



# MAKING CONNECTIONS

A VIBRANT CENTRAL  
CIVIC SPACE

**AUCKLAND  
DESIGN MANUAL**

TE PUKA WHAKATAIRANGA | A TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU

PARKS // CIVIC SPACE CASE STUDY

**Aotea Square**  
Auckland CBD, Auckland



# OVERVIEW

Our central city's civic space has been successfully upgraded with more greenery and modern conveniences, making it perfect for both events and everyday use.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Aotea Square is a 1.3ha civic square in the heart of the Auckland's central business district. Its name is derived from Motu Aotea, the Maori name for Great Barrier Island.

It was officially opened in 1979 by Sir Dove-Myer Robinson at the intersection of Grey's Ave and Queen Street. The square is strategically framed by key civic and cultural facilities such as the Town Hall and Aotea Centre, and was used for open-air concerts, gatherings, markets and political rallies.

The whole of Aotea Square (Town Hall site plus Aotea Square plus foot of Greys Ave) is a scheduled Maori Heritage Site known as Horotiu in the Auckland Council District Plan (Auckland City Central Section). The scheduled site surrounds of Auckland Town Hall partially overlap the square, which meant that a buffer area had to be respected in the new redevelopment designs. There are a number other interesting heritage and cultural items in the square, such as the Waharoa and bronze statues of Sir Dove Myer-Robinson, George Eden and Lord Auckland.

In October 2010, a major redevelopment of Aotea Square was completed. Changes included stronger connections with the street network and surrounding facilities, more green space and trees, greater amenity and expression of arts, and developing a sense of place. This redevelopment was very successful, bringing our central civic space to life once again.



Making Connections – Aotea Square is a vibrant central civic space.

# KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

## MAIN ENVIRONMENT MODULE CIVIC SPACE

## OTHER PARK ENVIRONMENTS INFORMAL RECREATION

## SITE AREA APPROX. 13,000M2

Elongated public square which sits on the corner of Queen St and Grey's Ave. Bordered on three sides by buildings with a significant frontage onto Queens St.

## KEY FEATURES

A multi use plaza space which supports markets, concerts, celebrations and public demonstrations

Sculptures celebrating civic figures and cultural identity

Interpretive and wayfinding signage

An integrated sound system

A large quantity of formal and informal seating

Large lawn terraces and shade trees

Active edges including theatres, conference facilities and cafes

Interface with scheduled heritage buildings

## LESSONS LEARNT

Desire lines – Additional maintenance works were required because people were cutting across planting areas. Better planning for desire lines may have helped avoid this.

Seating – The lack of paving around the formal seating within lawn areas has resulted in heavy wear and loss of grass around these furniture items.

Active edges - Significant changes in ground level along key edges of the space were treated with stairs or terracing.

Lack of clear vision - Skateboarders were designed into the space and later designed out. Articulate and demonstrate a clear vision from the beginning to avoid costly retrofits.

## LOCATION

**CORNER OF QUEEN STREET AND  
GREY'S AVENUE**

DESIGNER

**TED SMYTH & ASSOCIATES AND ROB  
BARNETT**

# CONNECT PLACES

1. Wayfinding signage provides clear information around and through the square.
2. The wayfinding signage and strong path networks provide directions and easy access to key civic buildings in and around the square.

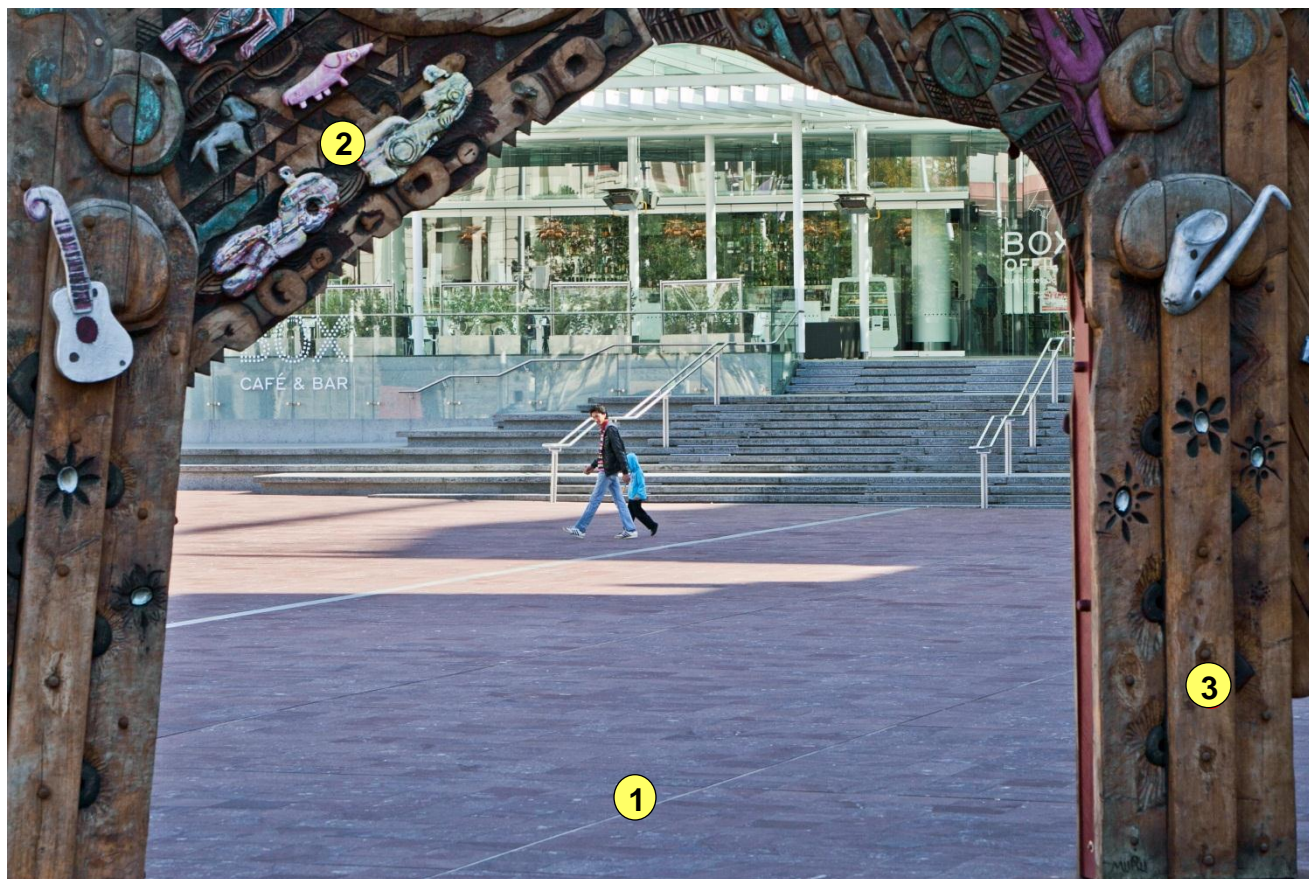


Aotea Square provides a good deal of wayfinding signage to help people find their destination quickly and easily.



# TREASURE OUR MAORI IDENTITY

1. This work provides a ceremonial entrance way into the space which can be used for special occasions. However, its placement does present some challenges for events because a 4m separation buffer needs to be maintained at all times.
2. This beautiful artwork called 'Waharoa' (ceremonial gateway) was successfully refurbished and integrated into the square. This piece celebrates Maori culture in the heart of the city, creating a welcoming sense of arrival and a strong sense of place.
3. Refurbishment was required as the macrocarpa timber which formed the structure had deteriorated significantly over 10 years. It was replaced with a durable hardwood timber and a reinforced steel skeleton was installed to prevent leaning. This highlights the importance of using durable materials for everything installed in civic environments.



This Maori artwork called Waharoa creates a distinct sense of arrival and sense of place, connecting people to Auckland's point of difference in the world.

# UTILISE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS

1. A clear and easy connection with easy to traverse gradients was formed along the edge of the town square building. The bollards are moveable to allow vehicle access for events.
2. This area is an inviting space for small, informal events with steps doubling as seats, or the top flat area serving as a stage.
3. An access stairwell and lift to the underground civic car park is located along this walkway.

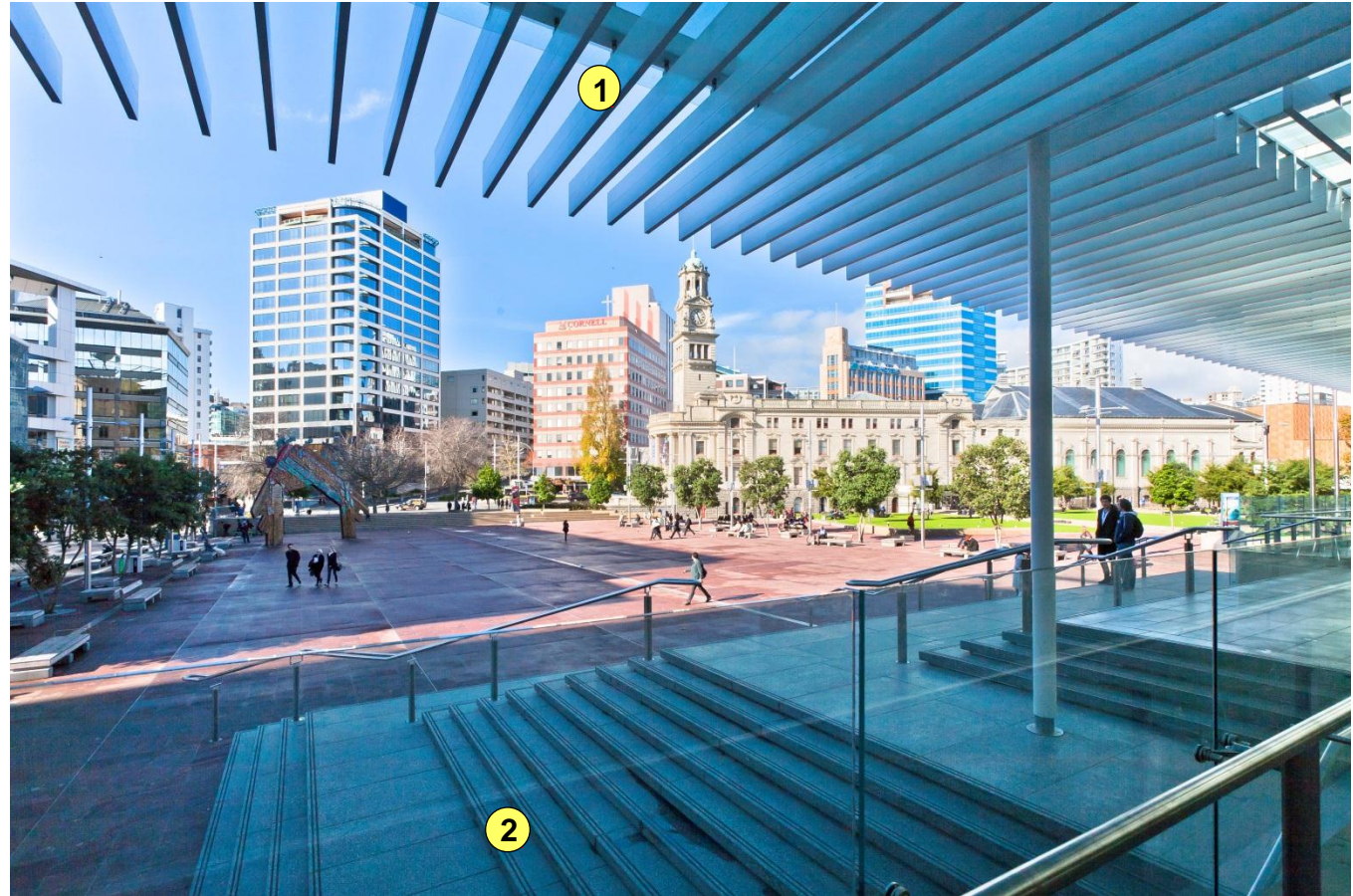


Aotea Square has been well-designed to cater for events. These bollards are moveable, allowing vehicles to gain access for event set up, but restricting access to make the space safe for pedestrians at all other times.



# CONNECT PLACES

1. A textured overhead canopy provides a pleasant, covered connection through to Wellesley Street West, sheltering those beneath from the rain.
2. Significant ground level changes are found across this site. This previously poorly connected and inactive edge along the Aotea Centre frontage was improved with the integration of broad terrace steps.



The way The Edge interacts with Aotea Square has been redesigned to allow people to use the stairs as informal seats, revitalising a previously inactive edge.

# TREASURE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1. These trees create inner-city habitats which can support our native birds.
2. This design is doing it's best to treasure Auckland's natural environment by planting of a number of indigenous trees, including: pohutukawa, puriri, karaka, kauri and nikau.
3. Two types of trees are used in the space: long term specimen trees in the lawn areas, and medium term pohutukawa trees in the plaza space which have an expected life of 15-20 years.



Native trees have been used in Aotea Square to provide habitat for inner city birds and connect the square with our region's rich natural environment.



# UTILISE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS

1. This large central area was widened and levelled in the 2010 redevelopment, enabling crowds of up to 20,000 to gather comfortably.
2. Terraces step down towards the main paved area for people to relax and watch events, or enjoy a lunch break in the fringe areas.
3. Trees were laid out to provide clear views for crowds at major public events.
4. The layout of the terraces is designed to reflect the architectural lines of the Auckland Town Hall. And also provides 3 different areas which can be used for a variety of events, or gatherings.



Aotea Square is a great place for events. There are a variety of large and small bookable spaces, and a raised entrance area which acts as an informal stage.

# UTILISE OUR RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY

1. Aztec Red granite paving is used throughout the square, referring to Auckland's volcanic character, creating a sense of place. However, the pavers are not particularly durable and will soon need to be replaced.
2. By using removable tree pits, and choosing their location carefully (due to construction constraints due to the car park below), the designers successfully incorporated shade, shelter and greenery into a previously barren space.
3. Furniture elements have been successfully consolidated onto light poles, which also host lighting, banners, CCTV and speakers. This is highly successful and reduces the visual clutter in the space.



By using a single pole to host CCTV cameras, banners, lights, and a sound system, the designers have reduced clutter in the space and saved the need for additional poles.



# TREASURE OUR HERITAGE

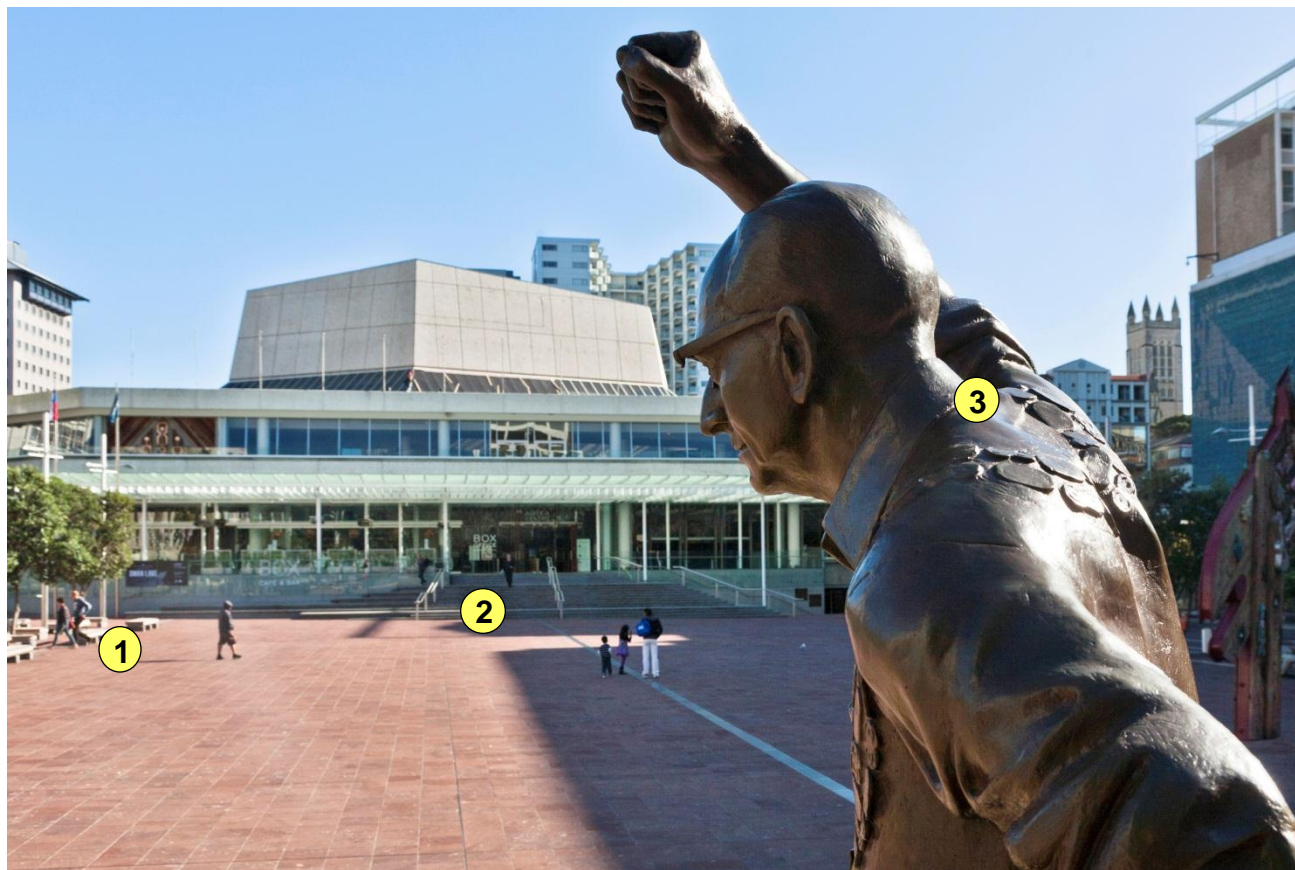
1. Steps surrounding the space double as seats. This particular spot adjacent to Queen St works well as an informal stage for community groups with no budget for events.
2. Trees were planted to maximise long term shade without inhibiting sightlines during events.
3. LED lighting was used throughout this space including the under lighting of stairs. LEDs reduce the overall energy costs and have longer life spans than regular luminaries.



Several large trees at the Queen Street entrance were retained in the design, ensuring that the revitalised space still connects with its history.

## UTILISE OUR RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY,

1. Tree pit design in these paved areas was based on the use of structural cells with integrated irrigation and aeration systems. Removable lids ensure any trees which are damaged or need replacing can be easily removed with minimal disruption to surrounding paving.
2. The new car park roof installed as the platform for this space was raised by around one metre, which improved connections with surrounding buildings.
3. A sculpture of former Auckland mayor, Sir Dove-Myer Robinson overlooks the space to recall and celebrate the city's history.

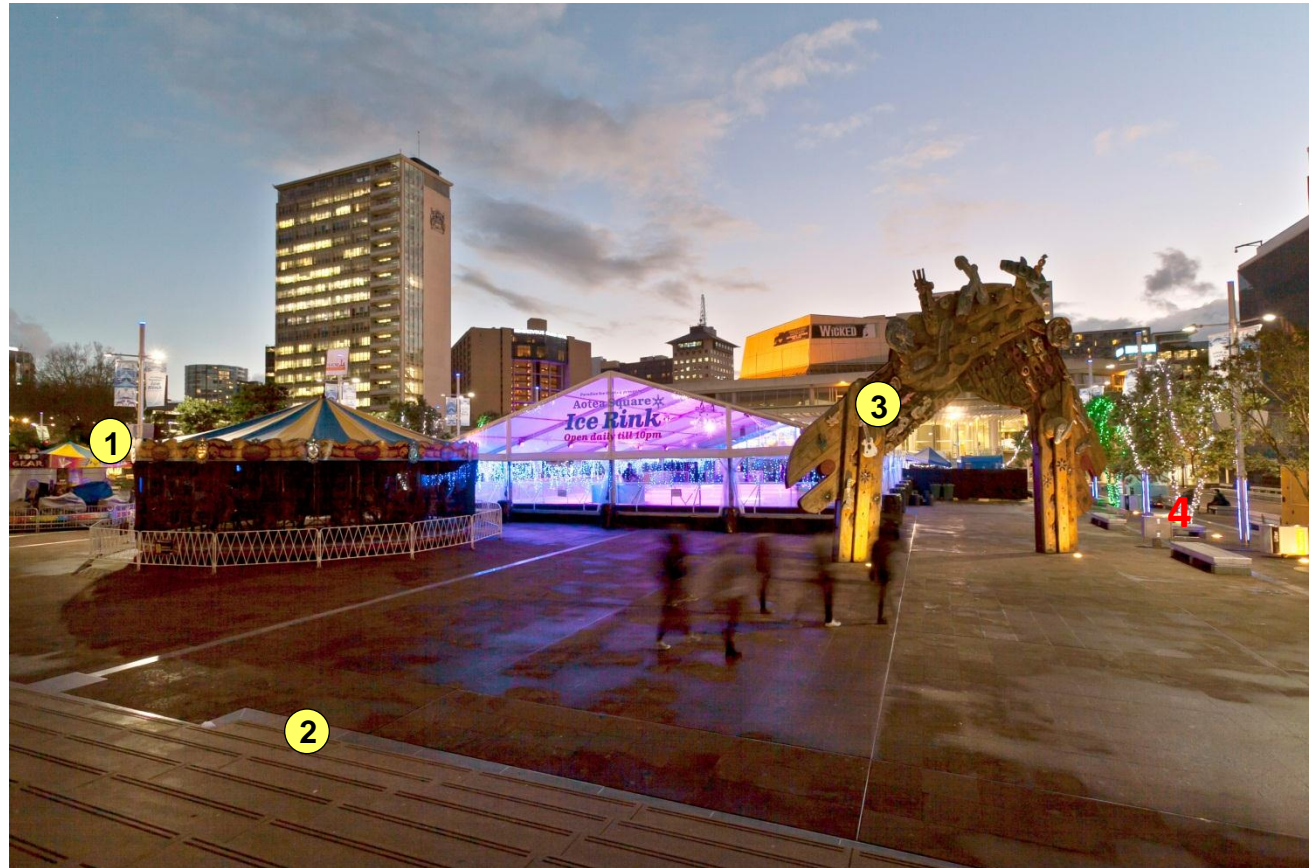


Puhinui provides a fun, creative and stimulating environment for all ages to enjoy, with the required amenities and facilities to support a range of uses. It also incorporates artworks and can host events big and small.



# ENJOY MORE USE & A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES

1. The linear layout of the space, with fixed elements along the edges, provides a structure for stalls to be placed along this edge. Power connections and other facilities are located through these edge areas.
2. Wide areas of steps around the edges of the space provide informal seating as well as stage opportunities.
3. The 'Waharoa' sculpture provides an entranceway to events that occur within the space.
4. Fixed elements in this space, including trees, light poles and seating, are confined to the edges to allow for multiple events and festivals.



Inviting lighting and events bring the space to life, inviting more people to visit and enjoy this inner city open space.

# AUCKLAND DESIGN MANUAL

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The Auckland Design Manual provides practical advice, best practice processes and detailed design guidance to enable us to design and build the world's most liveable city. The manual will enable us all to make informed choices, to build houses and develop our streets and neighbourhoods to not only look good but to ensure they are built to last, sustainable and give the best return on investment.

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