

FAQs

Why are you asking for feedback again?

Council will soon set the city's budget for the next 10 years through the 2021-31 Long-Term Plan process. We want to make sure our budget reflects community input on the next steps for the Founders site.

What about the feedback we gave you last time?

We've consulted twice with the community on options. Each conversation has built on the previous one. The first consultation (2016) asked about refurbishing Founders Theatre, building new or closing and demolishing it. Momentum Waikato's proposal for a new theatre came out of that conversation.

The second consultation (2017) focused on what to do with the theatre building. The majority of people wanted it repaired for community use but did not want ratepayers to fund that. Some groups have presented ideas for using the building for community purposes, but these have not been backed with the necessary funding.

Based on this, and on the West Town Belt vision for the wider area, we have proposed two options for the Founders site. Both could be funded through Council budgets. We are also inviting submissions on a third option that uses the theatre building (partly or fully) for an alternative purpose - these need to have a business plan and funding proposal.

Why was Founders Theatre closed?

In 2015, Council was investigating options to upgrade the ageing theatre. These investigations found issues with the flying system. A flying system is above the stage and holds elements that support a production, including curtains, lights, scenery, stage effects and sometimes people. The Founders Theatre flying system was considered unsafe for the loads it was carrying, so the building was closed. We now know the theatre is also earthquake-prone.

Isn't Founders Theatre a protected building?

The building contains many city and community memories, but it has a low heritage value and is not protected under the District Plan. In July 2016, the building was independently assessed against the District Plan heritage criteria (e.g. historic, architectural and archaeological qualities) and given a moderate ranking - not enough for protected status. Click [here](#) to view the report. Option 2 - the multi-purpose park - would include features that mark the site's heritage.

What will happen to the fountain?

The Dame Hilda Ross Memorial Fountain will be repaired and restarted, whatever option Council decides on.

What is the history of Founders Theatre?

The 1249-seat theatre opened in 1962 and was expected to have a life of 50 years. The community raised 10% of the £250,000 cost and Hamilton City Council paid the remaining 90%. The building was officially opened on 17 November 1962 by Mayor Denis Rogers, and the Dame Hilda Ross Memorial Fountain, in front of the theatre, was opened by Prime Minister Keith Holyoake the next year.

Why isn't Council proposing both a multi-purpose park and keeping the building for community use?

It's a matter of budget and the best use of the site. If the building remains, there is less area for the park (only Boyes Park), so less could be done with it. Estimates to restore the building have ranged from \$12M to \$20M. Converting it for another use would add cost and there would also be ongoing operating expenses. Council will weigh up the options, including new ideas from the community and the likely costs for all options, when it sets the city's budget through the Long-Term Plan.

What will each option cost?

Option 1 (Remove the theatre and create a basic park) is budgeted at \$1M.

Option 2 (Remove the theatre and create a multi-purpose park) will cost more. The cost will depend on what our community wants in the park. If Council chooses Option 2, the budget will be included in the Long-Term Plan consultation next March.

What will you do with my feedback?

Council will consider a report on the future for the Founders site on 8 December as part of the Long-Term Plan budget deliberations. The report will cover the feedback from our community. If Option 2 (the multi-purpose park) is chosen, your input and ideas will help us design the park.

What's the timing if the Council chooses one of the park options?

This depends on decisions made in the 2021-31 Long-Term Plan. Council takes a 10-year view (even longer for major capital projects), which means looking at what projects are planned and when and how the city's budget is best spread from year to year.

Won't a new park encourage anti-social behaviour?

As the front of the building is sheltered, we have had some issues with people using it for rough sleeping or as a toilet. Creating a park that is frequently used by a wide range of people and has good lighting and fewer secluded spaces will discourage this sort of behaviour.

Where can I find more background on Council's discussions about the Founders site?

Document Title	Date	Link
Founders Theatre - Engagement and Recommended Option	28 July 2016	Click here
Founders Theatre - Future Options	29 Sept 2016	Click here
Founders Theatre - Update on Options	21 Sept 2017	Click here
Founders Theatre - Outcome of Consultation and Recommendation for Future Use	12 Dec 2017	Click here
The Future of the Founders Theatre Site	17 Sept 2020	Click here