

Dunedin Theatre Network

Concept Design Stage – Summary Report

By: Feldspar Associates

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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
Total cost of proposal	\$34,590,000

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
The Playhouse, Albany Street Dunedin Repertory Society	1875	600m ²	Currently unclassified Conservation report in place	130	Yes – earthquake prone	Yes minimal contamination
The Dunedin Athenaeum, The Octagon Zeal Land Ltd	1870	2,000m ²	Category 1 Heritage NZ District Plan scheduled Covenanted	100 (in New Athenaeum Theatre)	Yes – earthquake prone	Yes
The Mayfair, King Edward Street The Mayfair Theatre Charitable Trust	1914	1,400m ²	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 289m², with around 600m² 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.

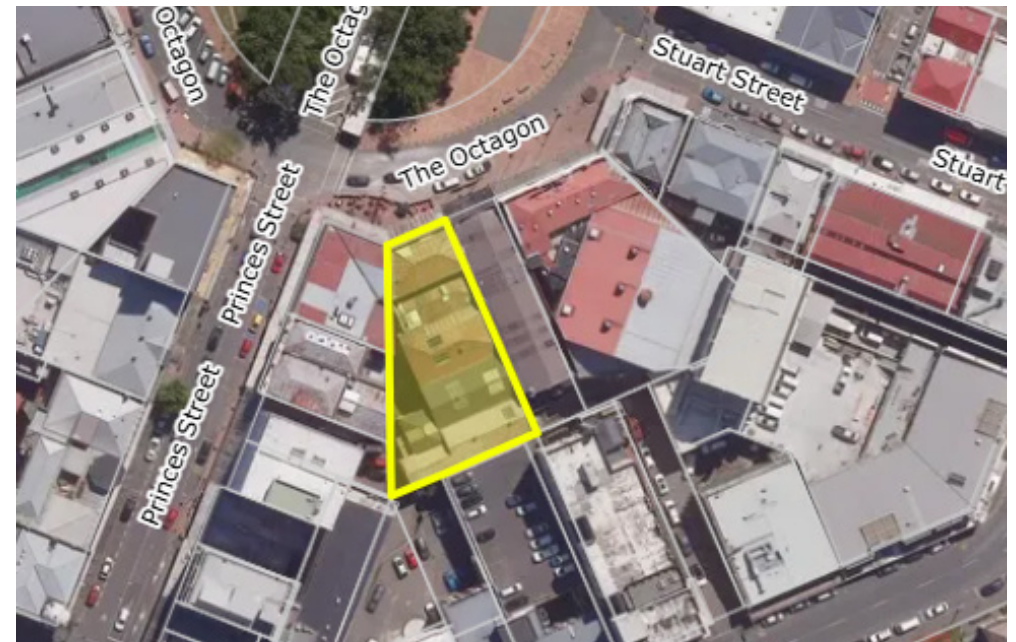
The Repertory Society has owned the building since 1971, but insufficient funding has led to much of the building fabric being degraded to a moderate-poor condition owing to damp and sustained water ingress.

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 1022m² site with over 2000m² 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.

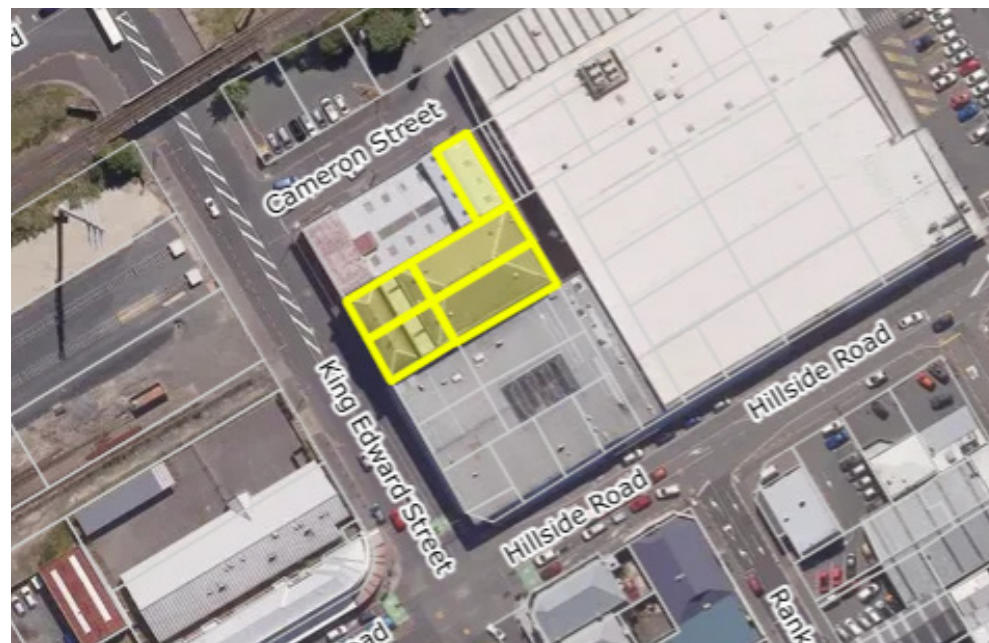
In 2018 in a rare move by a private building owner, Zeal Land, working in collaboration with Heritage New Zealand, placed a covenant on the building to further protect it for future generations based on its cultural significance to the city.

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

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

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
Fulton Ross Team Architects, (FRTA)	Architecture	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Rawlinsons	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.
Steve McKnight	Structural engineering - Playhouse	Steve is a well-regarded Dunedin based structural engineer and developer; he specialises in heritage buildings.
Peter Stevenson	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
WSP	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"> ◆ Accessibility ◆ Plumbing ◆ Electrical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Drainage survey ◆ 3D scans ◆ Archaeological authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Accessibility ◆ Electrical services ◆ Mechanical services

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	
Key Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 120 seat auditorium ◆ Traditional theatre format ◆ Large rehearsal/break out space above with semi-commercial kitchen ◆ Loading access to rear
Community Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Continuation of children's theatre ◆ Facilitate additional hires by professional theatre producers, musicians and community groups by providing improved facilities ◆ Widening participation in theatre by providing accessibility measures
Heritage Significance	Built in 1876 and designed by Mason & Wales, the building has been part of the cultural landscape of Dunedin for almost 150 years.
Current State	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	
Proposed Upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Seismic strengthening work ♦ Repair of key heritage features ♦ Creation of a new back of house/stage area ♦ Heating and ventilation improvements ♦ Full decorative refurbishment ♦ Improvement works throughout to comply with the building code
Architectural Design	<p>Enhanced Accessibility - Enlarged entrance, accessible toilet facilities, a box office, and a passenger lift providing barrier-free access to all levels.</p> <p>Improved Facilities - Reconfigured seating for better sightlines and comfort, upgraded meeting and rehearsal rooms, and modern backstage amenities, including dressing rooms and accessible toilets.</p> <p>Preservation and Modernisation - 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>Optimised Space Usage - 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>Enhanced Performance Support - Centralised control desk, updated stage facilities, backstage green room with kitchenette and additional storage for seamless performance operations.</p>
Structural Design	<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>
Other Key Areas	The proposed scope of work includes the installation of sprinklers, electrical upgrade, and HVAC improvements.
Concept Cost Estimate	\$5,790,000

The Dunedin Athenaeum Proposal	
Key Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ 120 seat black box space ♦ Highly flexible basement performance venue with capacity for 600 people standing ♦ Plans to maximise daytime use (as well nighttime) to attract tourism ♦ Recording studio with video capability ♦ Centre for Writing and associated library space, (legacy project for the Athenaeum) ♦ Two café/bar spaces on the ground floor and further provision in the basement ♦ Further hireable event/meeting spaces ♦ Loading access to rear
Community Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Multi-space venue in the centre of the city with great social spaces, café/bar spaces on both floors ♦ Smaller/mid-size performance spaces which are affordable and high-quality to meet demand ♦ Flexibility to support daytime as well as nighttime uses ♦ Adding value to the heart of city, bringing vibrancy and activity ♦ Accessibility improvements to widen participation and maximise use ♦ Adaptive re-use of a culturally significant building in the city centre
Heritage Significance	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.
Current State	<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	
Proposed Upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Seismic strengthening ♦ Repair of key heritage features ♦ Reconfiguration of spaces to facilitate better utilisation ♦ Creation of an improved entrance and café/bar/reception space from the Octagon ♦ Creation of a new black box space on the ground floor ♦ Integration of the Centre for Writing/library space with the rest of the building ♦ Creation of a large multi-purpose flat floor venue in the basement ♦ Heating and ventilation improvements ♦ Full decorative refurbishment ♦ Improvement works throughout to comply with the building code
Architectural Design	<p>Enhanced Entrances and Foyer - 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>Modernised Facilities – 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>Performance Spaces - 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>
Architectural Design	<p>Optimised Support Areas - Back-of-house storage, a service lift for equipment, a recording studio, and dedicated backstage spaces for both performance and function venues.</p> <p>Improved Accessibility and Services - Public corridor access to shared facilities, a loading dock for equipment, and streamlined space for technical and operational needs.</p>
Structural Design	Strengthening concept complete, targeting at least 67% NBS at IL3.

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

The Mayfair Proposal	
Key Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ 340 seat auditorium ♦ Traditional theatre format with significant capacity backstage ♦ Large rehearsal space/F&B available with semi-commercial kitchen ♦ Associated workshop/storage space with good loading and direct access to stage
Community Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Redevelopment of a traditional mid-size theatre with good access and parking ♦ Continuation of hires by schools and community groups as well as professional performers ♦ Facilitate additional hires by professional theatre producers and community groups by providing improved facilities ♦ Widening participation in theatre by providing accessibility measures
Heritage Significance	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.
Current State	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	
Proposed Upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Seismic strengthening work ♦ Replacement of the asbestos roof ♦ Repair of key heritage features, including the facade ♦ Substantial improvement to back of house facilities ♦ Creation of a new workshop with stage access and loading ♦ Improved toilet facilities ♦ Heating and ventilation improvements ♦ Full decorative refurbishment ♦ Improvement works throughout to comply with the building code
Architectural Design	<p>Accessible Facilities - Accessible entry and routes for people with disabilities, including a passenger lift, accessible toilets, and wheelchair seating options in the auditorium.</p> <p>Upgraded Auditorium - Reconfigured seating for better audience connection, centralised sound and light control, and restored plasterwork.</p> <p>Enhanced Backstage Areas - Redesigned backstage with improved stair access, stage-right performer facilities, dressing rooms, chorus spaces, a green room, and a laundry facility.</p> <p>Improved Technical Spaces - Connection to a workshop and scene dock with a hoist, technician space, and storage for technical and plant equipment.</p> <p>Refurbished Additional Spaces - Updated rehearsal/social room with a new bar and accessible passenger lift access.</p>
Structural Design	Targeting at least 67% NBS at IL3.
Other Key Areas	The proposed scope of work includes the installation of sprinklers, electrical upgrade, and HVAC improvements to all areas.
Concept Cost Estimate	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
Total	\$5,790,000	15,480,000	\$13,320,000

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
Do nothing	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
Option 1	Concurrent Delivery – 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
Option 2	Sequential Delivery – 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	Staggered Delivery – 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>

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									

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
Total	\$37,060,000	\$2,470,000

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



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
SPATIAL PLAN	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
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	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
ARA TOI STRATEGY	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
TE AO TUROA STRATEGY	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.
SOCIAL WELLBEING STRATEGY	Connected people	<p>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.</p> <p>There are also similar noted benefits for audience members. As the project progresses, there will multiple opportunities to build and facilitate more connections.</p>
	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:

Investing for Maximum Impact	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Nurturing Talent	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.
Reducing Barriers to Growth	<p>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.</p> <p>The creation of accessible facilities and infrastructure supports Amplify's principle of reducing barriers to engagement, ensuring inclusivity for diverse audiences and performers.</p>
Amplify's Vision of Cultural Soft Power	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.
Community-Centred Outcomes	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:

Enhancing Regional Economic and Community Resilience	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.
Fostering Regional Connectedness and Growth	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.
Improving Sustainability of Cultural Institutions	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.
Addressing Resilience and Enabling Infrastructure Goals	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.
Opportunities for Regional Tourism and Economic Growth	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:

Deferred Maintenance and Gradual Deterioration	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.
Closure or Reduced Operating Capacity	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.
Loss of Historic and Cultural Value	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.

Missed Opportunities for Economic and Social Benefits	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.
Potential Sale or Redevelopment by Private Entities	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.
Increased Costs for Future Repairs and Restoration	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.
Reduced Accessibility for Arts and Community Groups	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.
Loss of Arts Sector Talent and Opportunities	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:

Cultural Benefits	<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>
Social Benefits	<p>Greater inclusivity through improved accessibility and more diverse programming capability.</p> <p>Improvements to Dunedin's streetscape by redeveloping key heritage buildings.</p>
Economic Benefits	<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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