

## Feedback

# Auckland Council Recovery Budget - 2021-2031

*Arts and culture can make a powerful contribution to transforming Auckland into the world's most liveable city. Arts and culture are fundamental to quality of life in Auckland. Being a culturally rich city, where the arts are integrated into our everyday lives, is essential if we are to achieve the*

*Auckland Plan vision of becoming the world's most liveable city.*

### **Toi Whīiki – Auckland Council Arts and Culture Strategic Action Plan**

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Council's proposed 10-year Budget 2021-2031.

We appreciate the financial constraints arising from the impact of COVID-19, and the many calls on the Council's funds.

We have provided some sector context, and then focused our response on four of the questions on which the Council has invited specific feedback:

- Question 1 – Proposed 10-year budget
- Question 4 – Community investment
- Question 6 – Local boards
- Question 7 – Other issues

## Sector context

**Key point:** *Investment in the recovery and rebuild of this critical sector should be a priority, to avoid systemic weakening of the sector's ecosystem due to COVID-19 financial constraints.*

- The vibrant ngā toi / arts and culture sector of Tāmaki Makaurau is a taonga in its own right. It reflects indigenous Māori culture, and the diversity of cultures of people attracted from around the world to live in the region. It is a contributor to our sense of wellbeing; a source of connection between our diverse communities; a wellspring of talent that feeds the region's creative industries; a major employer; a domestic and international tourism asset.
- The Council has recognised the central role of ngā toi /arts and culture, in its development of a long-term vision for the Auckland region; and in the development of the Toi Whīiki Arts and Culture Strategic Action Plan. Ngā toi /arts and culture can play an important role in supporting an inclusive Auckland where everyone can participate and belong.
- The sector, particularly the parts of the sector that are reliant on in-person audiences (exhibitions, concerts, theatre, dance, and events and festivals that include arts and culture, such as Matariki and Pasifika), has been hard

hit by COVID-19. The recovery from the COVID-19 crisis will require both support for the creative workforce and for financial recovery for arts companies and organisations. The Council, alongside Government, philanthropic and other funders, must continue to be an investor in this recovery in order to secure the long-term benefits to the region of a strong ngā toi / arts and culture sector.

- Here is an opportunity for you and/or your organisation to share your story of Covid-19 impact, how the downturn has affected you, and the types of support you think would be most appropriate to ensure effective recovery and rebuild
- In addition to the recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, the sector also has pressing development needs. Greater priority needs to be given to recognition, visibility and celebration of ngā toi Māori; and the sector needs to grow to be more inclusive of the arts of our Moana Oceania, Asian and other diverse communities.
  - Prioritisation of ngā toi Māori can help Council to deliver to the Kia Ora Tāmaki Makaurau outcomes
  - Increased recognition and inclusion of the arts of Moana Oceania, Asian and other arts sector communities can also help Council to deliver wellbeing outcomes to Auckland’s increasingly diverse population.
  - Here is an opportunity for you and/or your organisation to share your perspective on the development needs of the sector as this relates to you/ your organisation, or to the development of the sector in the region to make it stronger and more inclusive.
- We would suggest that priority for investment in the ngā toi / arts and culture sector should be in maintaining and developing the region’s creative workforce; its artists and performers, core arts organisations and facilities, the emerging arts organisations that support toi Māori, and other arts communities that are currently considered on the margins of the sector. Direct engagement with the arts sector can help the Council to identify the best opportunities for investment to benefit the sector.
  - Here is an opportunity for you and/or your organisation to give Council insight into what would be your investment priorities – and your perspective on the investment needs of the sector

## Question 1 - Proposed 10-year budget

**Key point:** *Collaborate with the region's arts communities to find creative solutions that address financial constraints while strengthening the ngā toi / arts and culture sector of Tāmaki Makaurau*

- The budget is light on detail regarding funding relating to the arts and culture sector. What we would recommend, however, is that;
  - while spending is constrained and changes are made to the facilities, venues, and other Council resources available to the sector, that active, direct and comprehensive engagement with the sector and the various arts communities is pursued to build a strategic approach to meeting the sector's needs. This would
    - ensure a shared understanding of the varied needs of the sector across the diverse arts communities (art form, location, culture) in the region to inform and guide funding and investment decisions
    - create an opportunity for collaboration between Council and the sector to find creative solutions to sector needs
  - maintaining at least current levels of funding for the sector remain a priority until such time as the Council is able to further invest in developing the region's arts and culture infrastructure.
- We support a one-off rates increase that would secure
  - the proposed additional funding of \$65m for Parks and community
  - the proposed additional funding of \$50 million for Economic and cultural development, particularly as this would allow the restoration of the Art Gallery heritage building, an anchor facility for ngā toi / arts and culture in our region.

## Question 4 – Community investment

**Key point:** *Consult with the region's arts communities to ensure that in reshaping the Council's portfolio of facilities the ngā toi / arts and culture sector retains affordable access to fit-for-purpose facilities*

- We support Council's proposal to reduce costs through taking 'a new approach for community services, such as leasing or shared facilities, that does not rely as much on us building and maintaining physical assets. This will reduce our carbon footprint and lower our costs by partnering with others to deliver services and deliver more community services online.'
- Any changes to venues that are currently used to support arts and culture needs to be done in consultation with the sector – and as noted above,

this consultation needs to be 'active, direct and comprehensive engagement' appropriate to the various arts communities.

- Venue costs are already a barrier for some smaller arts and culture organisations, particularly those in some of our diverse communities. Cost increases will be unmanageable for many. As the Council looks to greater use of leasing or partnership arrangements, increases in the costs of using community facilities should be avoided.
  - The Council's focus, in developing a slimmed down, 'fit for purpose' portfolio of owned and leased facilities, should be on increasing venue access and reducing venue costs for emerging artists, arts companies, cultural organisations from Auckland's diverse communities, and groups who are supporting specific community needs, such as rangatahi arts. Preserving current costs for established artists, arts companies, and cultural organisations as the sector recovers over the coming years from the impacts of COVID-19 is also key
  - It is also important for Council to recognise that a shift towards shared, multi-purpose facilities addresses the diverse needs of the sector for the specific facilities needed to make and present creative work (e.g., theatres, studios etc)
  - Here is an opportunity for you and/or your organisation to give Council insight into your use of Council facilities - or barriers to the use of these facilities – and what you would want considered as Council looks to review these facilities
- Council and local boards need to work with the sector to find innovative ways to use community facilities and cost-neutral ways to support the sector such as by providing low-cost spaces for activities like performance rehearsals. The creativity of the ngā toi / arts and culture sector is an asset the Council and local boards can draw on, both to find sector-specific solutions, and for creative thinking about the wider challenges relating to getting best value for the community from these facilities.
  - The potential for artists and creative practitioners to provide wider support to the Council in designing and delivering innovative, strategic, and cost-effective solutions to the unique challenges faced by the region should also be considered. The sector is a rich resource for the Council to draw on.
  - Here is an opportunity for you and/or your organisation to give Council insight into the possibilities you see for engagement with the creative sector to address wider regional issues. What would you like to

communicate to the council and how do you think you could add value to their future planning?

- Council needs to recognise that online services to provide for our diverse communities is not necessarily going to be appropriate for ngā toi /arts and culture engagement. Arts and culture events provide opportunities for the face-to-face connection within and between communities that support the Council's wellbeing and social cohesion goals.
  - It also needs to be recognised that not all communities are going to be easily able to access online content. Investment in community accessibility to technologies is needed if Council pursues these options. Equity considerations need to be addressed when exploring options for delivery of online services
  - Here is an opportunity for you and/or your organisation to give Council insight into the positives and negatives of using technology and online services for arts and culture initiatives

## Question 6 – local boards

**Key point:** Draw on local knowledge to identify the needs of local arts communities, and to inform a regional approach to developing the ngā toi / arts and culture sector

- We note the inclusion of arts and culture in the priorities set by local boards for 2021/22 and acknowledge the value of having funding decisions made close to communities across the region. We recommend:
  - Council encourage engagement around the Toi Whītiki strategy between local boards, regional arts organisations, and community arts organisations and leaders to build relationships to inform local board decisions, facilitate a regional perspective of activity and funding in the sector, and identify opportunities for partnership between the boards and sector organisations.
  - We would see this extending to closer engagement between Council, CCOs and the sector to build on Toi Whītiki to deliver a cohesive strategy and investment plan for the region.
  - Here is an opportunity for you and/or your organisation to give Council insight into the types of engagement you /your organisation would like to have with Council

## Question 7 – What is important to you?

- We support the Council’s statement of commitment to the Māori outcomes outlined in the consultation document, and its commitment to provide funding to support Māori outcomes. We note that support for ngā toi Māori will help the Council meet the identified mana outcomes, in particular Māori Identity and Culture; Whānau and Tamariki Wellbeing; Realising Rangatahi Potential; Te Reo Māori; Kaitiakitanga; and Māori Business Tourism and Employment.

## Conclusion

The ngā toi / arts and culture sector of Tāmaki Makaurau is both an asset for Council to nurture, and a resource for Council to draw on. We ask that Council, local boards, and CCOs:

- work collaboratively with the sector to approach the shared challenge of rebuilding and renewing the sector as a unique regional asset
- draw on the creative capacity of the sector, both to address the needs of the sector, and to address the wider challenges facing the Tāmaki Makaurau as a result of the pandemic
- Here is an opportunity to add anything further you would like to communicate to Council about your work or perspectives on the needs of the sector

Ngā mihi nui,

Your name and (if applicable) your organisation