The Ōtāhuhu Station carves out new territory amongst Auckland’s public buildings, and successfully utilises Māori design principles to connect to the environment, culture and heritage of the area.

It demonstrates Auckland Transport’s vision for a transport network that seamlessly connects bus and train services, and features improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT TYPE
PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE

SITE AREA
13,000M²

ROHE / LOCATION
27-33 WALMSLEY ROAD,
ŌTĀHUHU,
TĀMAKI MAKARAU (Auckland)

YEAR COMPLETED
2016

PROJECT DURATION
3 YEARS
(From conception to completion of final construction stage)

PRICE BAND
$28 MILLION

ARCHITECT
JASMAX

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
JASMAX

MANA WHENUA INVOLVED IN PROJECT
NGĀTI MARU
NGĀTI TAMAROH
TE AHIWARU / MAKARAU
NGĀTI TE ATA WAIHOA
TE AKITAI WAIHOA
NGĀTI WHATUA O ORĀKEI
NGĀTI POA
NGĀTI TAMATERĀ
NGAI TAI KI TĀMAKI
NGĀTI WHANAUANGA

CLIENT/DEVELOPER
AUCKLAND TRANSPORT

MAIN CONTRACTOR
DOWNER GROUP

LANDSCAPING
DOWNER GROUP

IWI FACILITATORS
DESIGN TRIBE
AUCKLAND TRANSPORT

ARTISTS
TESSA HARRIS (NGĀI TAI KI TĀMAKI)
- PURAPURA WHETŪ MAHAU (LIGHT FEATURE AT ENTRY)
- ARAMOANA (GLASS SHADING DETAIL)
MAUNGA MAUMARUA

GRAHAM TIPENE (NGĀTI WHĀTUA O ŌRĀKEI)
- MAUNGA MOANA (PRECAST CONCRETE FAÇADE DETAIL)
Ōtāhuhu occupies a 1.2km wide strip between the Waitematā and Manukau Harbours. As the narrowest point on the Auckland isthmus, it is a place of geographical and cultural significance.

Ōtāhuhu was traditionally renowned for its many waka portages, particularly Te Tō Waka / Te Tāhuhutanga o te Waka Tainui. With the advent of land-based transport, it developed into the main north to south land-based transport and trade route.

Ōtāhuhu was identified by Auckland Transport as an opportune location to provide a high quality transport interchange, that offered direct connections between bus and rail networks, and better linking public transport between South and Central Auckland.

The priority for this project was to create a public facility that not only performed functionally, but enhanced and connected with the local environment and acknowledged the area’s heritage.

Three key themes were identified by Mana Whenua kaitiaki, and were incorporated throughout the design of the proposed facility: waka and portage, maunga, and navigation.
Early in the project 13 Mana Whenua groups within Tāmaki Makaurau were formally notified and invited to collaborate in the project. Ten responses were received, from Ngāti Maru, Ngāti Tamaoho, Te Ahiwaru Makaurau, Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua, Te Akitai Waiohua, Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei, Ngāti Paoa, Ngāti Tamaterā, Ngāi Tai Ki Tāmaki and Ngāti Whanaunga.

A three year engagement process then followed, including regular hui between nominated Mana Whenua kaitiaki, Auckland Transport iwi facilitators, and the project team. Early engagement and a commitment to open and honest kōrero by all parties helped establish a shared understanding.

As a result of this engagement Mana Whenua kaitiaki were successfully able to convey creative concepts and narratives to the design team. In turn, the design team were able to communicate architectural principles, opportunities and constraints back to the Mana Whenua kaitiaki.

This open exchange process has resulted in a clear and meaningful Māori design influence that extends beyond the token or ornamental.
MANA WHENUA ENGAGEMENT: DESIGN PROCESS

Part way through the design process, the project team adopted the Te Aranga Māori Design Principles. The principles were highly useful as they provided both practical guidance for enhancing design, and a clear way for the project team to communicate their design thinking back to Mana Whenua.

Critical in the development of the project’s art components was an agreement with Mana Whenua to establish an ‘Iwi Design Sub-Committee’. This committee comprised of the mandated Mana Whenua representatives, project designers, AT urban design specialists and project managers.

The group were to weave together the interests of Mana Whenua, the budget and scope requirements of the client, architectural practicalities, and creative expression. Tikanga Māori was observed across the life of the project.

The subcommittee met once a week with the project team to progress the development of iwi artwork within the project. Attendance was open to all Mana Whenua, and progress was reported back to the broader Mana Whenua kaitiaki group and discussed through hui held on a monthly basis.

The forum was empowering for all involved and promoted the sharing of expertise and cross-pollination of creative and cultural ideas within the art, architecture and landscaping. The result delivered a landmark building and landscape, and a legacy for future generations of Tāmaki Makaurau.
**MANA WHENUA DESIGN THEMES**

**Waka & Portage Theme**
This theme was expressed at multiple levels, from the orientation of the station concourse to the design details of the building and landscape. An east-west axis was established for the station concourse, orienting it in line with historic waka portage routes between the Tāmaki River and Manukau Harbour. The architectural form of the station is representative of a waka, with angled ends marking the tauihu (bow) and taurapa (stern). Additionally, rango paving on the ground directs users through the landscape and into the building, and references the ‘skids’ used to haul waka over land.

**Maunga Theme**
Reference to Maunga (mountains) was expressed most prominently in the concrete façade detailing on the face of the building, and the field of ‘Maunga Maumahara’, carved kōwhatu (basalt boulders) that denote the location of local maunga.

Both of these works speak to the volcanic cones which form an integral part of the landscape and history of Auckland, and pay homage to the maunga that have been lost to quarrying and development.

**Navigation Theme**
The theme of navigation is referenced throughout the station in paving patterns and specific integrated artworks. Traditional navigation relied upon whetū (stars) and other natural phenomenon to guide the way. The design incorporates whetū into the mahau (threshold) of the station, providing a beacon for the safe arrival and departure of people using the station.

Concrete paving inlays also reflect traditional maps used by tūpuna Māori for navigation, across Te Moana Nui A Kiwa to Aotearoa. Directional paving lines point to the Maunga Maumahara, carved basalt boulders flanking the main path to the concourse.
MAHI TOI CREATIVE FEATURES

There were four major artworks embedded into the project; the Purapura Whetū Mahau (light feature at entry), Aramoana (glass shading detail) and Maunga Moana (precast concrete façade detail).

Purapura Whetū: Mahau
The Purapura Whetū lighting design alludes to traditional tukutuku patterning, and references the many people populating this region - past and present, particularly Ngā mate kua whetūrangitia - loved ones passed on.

The pattern used represents the whetū (stars), used by Māori for navigation, for directional guidance and confirming place. With the incorporation of a mahau (veranda) form of traditional Māori architecture, Purapura Whetū is used in this entrance as a welcoming pattern to express manaakitanga (hospitality).

Aramoana: Windows
Aramoana is a tāniko-inspired pattern running through the building. This pattern references the waterways, the ebb and flow of tides (ta timu tai pari), and the journeys across the isthmus. Specifically, the patterning references the waka that have been through this portage across time.

The triangular form represents different whānau, hapū and iwi that have occupied this isthmus. A contemporary reading of the pattern acknowledges the future travellers that will make their journey through Ōtāhuhu.

Beyond being an artwork, the patterning perform a specific function within the building. It is made from ceramic frits embedded within the concourse glazing, and has been calculated to manage shading and environmental control.
MAHI TOI CREATIVE FEATURES

Maunga Moana Concrete Façade
The designs on the main building facade were inspired by traditional Pūhoro design. Pūhoro were often carved into the front underside of waka to help them move faster across the water and have been interpreted to represent Te Manukanuka o Hoturoa (Manukau Harbour) and Te Tai O Rehua (Tasman Sea) to the west, and to the east Wai Mokoia, Tāmaki River, Te Waitematā (the Waitematā Harbour), Tikapa Moana (the Hauraki Gulf) and beyond to Moana Nui A Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean).

The artwork also speaks to the many volcanic cones in the Auckland area, which are an integral part of the landscape and history of the isthmus and beyond.

Maunga Maumahara Carved Boulders
Arrival and departure from the station navigates through the field of ‘Maunga Maumahara’, or memorial markers, which are carved kōwhatu (basalt boulders) that denote the location of local maunga. These allow travellers to locate themselves in relation to the whenua (land) and cultural landscape. The maumahara also commemorate maunga which have been lost to quarrying with two of the carved kōwhatu, Te Apunga o Tainui (McLennan Hills) and Matukureia (McLaughlins Mountain), expressing a silhouette of the quarried peaks.

Interpretive Video: Ahi Kā
The success of the integrated narratives and artwork led to Auckland Transport requesting interpretive signage to explain the artworks. As a result, an audio visual reference display was developed in consultation with contributing Mana Whenua artists, and plays in the main pedestrian atrium area.

This video helps the public to identify with and understand the various elements and Mana Whenua narratives that are present in the design.

The interpretive signage and short audio visual presentation uses spoken taunui tribal dialect for the welcome haka pōwhiri – ‘Tooia Mai’.

View of the Maunga Moana Concrete Façade - Graham Tipene (Ngāti Whātua O Ōrākei).

Maunga Maumahara -Tessa Harris (Ngāi Tai Ki Tāmaki).
RESTORING MAURI

From early colonial settlement to the present day, Ōtāhuhu been an area of primarily industrial activity. Successive waves of industry have degraded both the land and surrounding waterways. Bordered by warehouses and container storage lots, this development provides an opportunity to act as a catalyst for change for Ōtāhuhu.

From the outset Mana Whenua groups stated a strong desire to reinstate the mauri of this highly degraded site. This formed the basis for the landscape strategies, including:

• The use of impermeable pavement over a large proportion of the site. This reduces stormwater ground soakage and the risk of pollutants and toxins from contaminated soils below moving into ground water or nearby streams or harbours. All stormwater is instead treated through rain gardens and an on-site water treatment pond, which ensures discharged stormwater quality exceeds minimum Auckland Council standards.

• An ecological and cultural planting strategy that created different planted areas including wetland planting, an urban forest, native groundcovers and plants known for rongoa (healing) properties. Planting has been designed in collaboration with Mana Whenua, and was peer reviewed by a Mana Whenua appointed specialist.

• The inclusion of 10 large specimen multi-stemmed pohutakawa.

• A preference for eco-sourced plant stock. The landscape team worked closely with a Mana Whenua nursery to enable this.

Restoring mauri through native planting and other landscape strategies was an important consideration for this project.
WHAKAPAPA

Accurately and respectfully representing whakapapa for the site was a critical part of the design process.

An important consideration was to allow enough time for Mana Whenua representatives to propose, review, and debate the list of surrounding Maunga that were to be referenced in the ‘Maunga Maumahara’ sculptures. This list was then cross-checked by the Tūpuna Maunga Authority to ensure the that appropriate spellings and dialect was used.

It was a conscious decision to include both the Māori and English names for the Maunga within the Maumahara sculptures. This was done in order to increase public awareness of Māori ingoa (names) of well-known local maunga.

Additionally, the station signage incorporates macrons for all traditional names, which helps to encourage the correct pronunciation.

Both Māori and English names were included to increase awareness of Māori names for well-known features of the landscape.
LESSONS LEARNED

Ōtāhuhu Station demonstrates the value of meaningful engagement with Mana Whenua across the life of a project. This engagement enabled the establishment of key values and narratives from the outset, and has resulted in a strong sense of place and belonging in the final design outcome that would not have emerged without this engagement.

**Early, Open, and Ongoing Engagement with Mana Whenua**
Right from the outset, the project team, client, and Mana Whenua representatives agreed on a policy of openness and honesty that allowed for transparent and informed discussion between all parties. Additionally, Auckland Transport engaged an iwi design specialist to facilitate at hui, to ensure understanding of cultural protocol and project design constraints. This was pivotal to the success of this kōrero, as it helped to get everyone on the same page from the beginning.

The forum of the ‘Iwi Design Sub-Committee’ was particularly effective in shaping the project’s design.

**Integrating Māori Design into the Function of the Building**
One of the most successful aspects of this development was the way in which Māori Design Principles informed the function of the building. By ensuring that artwork was integrated into the building rather than a decorative overlay, the risk of it being value-engineered out of the design was minimised.

**The Importance of Time**
The design team spent additional time at the beginning of the project working with Mana Whenua and iwi facilitators, who helped to guide the tikanga during the initial discussions. This meant that the project team were able to develop a really strong brief, with narratives established by Mana Whenua interwoven through the entire design.

Though the process might have taken longer, the built outcome was much more robust than it might otherwise have been. Though the timeframes were tight for the project, the process was never rushed, and this enabled better outcomes overall.

The landscaping incorporates native planting and seating designs that reference the significance of the waka to the area.
The Auckland Design Manual is a fantastic free resource that’s been created to help you through your design concept and development phase. It’s a practical guide that sits alongside the Unitary Plan. If the Unitary Plan is your rule book, think of the Design Manual as your how to guide - helping you to visualise what you can build in Auckland.

The Design Manual will help you to avoid expensive mistakes by giving you the information you need up front, so that you are well-informed and know how to ask the right questions.

The Design Manual can support you at the following key stages in your development process:

- Inspiration for what you could build on your site
- Understanding the rules
- Writing your brief
- Developing a design
- Hiring your design and build team

Go to aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz to find out more