

ITEM 11.3	CREATIVE ART SPACE NORTH - SITE LOCATION
REPORTING MANAGER	EXECUTIVE MANAGER COMMUNITY, ARTS AND CULTURE
TRIM FILE REF	2018/746650
ATTACHMENTS	NIL

SUMMARY

PURPOSE

To report to Council on the outcomes of the Creative Art Space North Stage 2 community engagement and recommend that Council proceed with the repurposing of the Mona Vale Civic Centre into a creative arts space, and the refurbishment of the downstairs area of the Avalon Golf Club into artist studio and teaching space.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The concept of a creative arts space in the northern end of the local government area has received high levels of engagement, interest and support from the community during all stages of the project. It addresses Goal 10 and associated strategies in the Community Strategic Plan (Shape 2028):

Goal 10: Our community is stimulated through a diverse range of cultural and creative activities and events

Strategies: a. Support the arts and creative communities

b. Expand cultural events and creative opportunities, including safe nightlife opportunities

Two potential sites, the Avalon Annexe and the Avalon Golf Club House, were placed on public exhibition in October 2018, receiving 214 submissions. The submissions primarily related to the potential loss of multi-purpose community space at the Avalon Annexe, rather than comments on which site is the best location for a creative space, with 80% of submissions in support of the Avalon Golf Club House.

Since the initial investigation into suitable site options, a unique opportunity to utilise a large part of the Mona Vale Civic Centre for a creative arts space has been identified. As Mona Vale was considered a strong location throughout the community engagement, it is recommended that the Creative Space North be located within the Mona Vale Civic Centre. It meets all of the identified user and location requirements for a successful arts centre.

While it is not recommended to proceed with the conversion of the Avalon Golf Club House into a creative arts centre, there is an short term opportunity to refurbish the downstairs area to deliver two multipurpose artist studios and teaching space. This will provide a minimum of four new artists' studios in the north of the Local Government Area. These studios will be allocated on an annual basis to different artists per year, and use of the space will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the space meets community needs and expectations.

RECOMMENDATION OF GENERAL MANAGER PLANNING PLACE AND COMMUNITY

That:

- A. Council support the refurbishment of the Avalon Golf Club House lower ground floor, within the existing footprint, to include artist's studios and teaching space.
 - B. Council support the repurposing of the Mona Vale Civic Centre into a creative arts space, including exhibition, artists' studios and teaching space.
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REPORT

BACKGROUND

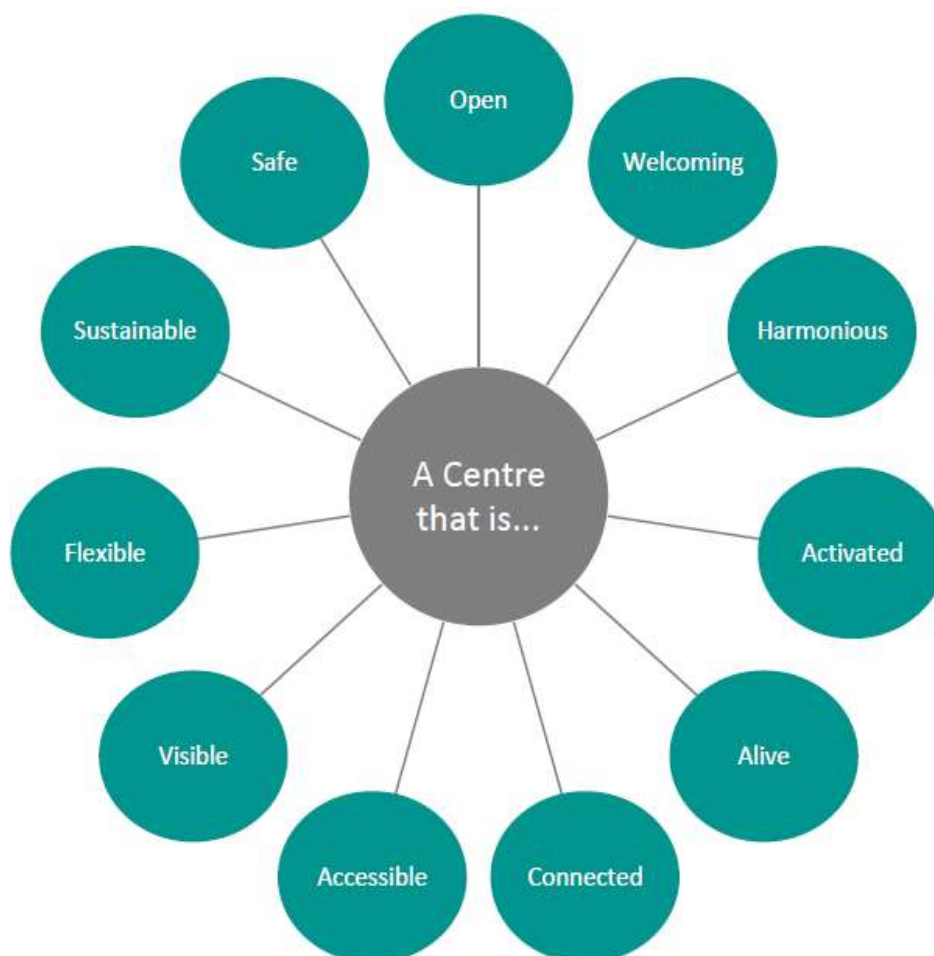
At its meeting on 27 June 2017 Council resolved to allocate \$1million from the Merger Savings Fund to establish a Creative Space in the northern part of the Local Government Area (Administrator’s Minute 09/2017).

Stage 1 of the community engagement (August 2017 to March 2018) sought general feedback on the proposal of establishing a creative space, as well as invited input from an Advisory Group that identified key user and location requirements for a successful creative arts space. The overwhelming responses from more than 650 people during this stage were in support of a new creative arts space in the northern area of the Local Government Area.

Key user requirements

The community identified the following essential user requirements; exhibition space, artist studios; teaching space and communal space. Desirable user requirements included; accessible toilet/s, additional toilets (for exhibition openings), café/kiosk, outdoor/deck area, the potential for surrounding space activation and a quality, attractive building. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Workshop participants used the following terms when describing what their ideal centre would be.



Location Criteria

In terms of the optimum location for exhibition space, the Advisory Group highlighted the need for a central location and emphasised that key success criteria for an exhibition space include visibility, pedestrian traffic, public access, 'reason to stay' (e.g. café) and general ambience of the place.

Key requirements:

- Visibility
- Accessibility
- Supporting Facilities
- Unique
- Size
- Flexible outdoor space
- Attractive location/ visual appeal
- Fit-for-purpose
- Reason to stay
- Council's ownership and control
- Adequate parking
- Vehicle access for delivery of work.

Options

Based on the key user and location criteria, five site options were identified, assessed and initial concept designs and costings developed. These assessments found that it would not be possible to satisfactorily meet identified user requirements within the original budget of \$1 million. The options were:

- Option 1a: Avalon Annexe Building (reduced scope, \$1.25 million)*
- Option 1b: Avalon Annexe Building (full scope, \$2.1 million)*
- Option 2a: Avalon Golf Club House (reduced scope, \$1.22 million)*
- Option 2b: Avalon Golf Club House (full scope, \$2 million)*
- Option 3: Mona Vale/Avalon Bowling Green sites (greenfield development, \$3.5 million+)*.

**These initial estimates have recently been revised to include works to surrounding areas (e.g. fit out, footpaths, landscaping) as well as updated contingencies to take into account staff capitalisation, building work contingency, scope variation, additional items and building cost escalation since project inception. This has increased all of the above estimates by over \$650K, with any works at the Avalon Annexe or Golf Club House now estimated to be between \$1.8M and \$3M.*

The five options above were reported to Council on 25 September 2018, where it was resolved:

- A. Council endorse the exhibition of the draft concept design for the proposed Creative Art Space North at the site of the Annexe Building, Dunbar Park, Avalon
- B. Council investigate additional funding sources to enable the construction of the full scope of the proposed Creative Art Space North
- C. Council also consult on the Avalon Golf Club.

Option 3: Mona Vale/Avalon Bowling Green sites were eliminated as both of these green field sites were not supported for development. At that time there were no other greenfield sites or existing property available to be repurposed in Mona Vale.

Since September 2018 an opportunity has arisen regarding the Mona Vale Civic Centre site. This location has now been revisited and assessed against the user requirements and location criteria, and it meets all of the desired needs and uses.

CONSULTATION

In total, 214 community members provided valuable feedback on the Stage 2 consultation on site options.

Table 1: Stage 2 engagement activities and participation

Engagement activity	Date	Objective	Participation
'Your Say' Community engagement webpage	13 Oct – 18 Nov 2018	Seek feedback from the community	182* submissions
Pop up engagement information stalls	25 Oct 2018 3 Nov 2018	Provide information and engagement opportunities, seek feedback from the community	Avalon Recreation Centre – 30 attendees Avalon Golf Club House – 60 attendees
Email, telephone and free form submissions	13 Oct – 18 Nov 2018	Seek feedback from the community	Over 25* submissions received
Petition (1)		Community Feedback	88 signatures**

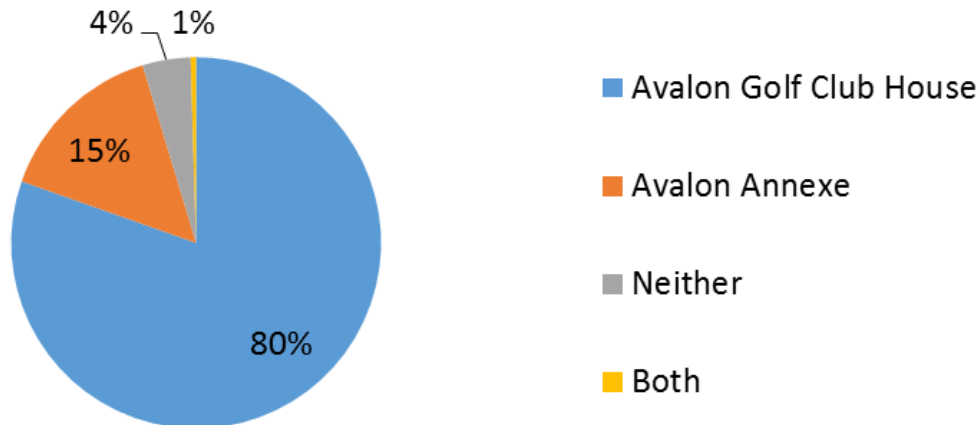
**Note that some submissions were duplicates with the same comments from the same applicant received multiple times, sometimes in differing formats e.g. Your Say, letter and email. These were counted as a single submission.*

***Petition treated as a single submission*

Community engagement key findings

The submissions were overwhelmingly in support of locating the creative space at the Avalon Golf Club House, as shown in the **Figure 2** below.

Figure 2: Submission response to presented options (n=214)



The community engagement found that there is a strong desire for establishing a new creative space in the northern part of the Local Government Area, but not at the expense of existing facilities and opportunities. In general terms, the community sentiment related more to the potential loss of multi-purpose community space at the Avalon Annexe than to what is the best location for a creative space. The existing users of the Avalon Golf Club would also like to see the Club House site reinvigorated, as it is recognised that it is currently under-utilised. These are the key drivers that identified the Avalon Golf Club House as the preferred site by the community, over the Annexe.

Key findings from the community engagement include:

- Strong community concern has been expressed over the potential loss of multi-purpose community space at the Avalon Annexe and the need to relocate existing users should the creative space be located there. In particular, concerns were raised over the difficulties in relocating tap dancers, who are current users of the Annexe.
- Of the 15% of submissions supporting the Annexe site, the main reason was around location, with close proximity to the town centre and good visual and pedestrian access. This reflected the Advisory Groups advice that good access, visibility and pedestrian flow were essential components to a successful art centre, particularly for the exhibition space component. In particular, concerns were raised over the relatively more remote location and low visibility of the Avalon Golf Club House, in relation to the viability of an exhibition space.
- Existing users of the Golf Club are largely supportive of locating some form of creative space at Avalon Golf Club House, as they welcome the activation and increased visitation to a site that is currently underutilised. This was conditional on being provided with space and facilities to continue playing golf and have an area suitable for golfing social functions.
- There was a desire to maintain and enhance the heritage values of the Golf Club House.

Proposal

From research and the consultation analysis, the Avalon Golf Club House is recommended for the location of artist's studios and some teaching space on the ground floor level only. This location has overwhelming community support and it meets some user requirements. The Avalon Golf Club House location is not considered suitable for an exhibition space due to its relatively isolated location and low pedestrian traffic.

Each studio will be allocated on an annual basis and all creative/ studio spaces will undergo regular review to ensure that they are meeting community needs and expectations.

Since these previous investigations and community consultation took place, the Mona Vale Civic Centre has become available for consideration. The previous plans to relocate staff to this location have been revisited and the existing Customer Service Centre will move to the rear of the building, at ground level, while maintaining the Call Centre operations in the building.

Throughout the community engagement for the project Mona Vale was considered a strong location and the Mona Vale Civic Centre meets all of the communities desired criteria for an art space:

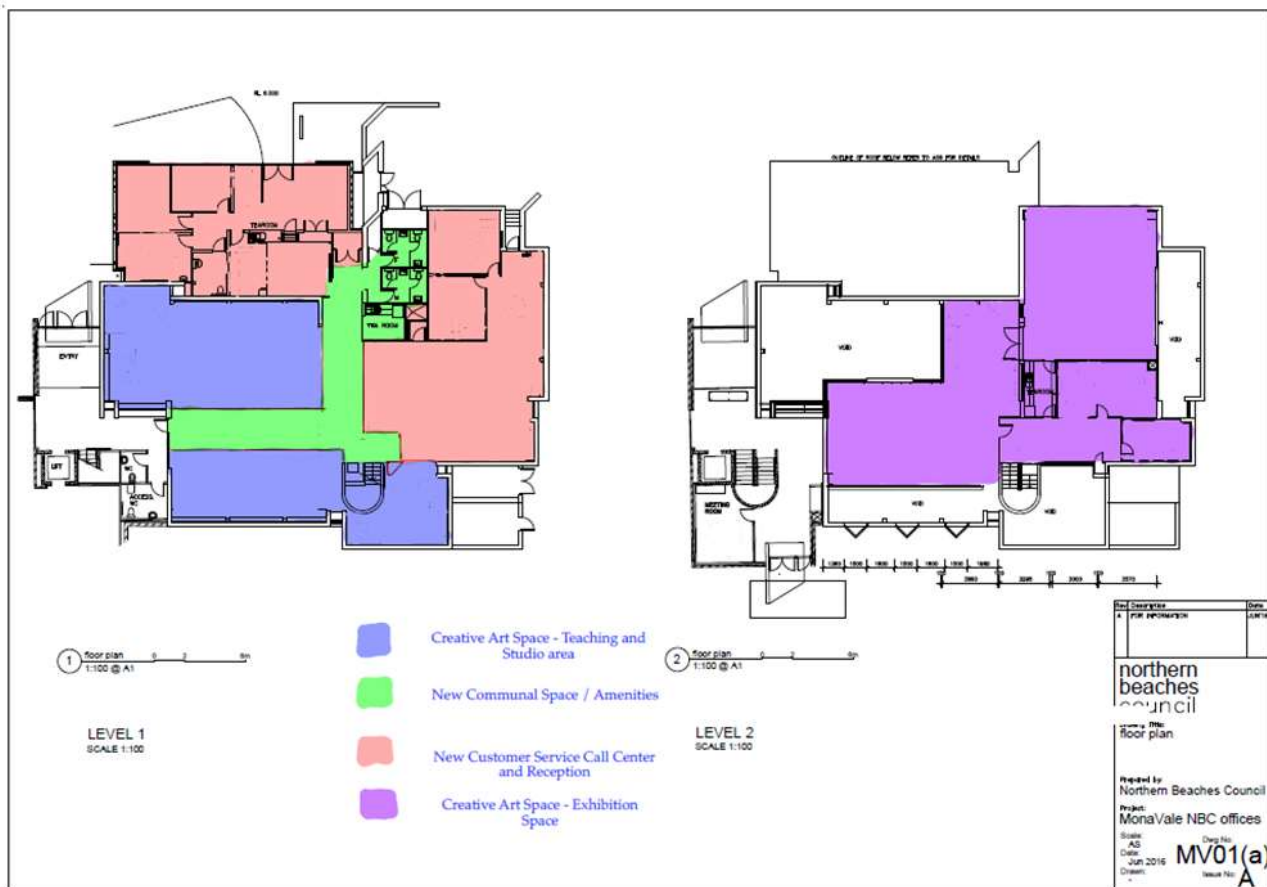
- It meets the intent of a creative space for all the required creative production opportunities, providing dedicated studio and teaching spaces, opportunities for outdoor sculptures, activations on the Village Green and a large dedicated exhibition space.
- The site would not require relocation of existing community users (with a potential knock-on effect to other facilities) or loss of multi-use community space, as with the Avalon Annexe.
- It will become an active arts hub in a central location, which is desired by the community.

A summary of the benefits of the Mona Vale Civic Centre as a creative arts space are:

- meets all of the identified desired criteria of an arts space
- meets desirable criteria for location
- accessible with north/south and western road network, good public transport and parking
- accessible by pedestrians and passers-by, with good foot traffic
- large flexible, open floor space, which can be adapted to desired uses
- opportunities for sustainable growth
- centralised location for access by the Northern Beaches community
- 'Reason to stay' with connection to existing cafes, shops, park, library, Mona Vale Memorial Hall, Council Customer Service.
- space for additional creative activations on adjoining land. e.g.: sculpture exhibitions, live performances.

Initial concepts indicate that Level 2 of the Mona Vale Civic Centre could be utilised for a large, flexible exhibition space, while Level 1 can be utilised for artists' studios and teaching space, along with the existing Customer Service Call Centre. See Figure 3 for a draft allocation of space.

Figure 3 – Mona Vale Civic Centre. Initial Concept of potential uses.



TIMING

Subject to Council endorsement the internal refurbishment at Avalon Golf Club House is envisaged to be carried out within the next 12 months.

A timeline for the redevelopment of the Mona Vale Civic Centre site is yet to be developed in detail, however it is envisaged that it will not commence construction until late 2020.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Indicative costings:

Mona Vale Civic Centre \$3.5- 4mill

Includes: large exhibition area, studios, teaching space, additional toilets, improved connectivity to other facilities (e.g. café), external refurbishment, air conditioning refurbishment (required regardless of future use).

Avalon Golf Club

\$260-300k (+additional \$165k if a lift is required)

Includes: Studios and shared space – downstairs area only

To date \$1million has been allocated from the Merger Savings Fund for the project. It is envisaged that the current budget will be more than sufficient to complete the Avalon Golf Club House refurbishment. The additional cost for the Mona Vale Civic Centre could be partly funded from programmed savings on future works and savings on relocation costs, in the order of \$260,000.

This would still leave a shortfall of approximately \$2.24 – 2.74 million that would need to be identified from other sources such as grants. Should the Mona Vale Space be the preferred option a further report will be provided to Council identifying funding sources.

The project will also incur ongoing maintenance, management, operational and depreciation costs that are not presently identified in the existing Operational Budget or Long Term Financial Plan.

Section B of the Council Resolution on 25 September 2018 regarding the investigation of additional funding sources has commenced. Initial investigations into grant funding indicate that Northern Beaches is outside the current CreateNSW grant program identified priority areas, and is therefore unlikely to be successful with funding applications.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A review of current access to community art spaces on the Northern Beaches identified that this project would fill a gap in the northern area of the Local Government Area. The Creative Art Space North will provide ongoing social benefits for the area through;

- Connection - providing an environment that is welcoming, a place where artists and the community can meet, create and view art
- Access - affordable rates, with equitable access for users.
- Enrichment – offering a diverse range of community activities.
- Stimulation - providing opportunity for programming to learn and experience art.
- Belonging - enhancing community identity and emphasising the unique characteristics of the Northern Beaches.

The Avalon Golf Club House building is currently under-utilised and it is likely that the proposal will have positive social impacts on the existing facility, the cafe and the golfers, drawing increased visitation and activation to the site.

The Mona Vale Civic Centre site is in the centre of Mona Vale and has connectivity to the town centre, library, Mona Vale Memorial Hall, cafés, bars, village green and local shops. There is huge potential for further artistic activation around the centre using these other assets, creating a vibrant creative heart for Mona Vale.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Avalon Golf Club House has recognised heritage values that will need to be considered.

There is a possibility that the Avalon Golf Club House building may contain asbestos, which will need to be dealt with under relevant guidelines.

GOVERNANCE AND RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The project is still at concept stage and it is not considered there are any unmanaged governance or risk issues.