballarat Art</td>
<td>Medium price accommodation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES
TOP PROGRAMMING & ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporary and pop-up events</th>
<th>Lighting projections</th>
<th>Bands and live music</th>
<th>Speakers corner</th>
<th>Soup buses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food trucks</td>
<td>Buskers</td>
<td>Night markets</td>
<td>Artist in residence</td>
<td>Craft markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art exhibitions</td>
<td>Sculpture garden</td>
<td>Public benches and seating</td>
<td>Local farmers/produce markets</td>
<td>Formal dining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal dining</td>
<td>Public BBQs</td>
<td>Outdoor cinema</td>
<td>Free wifi</td>
<td>Skate boarding (24/7 access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>Learning programs</td>
<td>Business incubator</td>
<td>Arts incubator</td>
<td>Art exhibitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports programs</td>
<td>Youth programs</td>
<td>Elderly programs</td>
<td>Multicultural activities</td>
<td>Digital learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco/green learning</td>
<td>Cabaret performances</td>
<td>Flea markets</td>
<td>Art house movie screenings</td>
<td>Cafes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Workshop Activities
3.2 NEXT STEPS

The community workshop and submissions received to date have provided Council’s concept and visioning team with great ideas and directions to develop concepts for the future use of Civic Hall.

The process to follow on from here can be summarised as follows:

- Council’s concept and visioning team will develop a number of options that capture the key uses and activities that were identified from the workshop process.

- Council and Village Well will be holding another community forum on 5 August where the community will have a chance to review the ideas agreed upon and the drawings from the concept and visioning team.

- Council will further refine the ideas to those with the greatest support.

- A book of the final ideas will be compiled and this will be considered by the current Council in September.

- The new council will consider how to move forward & engage the community in the tough decisions on finance, timeframes and priorities.

*For more information about the Civic Hall engagement process please contact Trent Bursill at the City of Ballarat.