

RE-ESTABLISHING PRAHRAN AS ONE OF MELBOURNE'S CORE CULTURAL HUBS

Using the Prahran Town Hall to drive diversification, build
an identity and foster economic growth

A discussion paper prepared by Future Tense for the City of Stonnington
January 2023



City of
STONNINGTON

FUTURE TENSE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Future Tense would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners of the land discussed in this report. We acknowledge the important and ongoing place that all Indigenous people hold in the community. We pay our respects to the Elders, both past and present, and commit to working together in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect for the benefit of the broader community and future generations.

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The investigations outlined in this report were undertaken in partnership with Alison Leach (Manager Events, Arts & Culture) and Reza Ramjerdi (Team Leader Non-Recreation Building Projects) from the City of Stonnington. The expertise of many other Council officers were drawn on as required.

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The authors would like to thank everyone that participated in undertaking this work.

VERSION CONTROL

DATE	COMMENT	AUTHORS
21 November 2022	First draft report	Leith Thomas, Jan van Schaik
6 January 2023	Updates based on feedback from the Steering Committee	Leith Thomas
16 January 2023	Minor copy edits	Leith Thomas

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Figure 1: Prahran Town Hall. Credit: ImagePlay.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report explores options for transforming the Prahran Town Hall and surrounding buildings into a premiere creative, cultural and community facility.
- It has been designed to lay the foundation of a formal business case to attract external investment.
- Though Prahran has lost its standing as one of Melbourne's critical creative hubs, the revitalisation of the Town Hall presents an opportunity to leverage this legacy and reestablish a cultural hub South of the Yarra.
- This will be a transformative project for the neighbourhood that will drive positive change.
- Creative Victoria has indicated strong support for this approach.
- It also aligns with Melbourne Polytechnic's dedication of its nearby campus to creative industries training.
- The project will make significant contributions to Council's strategic aims and aspirations – particularly the Community Vision, Council Plan, Chapel Street Transformation Project, and the forthcoming Libraries and Arts and Culture Strategies.
- It is recommended Council frame this initiative as the establishment of a cultural hub at the Prahran Town Hall.
- The hub will bring together multiple creative organisations and activities, the Library, and the establishment of a new medium sized performance and events venue.
- Development of the business case will allow Council to involve the community and stakeholders in the finalisation of the hub's vision and design, as well as thoroughly and systematically test the concept to ensure its viability and success.
- While this process is underway, remediation works should be completed where possible to preserve the heritage components of the site.

1 ABOUT THIS REPORT

This discussion paper explores opportunities for transforming the Prahran Town Hall into a cultural and community hub and articulates a vision for its future activation. It has been designed to form the foundation of a business case and set Council up to pursue external partner funding for the project.

1.1 Our brief

Future Tense was engaged by the City of Stonnington to undertake a review of the proposed redevelopment of the Prahran Town Hall and provide advice on the optimal way to realise the Council's aim of transforming the site into a premier arts, cultural and community facility – both locally and within the wider context of Melbourne's creative landscape.

The goal of this work was to establish a guiding vision and purpose to drive the redevelopment works and subsequent activation of the site. This included consideration of Council's strategic priorities, the community's aspirations, activity across the neighbourhood, Melbourne's wider creative and cultural sector, and Victorian Government priorities.

1.2 Approach

The investigations took place between February and November 2022. Activities included:

- Review of Council's strategies, plans and past consultations
- Assessment of local creative sector data from Council, the Victorian Government and other sector bodies
- Multiple site visits to the Prahran Town Hall
- Tours of the neighbourhood and key sites nearby to the Prahran Town Hall
- Extensive engagement with officers from across Council's business units, and
- Consultations with Melbourne Polytechnic and Creative Victoria.

Community engagement was not undertaken as it was deemed inappropriate at this stage. In consultation with Council's engagement team and the Steering Committee it was decided that Council would determine its preferred direction for the Prahran Town Hall, then undertake broad community and stakeholder engagement to refine the vision.

1.3 Alignment with investor requirements

During the process it was determined that external partner funding would be required to realise Council's aims for the Prahran Town Hall redevelopment. In order to lay the foundations for this future work, the Department of Treasury's (DTF) Investment Management Standard (IMS)¹ was deployed. The IMS is a methodical strategic process designed to ensure a case for investment articulates and focuses on the benefits the project aims to deliver rather than the specific asset in question. It is required by DTF for all investment requests over \$10 million. Following the IMS process was strongly encouraged by Creative Victoria.

Two IMS workshops were held in August 2022: a Problem Definition Workshop with Council leaders and a Problem Definition Workshop with other senior officers from relevant

¹ More information on the Investment Management Standard can be found at: <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/infrastructure-investment/investment-management-standard>

departments. An Investment Logic Map (ILM) was produced from these sessions. The ILM provides an overview of the case for investment. Using the ILM as a framework, three utilisation options were developed for further investigation. These were workshopped with the Steering Committee in October. A response options analysis was subsequently undertaken on these options and a recommendation made.

This report compiles and presents the findings of all these investigations. It has been prepared to meet the requirements of a Strategic Assessment² and lays the foundation for further exploration of the Prahran Town Hall redevelopment through a full business case. The table below highlights the requirements of the various stages of a DTF-compliant business case.

		Strategic assessment	Preliminary business case	Full business case	
Step				HVHR	Non-HVHR
Investment case	1. Problem definition	Conceptual	Developed	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
	2. Case for change	Conceptual	Developed	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
	3. Response option development	Conceptual	Developed	Comprehensive	Developed
	4. Response option assessment	N/A	Developed	Comprehensive	Developed
Delivery case	5. Project solution	N/A	Conceptual	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
	6. Commercial and procurement	N/A	N/A	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
	7. Environment and planning	N/A	Conceptual	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
	8. Project schedule	N/A	Conceptual	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
	9. Project budget	N/A	Conceptual	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
	10. Management	N/A	N/A	Comprehensive	Comprehensive

The Strategic Assessment elements are explored at a conceptual level in Sections 2 and 3 of this report.

² More information on the Department of Treasury and Finance's Investment Lifecycle requirements can be found at: <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/infrastructure-investment/investment-lifecycle-and-high-value-and-high-risk-guidelines>

2 STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

Council has a strong opportunity to use the redevelopment of the Prahran Town Hall to reestablish the neighbourhood as one of Melbourne's critical creative hubs. This aligns to Council and Victorian Government priorities and builds on the work Melbourne Polytechnic is doing to transform its nearby campus into a dedicated arts and education facility. Critically, Prahran has a powerful legacy as one of Melbourne's cultural engine rooms that can be leveraged to achieve this end.

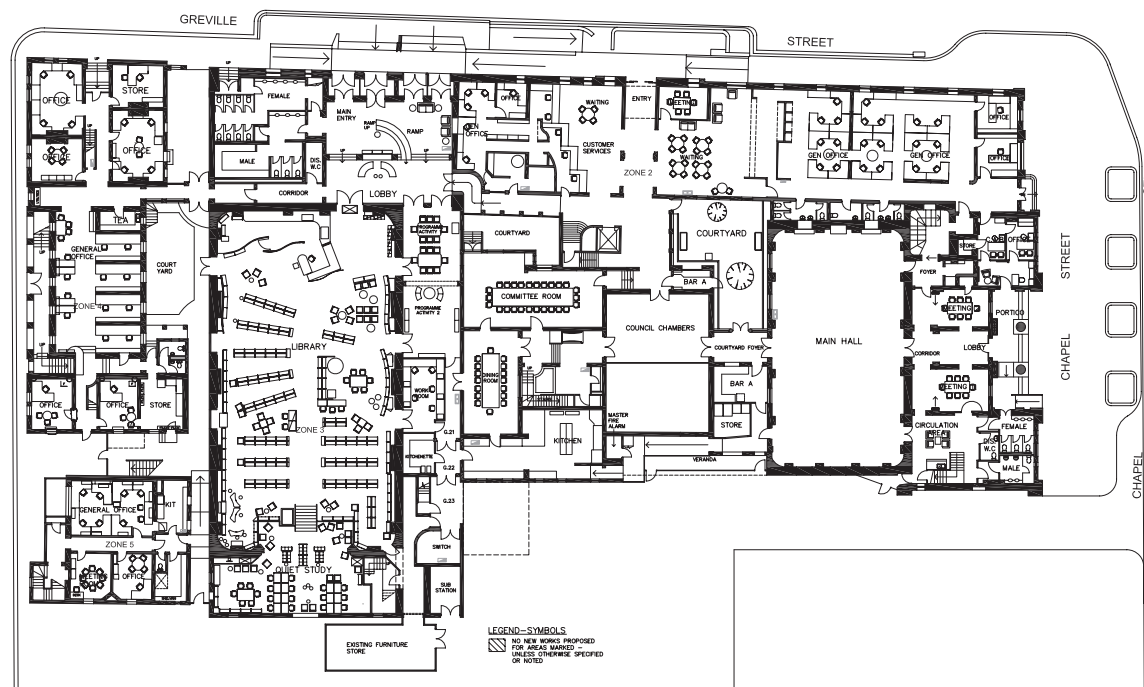
2.1 Situation analysis

2.1.1 THE PRAHRAN TOWN HALL IS AN UNDERUTILISED ASSET IN NEED OF REPAIR

Prahran Town Hall is a key Council asset located in the heart of Prahran's business precinct on the corner of Chapel and Greville Streets. Built in the late 1800s it was until recently the seat of local government. It is a significant building, featuring multiple halls, office spaces, and the former Council chambers. The site also encompasses the former Prahran Fire Station and Court House, located on Macquarie Street.

The site previously housed the Council Chamber, staff offices, the Library, a functions space and other Council services. Since 2015, the site has been largely vacant as Council functions and staff were relocated to its Malvern building. The Library and Customer Service remained for some time but were eventually relocated to temporary facilities in the nearby Prahran Square.

Figure 2: Floor plan of the ground floor of the Prahran Town Hall prior to Council moving out.



Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic several ground floor sections of the Town Hall has been used as a testing and vaccination centre by Star Health.

The buildings are in need of significant maintenance works and accessibility upgrades in order to make them safe and functional.

2.1.2 THE SITE HAS STRONG HERITAGE CONTROLS

The Prahran Town Hall, Court House and Fire Station are all significant heritage buildings with strong controls. Any works on the site need to take these into account. Heritage architects Trethowan undertook a significance assessment and documented elements of significance (presented below). This provides an essential guide for considering the site's utilisation and possible developments.

Figure 3: Map of heritage significance on the ground floor. Credit: Trethowan.

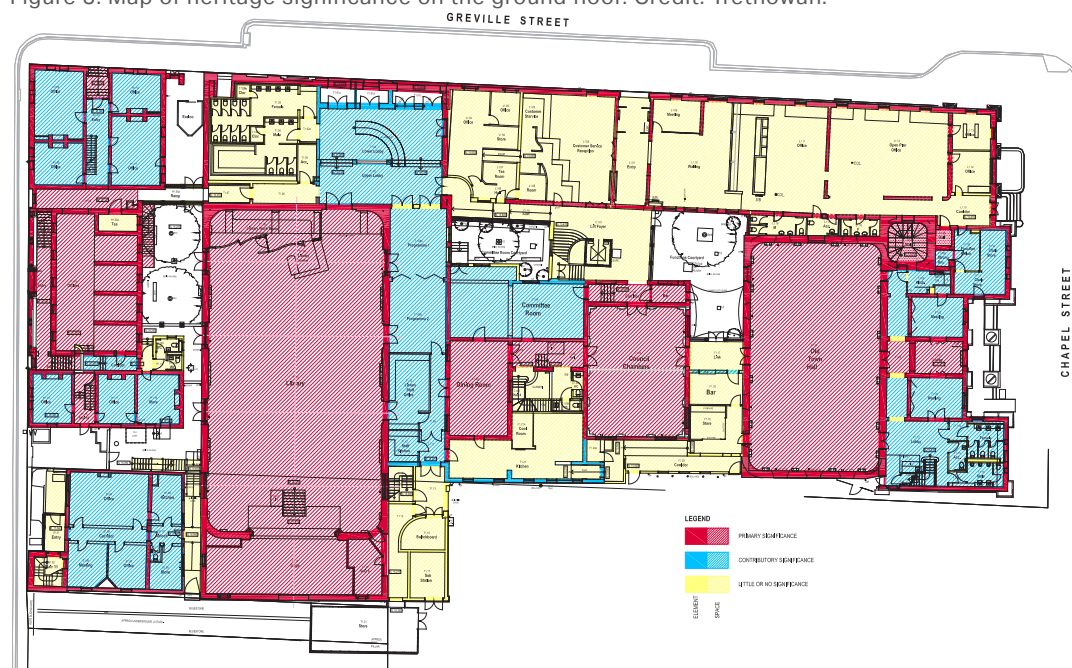
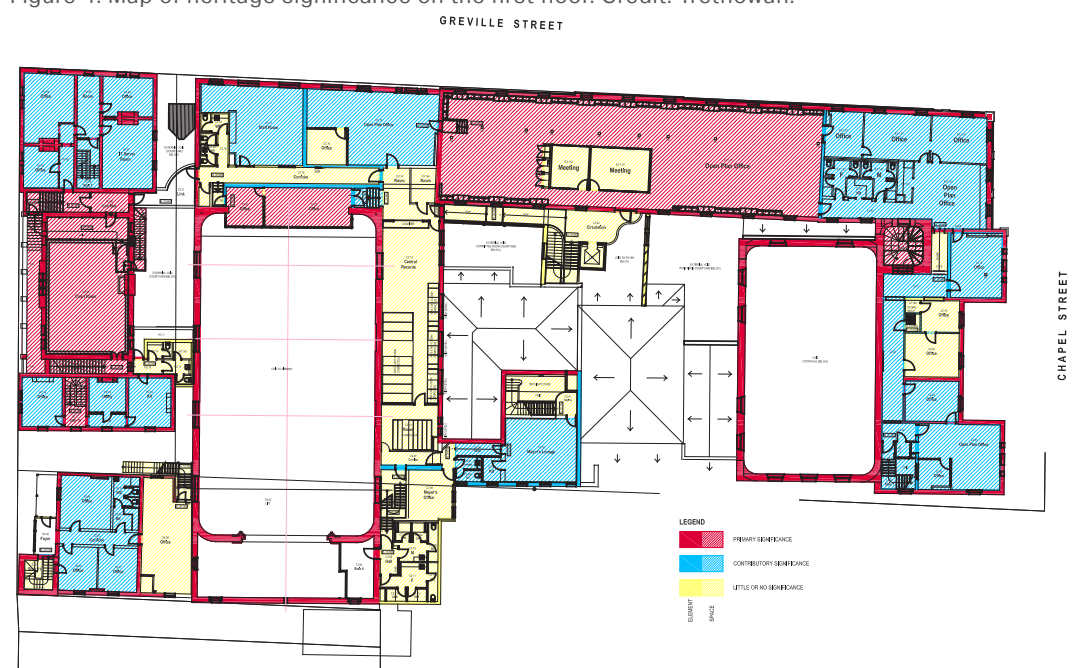


Figure 4: Map of heritage significance on the first floor. Credit: Trethowan.



2.1.3 PAST PLANS WERE DRIVEN BY THE BUDGET, NOT A GUIDING PURPOSE

Plans for upgrading the Town Hall and returning it to active use were prepared in 2019. Williams Ross Architects developed plans and RP Infrastructure were appointed as project managers. The \$29.1 million project was being funded by Council with \$10 million coming from the Victorian Government's Community Infrastructure Loans Scheme and \$750,000 from their Living Libraries Infrastructure Program³.

Figure 5: Ground floor redevelopment plans. Credit: Williams Ross Architects.

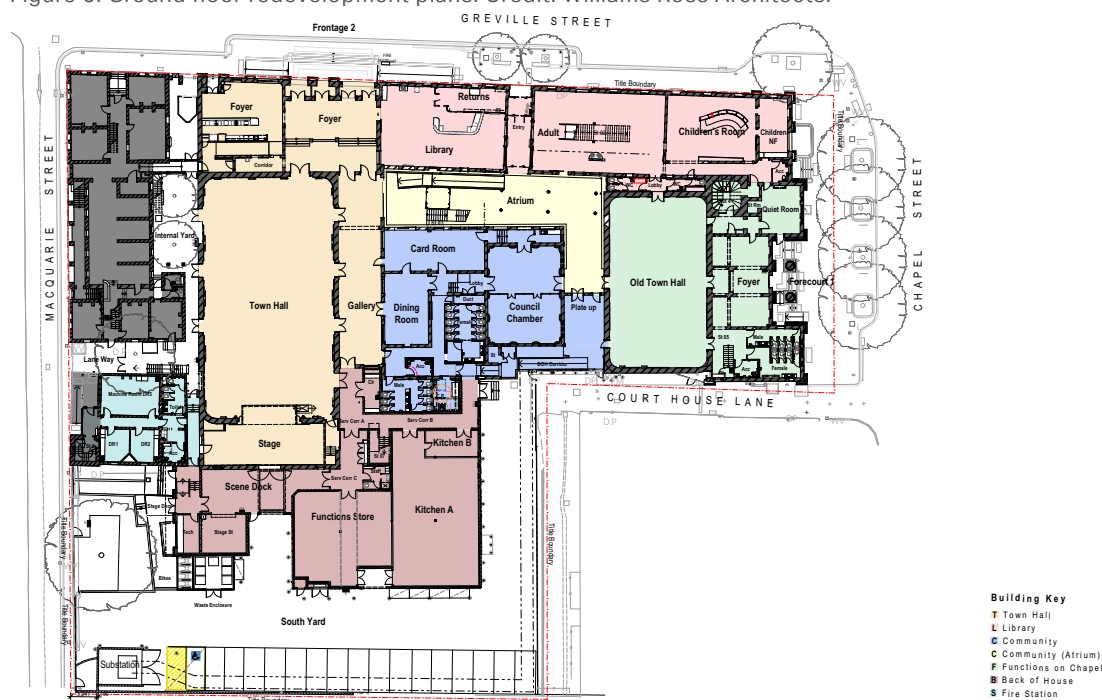
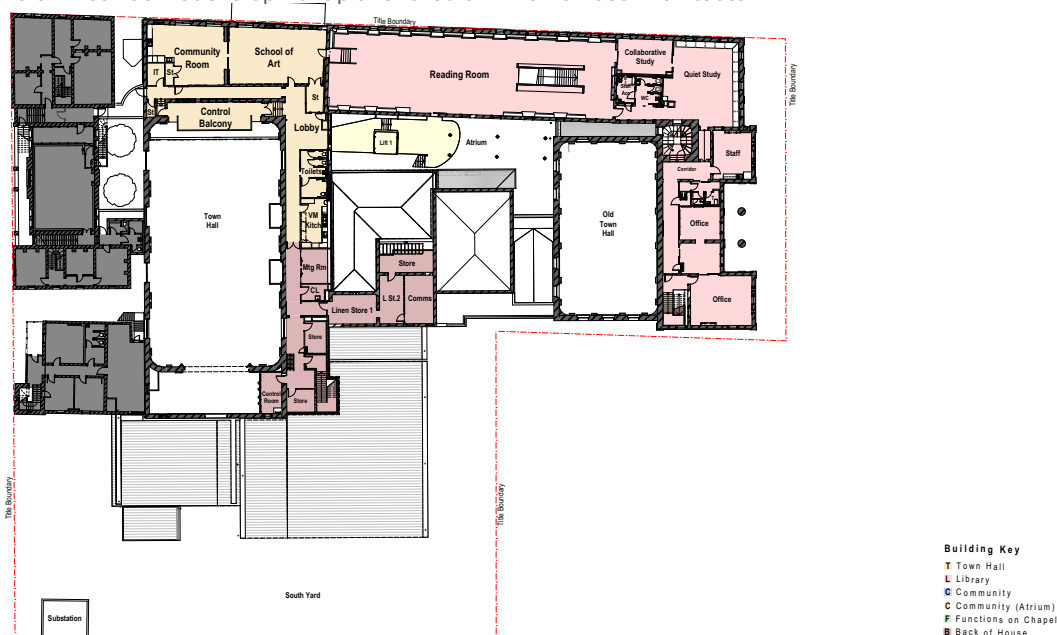


Figure 6: First floor redevelopment plans. Credit: Williams Ross Architects.



3 Details on the project can be found at: <https://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/About/Major-infrastructure-works-and-projects/Prahran-Town-Hall>

Council was seeking a builder to undertake the works when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The subsequent disruptions to supply chains meant the project was put on hold. This allowed for a reevaluation of its aims.

The drive to redevelop the Prahran Town Hall had been strongly driven and directed by previous Councillors. Because Council was not seeking external partner funding for the project, no detailed business case articulating the needs and benefits was required to be produced. The scope of the project was dictated by the available budget.

Consultations with Council's Executive highlighted the need for a clear vision for the redevelopment to guide the activation of the facility.

2.1.4 THERE IS STRONG INTEREST IN REESTABLISHING PRAHRAN AS A CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES HUB

Creative Victoria is particularly keen to see a creative industries hub established South of the Yarra. While there are strong communities of creative and cultural practitioners in Melbourne's South, most creative development takes place in the city's North and West. They are keen to rectify this. And while Prahran is officially classed as a creative neighbourhood by Creative Victoria – and it is home to a number of creative enterprises – there are fewer opportunities for the development of works⁴ (whether visual art, music or performance). Presentation opportunities are also scant, particularly when it comes to live music⁵. This may be due in part to the higher than average commercial rents in the area⁶ impacting the viability of creative enterprises.

The other major actor in the neighbourhood, Melbourne Polytechnic, has committed to dedicating its Prahran campus to creative industries training. They offer training in technical production alongside creative development, with a focus on the performing arts. The site has attracted state-level political focus, with the current government entertaining the idea of a significant investment that would allow for a radical overhaul of the campus – though this is not a confirmed investment. However, consultations with senior representatives from Melbourne Polytechnic have confirmed the institution will move ahead with the focus on the creative industries regardless of state investment. They are interested in collaborating with Council where possible as the Prahran Town Hall redevelopment aligns with their aims and the two projects will reinforce each other.

Figure 7: Melbourne Polytechnic's Prahran Campus.
Credit: Melbourne Polytechnic.



⁴ Listings on <https://www.creativespaces.net.au/> are mostly for office or co-working spaces, with a limited number of studio spaces available, and an even fewer number of rehearsal spaces.

⁵ Over half of the Stonnington respondents to Music Victoria's Live Music Census 2022 cited a lack of small to medium sized venues (150–500 capacity) as a key issue.

⁶ As highlighted in Creative Victoria's Creative Neighbourhoods research.

2.1.5 THERE IS A STRONG LEGACY TO BUILD ON

Prahran was once one of Melbourne's creative hot spots, with a high density of creative activity. This reputation died off in the early 2000s as residential development and the transformation of previously cheap commercial spaces pushed out artists and creative enterprises. Prahran's thriving nightlife culture was once a breeding ground for multiple artistic and creative movements. The neighbourhood was a driving force in live music from the '70s until the early 2000s – in rock, jazz, rave and dance. The slowdown occurred with the closure of live music venues or their transformation into bars and restaurants. There is an opportunity to build on this experimental legacy when considering the revitalisation of the neighbourhood's creative scene.

Figure 8: Revolver Upstairs. Credit: James Gillet.



Figure 9: The Young Professionals at Shake Some Action in the mid 2000s. Credit: Vice.



2.1.6 CURRENT CONDITIONS CAN BE LEVERAGED

Establishing a cultural precinct can't be done by Council alone. It requires the collective input from several organisations and enterprises in a clustered area. This needs to include creative workers, activities and audiences and the gathering, production and presentation spaces for them to inhabit. Prahran already has a reputation as a nightlife destination that draws people to the neighbourhood. It is well connected to public transport. And there are pockets of creative activity already taking place, such as at Chapel Off Chapel and various privately run coworking and studio spaces, as well as Melbourne Polytechnic's arts and education precinct detailed above. Adding a cultural hub at the Prahran Town Hall would greatly expand on these existing conditions and drive further development of the creative and cultural sectors in the neighbourhood.

2.1.7 COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES SUPPORT THIS AMBITION

Using the Prahran Town Hall as a catalyst for reinvigorating the neighbourhood as a cultural and creative hotspot supports many of Council's key ambitions.

DOCUMENT	RELEVANT OBJECTIVES OR AIMS
Community Vision 2040	<p>Guiding principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stonnington is a modern city that maintains heritage sites and its cultural identity whilst embracing progressive development, which supports its local businesses and encourages creative initiatives Stonnington's public spaces will provide the ability for all members of the community to experience and enjoy the natural environment We provide access to a variety of quality services and amenities for everyone within 20 minutes
Council Plan 2021–25	<p>Priorities for a thriving and unique place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1 Strengthen Stonnington's unique identity as a destination of choice, to continue to attract and create advocates of residents, businesses and visitors. 1.1.3 Define and reinvigorate the Chapel Street precinct as an iconic destination. 1.1.4 Attract and deliver iconic arts, culture and events that make Stonnington a place everyone wants to be. 1.2.1 Grow Stonnington's visitor and local economy across the municipality. 1.2.3 Support the establishment and success of innovative and creative enterprises. 1.2.4 Enable swift business activation and growth. 1.3.1 Provide safe, inviting, accessible and well-maintained streetscapes, neighbourhoods and public realm, as defined by our community, to promote pride of place and improved health and wellbeing outcomes. 1.3.2 Ensure our built, natural and cultural heritage is protected and celebrated. 1.3.3 Reactivate and celebrate private and public heritage buildings. 1.4.1 Deliver and advocate for sustainable and enjoyable pedestrian, cycling and public transport options to enable our 20-minute neighbourhoods.
	<p>Priorities for an inclusive and healthy community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1.2 Enhance our community's health and wellbeing and promote resilience through quality service delivery and strategic partnerships. 2.1.3 Support increased community involvement and connections to create a sense of belonging, improve mental health and emotional wellbeing. 2.1.6 Enhance wellbeing through community hubs, libraries and collaborative spaces. 2.2.4 Create public spaces and places that are inclusive and accessible to everyone regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, sexuality and personal circumstance. 2.3.2 Create more public and private open and green spaces through strategic land acquisitions and innovative solutions. 2.3.3 Create an interconnected and walkable green space network to enable our 20-minute neighbourhoods. 2.3.4 Plan for community infrastructure assets and facilities which are multi-functional and meet the current and changing needs of our community.
Chapel Street Transformation Project Return Brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision: to revive Chapel Street as a vibrant, successful and self-sustaining cultural destination. Challenge: Prahran has lost its character – eclectic shops, no vibe, grungy Speculation: Every day feels like a street festival, as art, music, and life abounds on Chapel Street. Lighting installations and public art make every step a delight of new discovery. Music and activity spill out across the street 24 hours a day, and there is never a dull moment.

Consultations with the Council officers in charge of the forthcoming Libraries Strategy and Arts and Culture Strategies confirmed alignment with this direction.

2.2 Problems to address

The following problem statements were developed through the IMS workshops with representatives from Council's executive leadership team and senior officers from across the organisation.

PROBLEM 1

High barriers to entry and lack of a clear neighbourhood direction limits the type of offerings being established

Despite a large number of vacancies, high rents and challenges engaging with landlords means only certain types of retail and hospitality are able to get off the ground. Enterprises need to make high returns to survive. This has the effect of excluding creative propositions from trialling their activities in the neighbourhood as the risks of taking a chance are too high.

PROBLEM 2

Lack of activity at the Prahran Town Hall negatively impacts the vibrancy of the precinct

The Library alone attracted 120,000 visitors per year when situated at the Prahran Town Hall. This, combined with the absence of the staff formerly located there, represented a significant reduction in foot traffic. Also the Town Hall occupies a large part of the Chapel and Grevellive Streets. An absence of activity creates a blank space in the experience of these activity hubs.

PROBLEM 3

The dominance of late night activities affects the character and amenity of the neighbourhood

While Chapel Street's nightlife is a key component of the neighbourhood's unique character, the absence of other entertainment and cultural draws means it plays an outsized role. Without something to balance it, this can lead to antisocial behaviours creating safety concerns and negative impacts on the streetscape.

2.3 Benefits to be delivered

The following benefits were articulated through the IMS workshops. These are the high-order outcomes Council should see from tackling the defined problems.



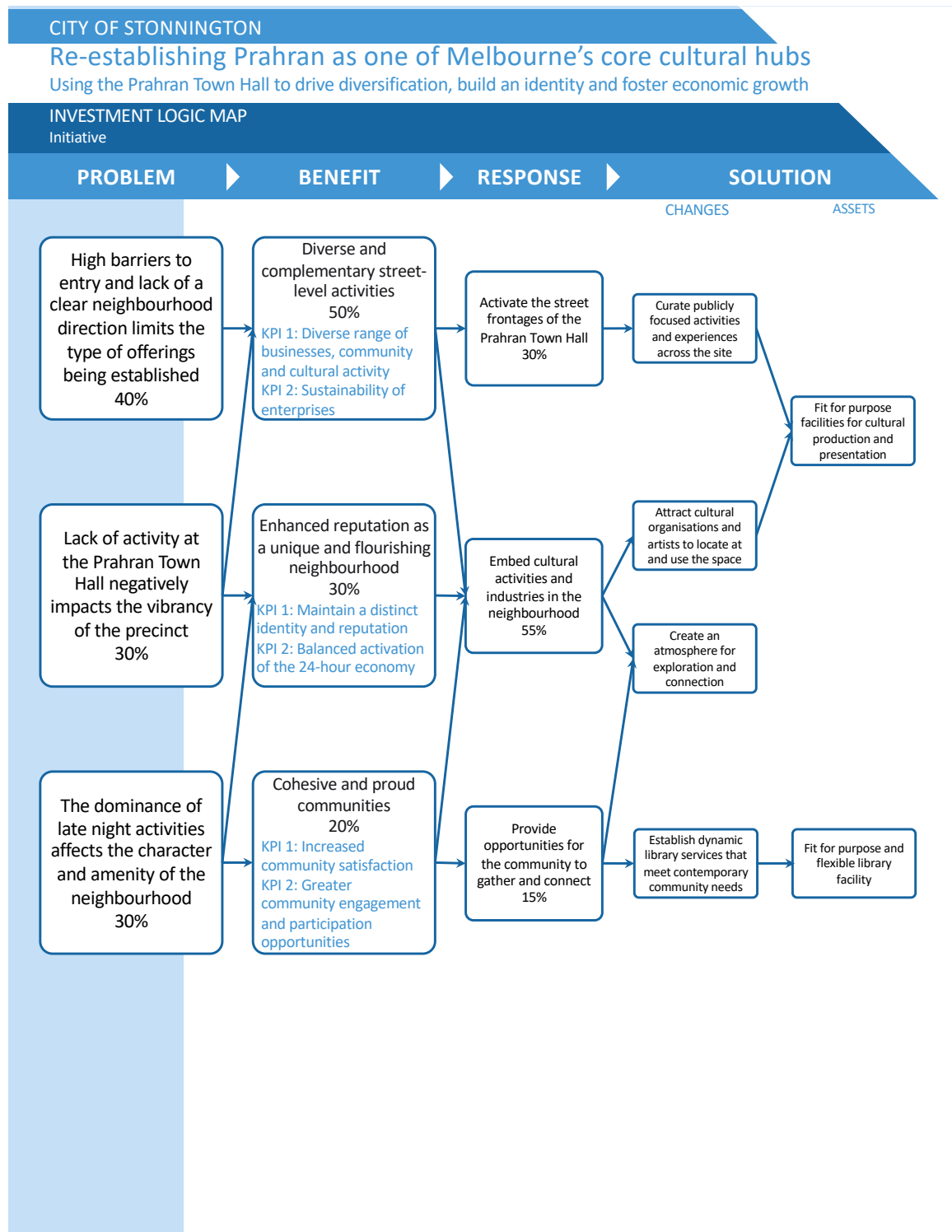
2.4 Strategic responses

These are high level strategies Council needs to deploy to tackle the defined challenges:

- **Activate the street frontages of the Prahran Town Hall** – Creating movement and life on the visible components of the buildings will enhance the pedestrian experience and increase dwell times.
- **Embed cultural activities and industries in the neighbourhood** – Arts practitioners, organisations and their activities will create unique experiences that benefit the community, drive visitation and build the neighbourhood's reputation.
- **Provide opportunities for the community to gather and connect** – Establish an indoor, non-weather dependent, non-commercial space for the community to compliment Prahran Square and Grattan Gardens.

2.5 Investment Logic Map

The aims, problems, benefits and responses are summarised in the ILM below. Please note, as ILM is a live document. It is intended to evolve with development of the business case.



Investor: Cath Harrod, Director of Community and Wellbeing
Facilitator: Leith Thomas, Future Tense
Accredited Facilitator: Yes

Version no: 0.6
Initial Workshop: 04/08/2002
Last modified by: Leith Thomas 14/11/2022
Template version: 6.0

2.6 Potential utilisation options

Three options for delivering on the ILM were considered.

DIRECTION 1: LIBRARY-LED FACILITY

What is it – The Library encompasses the entire Prahran Town Hall site.

Vision and purpose – A cutting edge library providing the community a place of wonder and inspiration. A place dedicated to helping build the community's creative capacities.

Programming to achieve the vision – The Library provides access to ideas and inspiration (through its collections and events) and the opportunity to put them into practice (with appropriate creative facilities and materials), as well the support to grow (through resident creative practitioners).

Facilities included – Alongside traditional library services, this facility could include dedicated collections of creative materials (books, albums, films, photos, etc) that focus on creative practice. There could also be a collection focusing on the creative history of Prahran, documenting the various art movements and musical scenes that have emerged from the neighbourhood over the years. These elements will be complemented by creative making spaces, such as wet areas for art, studios for writing, audio recording facilities and other maker spaces. The halls would be used for library programming, events and exhibitions.

Primary audience – The community

Operational considerations – This would require a significant increase in size and capacities of the Library staff and management and its activation budget.

Figure 10: Gathering space at the State Library of Victoria.

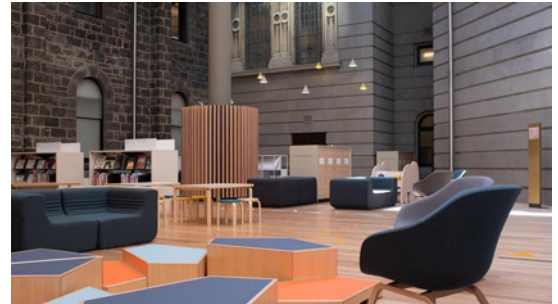


Figure 11: Makers space at Library at the Dock.



Figure 12: Reading room at Green Square.

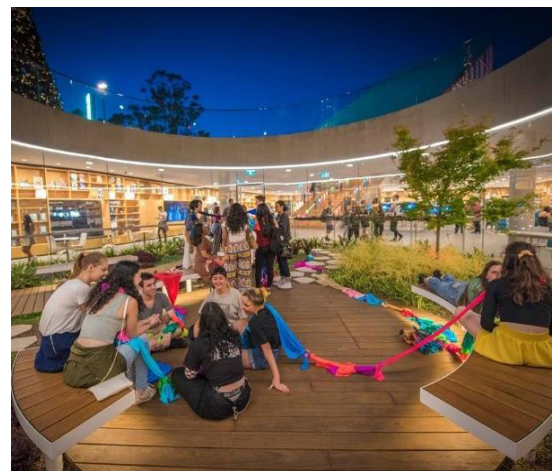
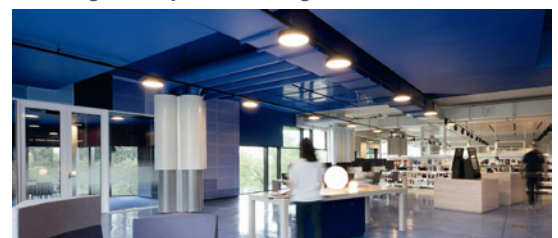


Figure 13: Collections, reading and work space at Geelong Library and Heritage Centre.



DIRECTION 2: VENUE FOR HIRE

Vision and purpose – A unique venue available for cultural events, with a focus on music and festivals. Council operates the Prahran Town Hall as a venue for events, using the main hall as a multiple purpose events space.

Programming to achieve the vision – Two distinct addresses needs to be established: the event space on Greville Street and the Library on Chapel Street. This delineated the different audiences from the two main functions of the building.

Facilities included – A library, a main band/event room (~500 capacity), bar and foyer, a presentation/gallery space, multiple multipurpose purpose spaces (for rehearsals and other development activities) and leasable offices.

Primary audience – Music promoters, festival organisers and their audiences.

Operational considerations – Council will either need to adopt strict policies around hiring of the Town Hall's various spaces to ensure creative use – or establish a service contract with a suitable venue manager able to promote the space to the right markets. It should be noted that in either configuration the activation of the space is being left primarily in the hands of the market.

Figure 14: The Substation.



Figure 15: Thornbury Theatre.



DIRECTION 3: CULTURAL HUB

Vision and purpose – A thriving creative town square, where cultural works are produced and the public engaged. The site will be occupied and activated by multiple tenants, including cultural and arts organisations, individual artists and the Library.

Programming to achieve the vision – The site contains multiple organisations all undertaking their own activities. The cumulative effect of this is a highly trafficked site. The event room will be established as a premier venue for experimental and cutting edge arts and festivals. Creative practitioners can access a range of spaces to develop and present their works, and the community has access to a vibrant program of activities and events.

Facilities included – Multiple purpose events space and bar, presentation/gallery space, theatre development space, writers residency studio, multipurpose development/rehearsal spaces, artist studios, leasable offices, and the Library.

Primary audience – The cultural sector, community and visitors are equally served

Operational considerations – How the site is managed needs to be carefully considered. It is recommended Council play the role of landlord (with policies in place around types of tenants) and leave the activation up to the organisations that use the facility. Ensuring an appropriate mix of creative tenants will be essential to the hub's success.

Figure 16: Collingwood Yards.

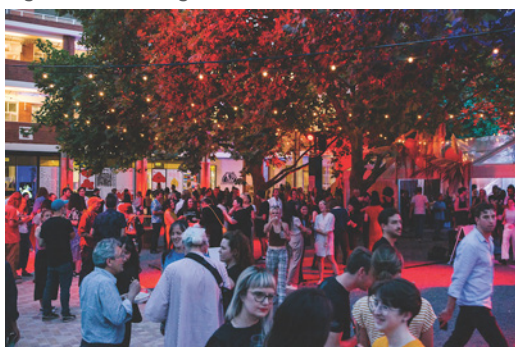


Figure 18: Siteworks.



Figure 17: Casula Powerhouse.



2.7 Options assessment

Each of the proposed directions – a library-led facility, a venue for hire, or a cultural hub – represent a viable path forward for Council. It is important to note that the Library is included in each as its return to the Prahran Town Hall is confirmed. The goal of the assessment at this stage is to assess which direction presents the best path forward for Council and the community.

Each proposed direction has been assessed in line with the IMS Response Options Analysis framework. This includes review against the six Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) articulated in the ILM:

- KPI 1: Presentation of a diverse range of businesses, community and cultural activity
- KPI 2: Increased sustainability of enterprises
- KPI 3: Maintenance of a distinct identity and reputation
- KPI 4: Balanced activation of the 24-hour economy
- KPI 5: Increased community satisfaction
- KPI 6: Greater community engagement and participation opportunities

Assessments are made using a simple three-point scale:

- 0 or Marginal contribution – This intervention contributes only marginally to the KPI, or not at all
- 1 or Partial contribution – This intervention makes a meaningful contribution to the KPI
- 2 or Full contribution – This intervention makes a substantial contribution to the KPI and is the overarching mechanism that will deliver the KPI.

Detailed exploration of how the chosen direction will be executed – such as the types of facilities to be included, the exact space to be dedicated to different functions, and detailed design solutions – will be explored during the business case development stage. The purpose of this assessment is to provide Council with clarity about which direction to pursue and how to shape further investigations.

The table below shows the performance of each direction against the KPIs.

OPTION 1

Title: Library-led facility

Description: A cutting edge library providing the community a place of wonder and inspiration. A place dedicated to helping build the community's creative capacities.

		Benefit 1		Benefit 2		Benefit 3		Weighted Benefit Score
		30%	20%	20%	10%	5%	15%	
Interventions	%	KPI 1	KPI 2	KPI 3	KPI 4	KPI 5	KPI 6	
Library services	50%	1	1	0	1	1	1	72.5%
Access to creative development and grow opportunities	50%	1	0	1	0	0	1	
KPI Score	100%	30.0%	10.0%	10.0%	5.0%	2.5%	15.0%	
Benefit Total		40.0%		15.0%		17.5%		

OPTION 2

Title: Venue for hire

Description: A unique venue available for cultural events, with a focus on music and festivals. Council operates the Prahran Town Hall as a venue for events, using the main hall as a multiple purpose events space.

		Benefit 1		Benefit 2		Benefit 3		Weighted Benefit Score
		30%	20%	20%	10%	5%	15%	
Interventions	%	KPI 1	KPI 2	KPI 3	KPI 4	KPI 5	KPI 6	
Library services	20%	1	1	0	0	1	1	
Band/event space	40%	1	0	0	1	0	0	
Creative sector office space	20%	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Cultural development spaces	20%	0	0	0	0	0	0	
KPI Score	100%	30.0%	20.0%	0.0%	5.0%	2.5%	7.5%	
Benefit Total		50.0%		5.0%		10.0%		65.0%

OPTION 3

Title: Cultural precinct

Description: A thriving creative town square, where cultural works are produced and the public engaged. The site will be occupied and activated by multiple tenants, including cultural and arts organisations, individual artists and the Library.

Interventions	%	Benefit 1		Benefit 2		Benefit 3		Weighted Benefit Score
		30%	20%	20%	10%	5%	15%	
		KPI 1	KPI 2	KPI 3	KPI 4	KPI 5	KPI 6	
Library services	30%	1	0	0	0	1	1	97.5%
Public-facing creative activation across the site	40%	1	1	1	1	0	1	
Regular and diverse creative events	30%	0	1	1	1	0	0	
KPI Score	100%	30.0%	20.0%	20.0%	10.0%	2.5%	15.0%	
Benefit Total		50.0%		30.0%		17.5%		97.5%

2.8 Recommendation

The results of the Response Options analysis clearly show that Direction 3, the Culture Hub, delivers the greatest impact against the KPIs. The Culture Hub provides a weighted benefit score of 97.5%, compared to the Library-led option's 72.5% and the Venue for Hire concept's 65%.

This ranking is further reinforced when financial considerations are taken into account. The Library-led facility would deliver significant community benefit, but would require significant investment from Council to cover operational costs. The Venue for Hire would have the potential for generating revenue, however this is unlikely to be consistent. The Cultural Hub, with its multiple tenancies, provides the best opportunity for Council to generate some stable revenue to contribute to the facility's operational costs.

The exact makeup of the ideal Cultural Hub will need to be explored further in the business case. This will test and consider tenancy and facility mixes and space allocations. The following section provides an example of how the Cultural Hub concept could be executed at the Prahran Town Hall.

3 CONCEPT FOR A CULTURAL HUB

The following sector outlines what a cultural hub could look like at the Prahran Town Hall. It is provided as an example only. It highlights the viability of the concept and should give Council confidence to move to the next stage of planning. Details of the concept will be fleshed out through the community, stakeholder and sector engagement that will be undertaken during the development of the business case.

3.1 Transforming Prahran Town Hall into a cultural hub

The cultural hub at the Prahran Town Hall is driven by a vision of a thriving creative town square. It's a place where artists can gather and produce cutting edge new work. It's a place where exciting experiences are presented to the public and attract people from across the city. It's a place where the local community can congregate, connect and be inspired. It's a place where culture happens and is accessible to all.

This vision will require multiple organisations and creative actors activating various parts of the site. The cumulative effect will be to produce a high level of activity and traffic in and around the facility.

A number of elements are required to achieve this:

- **A mid-sized performance space** – The main hall is ideal for establishing as a ~500-capacity venue focusing on contemporary music, comedy, and festivals and fill a much-needed hole in the events and touring market. Management and programming could be outsourced to a specialist operator⁷.
- **A theatre development space** – There is a unique opportunity to use the Courtroom as a theatre development space. This would very quickly become an in-demand space within the sector and compliment Chapel Off Chapel's activities.
- **Flexible presentation spaces** – There is a need to establish a space for the presentation of visual and experimental arts in the area. The Old Town Hall and foyer leading onto Chapel Street is well suited to this use.
- **Leasable office spaces for arts organisations** – There are numerous possible spaces that could be leased for a range of uses, from office spaces to public-facing workshops and galleries, such as those found at Collingwood Yards and the Abbotsford Convent.
- **Artist studio spaces** – Studios could be set up to accommodate visual artists, writers, musicians or performers. This will allow works to be produced on site.
- **Multipurpose maker spaces** – Public-facing creative activity spaces for uses such as workshops, classes or recording. The exact facilities will be explored during development of the business case.
- **Community hangout spaces** – Core to the success of the cultural hub is the ability of the community to own the space as a place for gathering.
- **A creatively-focused library** – The Library needs to inspire the creative capacities of the community. This could include a collection documenting the cultural history of the neighbourhood.

⁷ Such as the Venue Collective who operate the Corner Hotel and Max Watts.

3.2 Critical success factors

Building a reputation as a site of creative and cultural activities

Being known among creative practitioners as a place where works can be developed and experimentation supported – and where audiences know they can access exciting opportunities.

Having an active approach to curation across the site

While the cultural hub's success is the result of multiple actors, it is essential that Council maintains a role in ensuring the public facing components are activated. This can be done at arms length through the selection of tenants and hirers.

The site and its various spaces must be easily accessible to all

As well as ensuring compliance with accessibility and inclusion requirements, the site must be inviting to all who visit it. The goal is to create a sense of wonder and encourage exploration.

People need to be able to move in and around the site

The Prahran Town Hall is a large site. To stop it becoming an imposing monolith, multiple entrance points need to be created to allow visitors to access the many different elements individually.

There needs to be a mix of activators attracting different users

To create an atmosphere of energy and excitement the site needs to be able to attract and accommodate a range of creative activities and visitors simultaneously.

Revenue generation is essential

While the Prahran Town Hall is unlikely to ever be a profit centre, there is a need for the facility to generate revenue to contribute towards its operational and maintenance costs. Tenancies are one way to derive stable income alongside the more sporadic event hires.

3.3 What a cultural hub at Prahran Town Hall could look like

The following drawings show what a cultural hub could look like at the Prahran Town Hall. These are designed to give an indication of what is possible within the constraints of the site. Consideration of the exact layout and functionality of the site will be designed during development of the business case.

This concept is built around opening up the buildings and creating new garden pathways between and around the buildings, letting in more natural light and creating enticing avenues for visitors to explore. The South side of the facility is opened up as part of this process, creating new linkages for pedestrians coming off Chapel Street. A new lift structure is also proposed to the South of the building, creating a new way to access the first floor and to complement the internal lift at the Northern end. These proposals work within the constraints of the strict heritage controls in place across the site.

Figure 19: Conceptual drawing showing possible garden space. Credit: Future Tense.

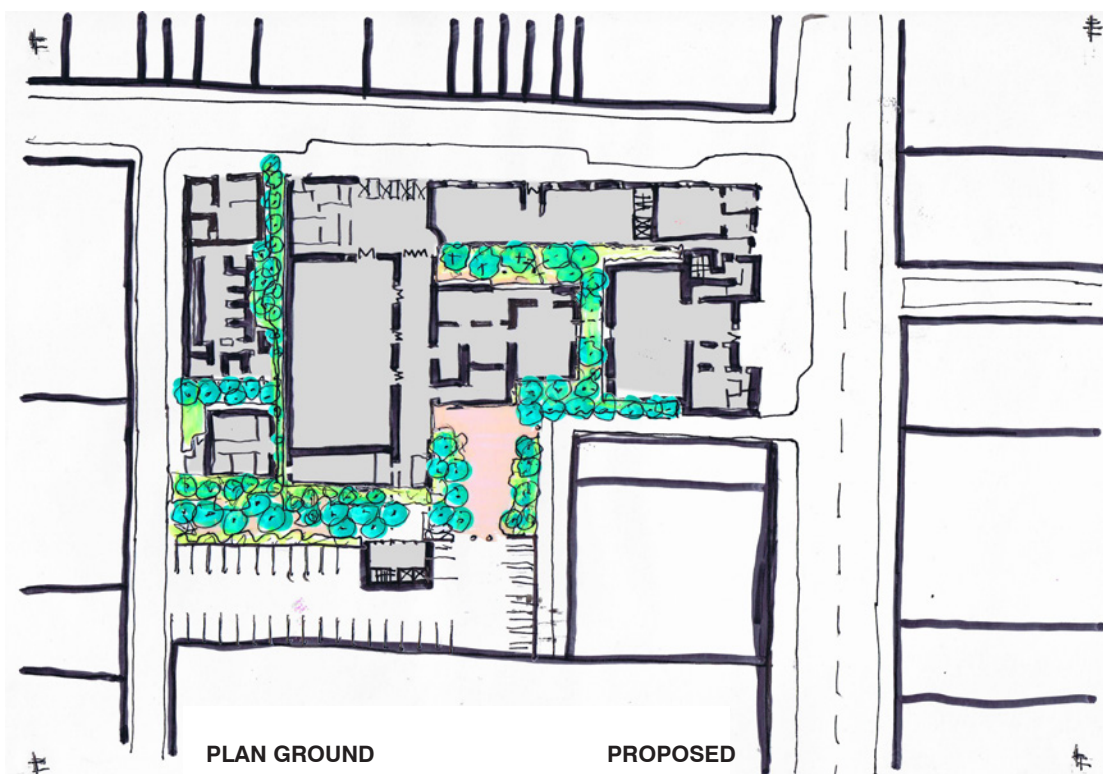


Figure 20: Conceptual drawing showing a possible ground floor. Credit: Future Tense.

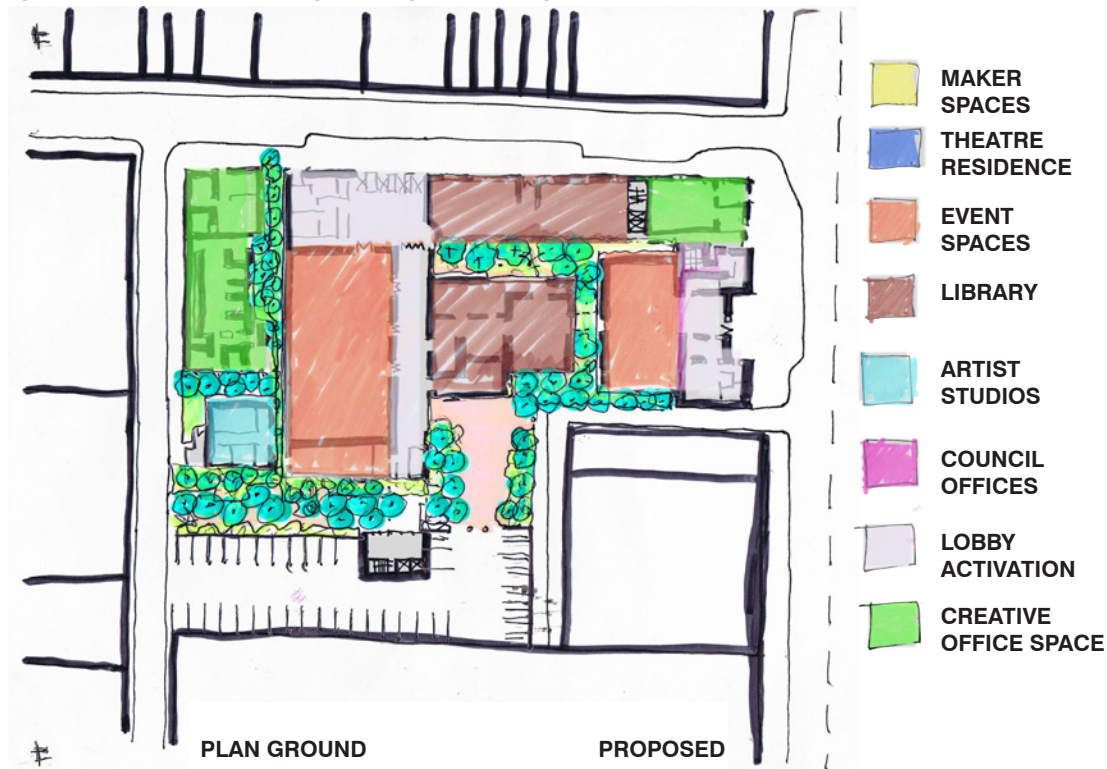
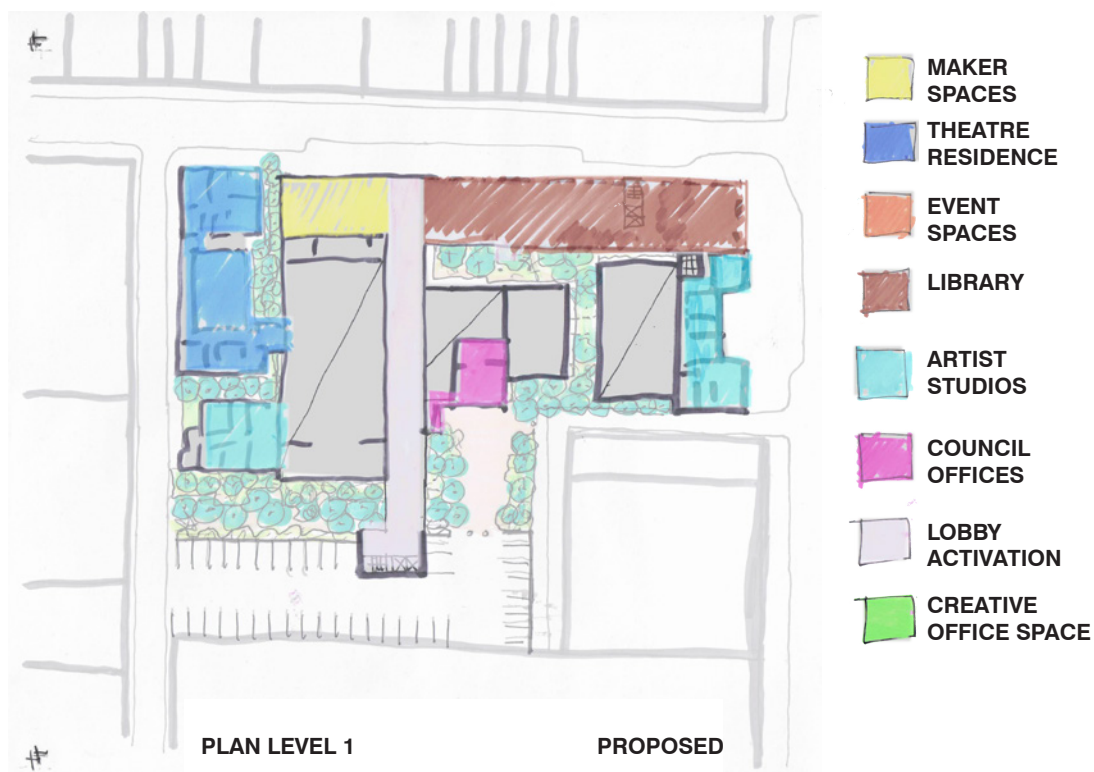


Figure 21: Conceptual drawing showing a possible first floor. Credit: Future Tense.



3.4 Considerations

There are a number of questions that need to be explored during development of the business case, including:

- **The Tenant and facility mix** – These elements need to be carefully curated to ensure they contribute to the desired vision for the cultural hub as a place for contemporary and cutting edge creative practice.
- **Operating and governance structures** – Council's role in the hub will largely be as landlord, with activation by large the responsibility of the tenant artists and organisations. A range of management possibilities exist, ranging from full control by Council through to complete outsourcing of the non-Library components to the third party creative sector manager.
- **Income streams** – While it is understood the hub is unlikely to be a profit centre for Council, it must bring in some level of revenue to offset the cost. Providing leasable space will provide a stable income source to meet this need.
- **Possible funding models** – Investigations into different possibilities could include establishing an entity, such as a foundation, that could receive philanthropic funds as well as the potential for state or federal funding for programming or activation
- **Naming of the hub** – The hub will need a name that reflects its intention and gives it an identity and unify the disparate activities that take place across the site

4 NEXT STEPS

Transforming the Prahran Town Hall into a cultural hub represents a significant opportunity for Council to realise the community's aspirations and achieve its strategic objectives. To achieve this will require external government investment. A Treasury-compliant business will need to be produced to secure this.

4.1 Why this project? Why now?

- There is a gap in the market
- Strong strategic alignment with the Victorian Government
- It delivers on Council's objectives and community aspirations
- Presents a strong return on investment
- It will be transformative for the neighbourhood

4.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- **Council pursue the vision of the Prahran Town Hall as a cultural hub** – This will frame the community and stakeholder engagement
- **Proceed with development of a business case to secure external funding** – In order to have some control over the project timeframe, it is recommended Council funds this work itself, rather than waiting for grant opportunities from the Victorian Government
- **Undertake restoration works** – Identify elements that are not dependent on the changes to the redevelopment design and progress those works (either through existing asset management funds or external heritage grants)
- **Activate available spaces in line with the vision** – This should include returning Library operations to part of the ground floor area and utilising the function spaces for creative activities. This will seed the idea in both the community and cultural sector and lay the groundwork for the larger transformation.

4.3 What a business case entails

Developing a long form business case that aligns to federal and state government investment gateway requirements will allow for a structured investigation and refinement of the cultural hub concept.

The process of preparing the business will include community and creative sector engagement, as well as market testing, operational models, and evaluation of the forecast economic and social impact the project will have. This will include exploration and assessment of the various options to come to the optimal plan for implementing the cultural hub at the Prahran Town Hall.

4.4 Proposed timeline

VISIONING (where we are now) 2022	BUSINESS CASE DEVELOPMENT 2023	SECURE FUNDING 2023–24	DELIVERY TBC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment Management Standard process • Assessment of directions • Sets vision for the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores the investment in detail • Long-form DTF-compliant business case • Community engagement • Concept finalisation • Design refinement • Operational plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the Victorian Government • Aligned to Budget cycles • Combined with Council's contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction design development • Tender • Appointment • Execution

FUTURE TENSE
FUTURE TENSE