

# TE WĀNANGA

PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

AUCKLAND  
DESIGN MANUAL  
TE PUKA WHAKATAIRANGA | A TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU

Isthmus.

DESIGN THINKING // MĀORI DESIGN CASE STUDY

Downtown, Tāmaki Makaurau

# OVERVIEW

**Te Wānanga - a new Tāmaki Makaurau public space at the meeting point of Te Waitematā and the City Centre.**

Located at the waterline of the Downtown ferry basin, Te Wānanga is a significant new public space that forms a unique and innovative coastal connection between whenua (land), moana (sea/harbour) and tāngata (people).

More than simply a pleasant place to gather and move through, Te Wānanga has a strong and innovative design focus on improving land-based and marine-based ecological health.

The name Te Wānanga (see page 3) has been provided by Mana Whenua and conveys aspirations for a place for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities to come together, to enjoy, to share and to learn.

Te Wānanga is a design collaboration between Mana Whenua, Auckland Council, Auckland Transport and a collection of local design firms.

This collaborative design process strengthened and elevated design outcomes to deliver a project that expresses local identity, culture and history that reflects Tāmaki Makaurau and the downtown area.



*Impression of Te Wānanga (Isthmus)*

# KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT TYPE  
**PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

ROHE / LOCATION  
**QUAY STREET  
DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT  
TĀMAKI MAKAUROU**

MANA WHENUA  
**NGĀTI WHĀTUA ŌRĀKEI  
NGĀTI WHĀTUA KI KAIPARA  
NGĀTI WHĀTUA RUNANGA  
TE PATUKIRIKIRI  
NGĀTI TE ATA WAIOHUA  
TE AHIWARU  
NGAATI WHANAUNGA  
NGAI TAI KI TAMAKI  
NGĀTI MARU  
TE ĀKITAI WAIOHUA  
NGĀTI TAMAHOHO**

KĀHUI KAIARATAKI - MANA WHENUA  
SPECIALISTS  
**TESSA HARRIS**  
(Ngai Tai Ki Tāmaki)  
**REUBEN KIRKWOOD**  
(Ngai Tai Ki Tāmaki)  
**RICHELLE KAHUI-MCCONNELL**  
(Ngāti Maniapoto)  
**CHARMAINE BAILLIE**  
(Ngāti Whātua/Te Uri o Hau)  
**JARROD WALKER**  
(Ngāpuhi)

CLIENT  
**AUCKLAND COUNCIL  
AUCKLAND TRANSPORT**

FUNDING  
**AUCKLAND COUNCIL THROUGH LONG  
TERM PLAN**

YEAR COMPLETED  
**2021**

PROJECT DURATION  
**10 YEARS** (funding, planning,  
approvals, resourcing)  
**3 YEARS** (design)  
**1 YEAR** (construction)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE/  
URBAN DESIGN  
**ISTHMUS GROUP**

# PROJECT SUMMARY TE WĀNANGA

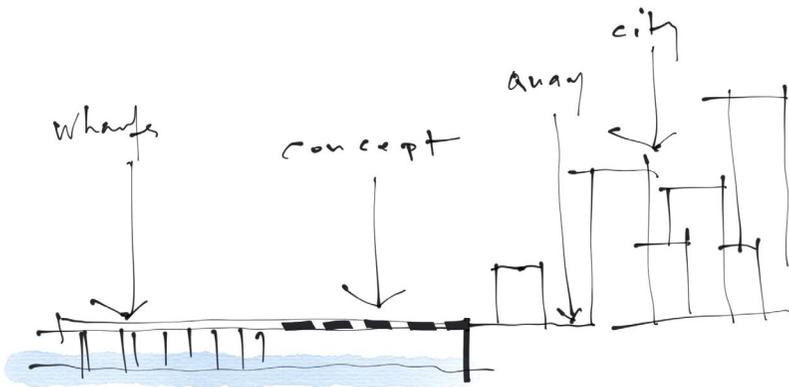
Te Wānanga is a generous new public space extending north from Quay Street between the Queens & Princes wharves. Te Wānanga integrates public space with upgraded ferry infrastructure to revitalise the City Centre's interface with Te Waitematā (Waitematā harbour).

The name Te Wānanga has been provided by Mana Whenua and speaks to collective aspirations for this new area of open space – “to meet, discuss, deliberate, consider. This area is a multi-learning space that focuses on events, hui which could include but not limited to Para Kore (resource optimisation), raranga (weaving), whakairo (carving) and the like. It will also be a learning place for sea ecology”.

The design creates an elevated ‘tidal shelf’ that provides space for both human and natural ecologies. The tidal shelf design takes its organic shape from the rocky edges of the sandstone headlands of Te Waitematā.



Conceptual spatial arrangement of Te Wānanga (Isthmus)



The Te Wānanga tidal shelf concept (Isthmus)

Te Wānanga incorporates marine and terrestrial habitats to support the restoration of mauri (essence) and place, and to recognise the mana (standing/respect) of Te Waitematā.

A ‘coastal grove of Pōhutukawa forest’ has been designed with Mana Whenua experts. This ‘forest’ incorporates epiphytes, rongoa (medicinal) species and specific harakeke (flax) weaving cultivars to provide amenity and habitat for all users and occupiers of this space.

Kūtai (mussels) have been introduced below the elevated decks of the wharf spaces. A taonga (treasured/special) species, kūtai provide habitat and food for sea life, improve water quality and provide a mechanism to educate the public on the need to care for and improve the mauri of Te Waitematā.

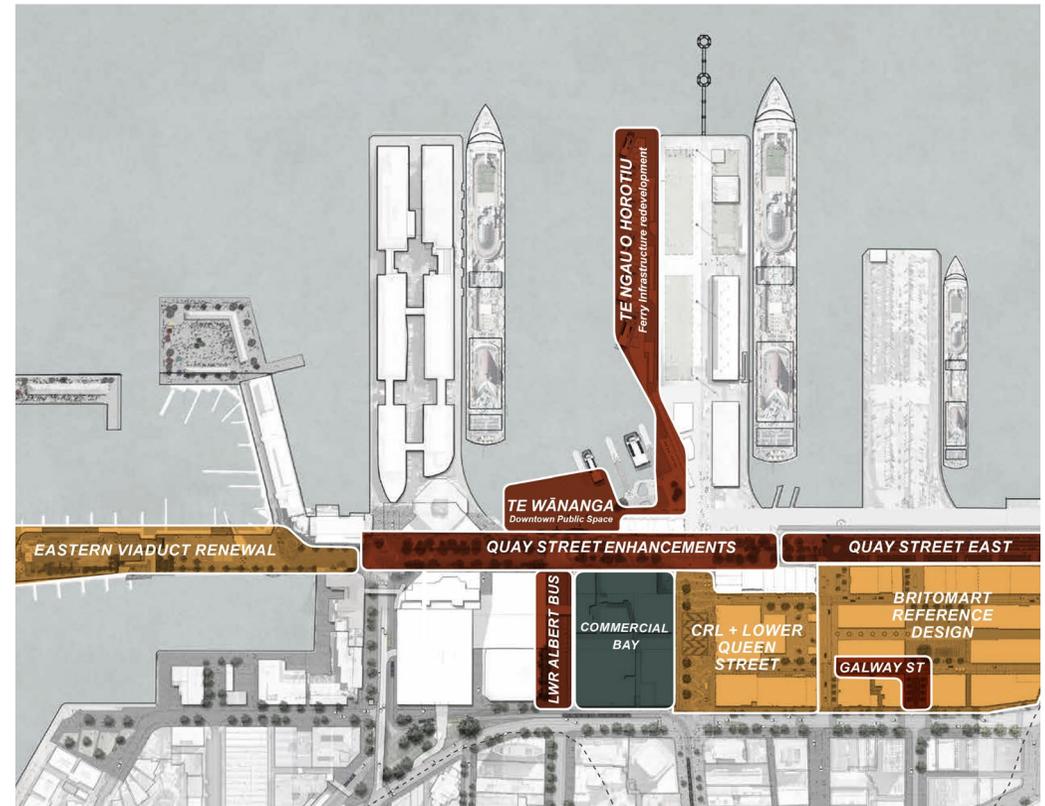
# BACKGROUND DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The QSE project is one of six projects that collectively form the Downtown Infrastructure Development Programme (DIDP).

The DIDP will transform the City Centre waterfront, delivering a series of people-focused spaces that strengthen the connection between Te Waitematā and the City Centre. The outcome will be a safe, attractive & pedestrian friendly waterfront that is uniquely Tāmaki Makaurau.

The six projects of the DIDP were initially drawn together as a programme to maximize efficiencies in both design and delivery.

Collaboratively working under a single programme has allowed each project's respective design team to pursue unique design narratives and outcomes, while still ensuring there is an overarching design coherence between the projects through the development of DIDP-wide design values and principles (see page 6).



Te Wānanga & the other DIDP projects (coloured in red)

# MANA WHENUA COLLABORATIVE DESIGN PROCESS

## A Collaborative Approach

The DIDP established a unique collaborative design approach between Mana Whenua, Auckland Council, Auckland Transport and a group of leading local design firms (the City Centre Design Collective).

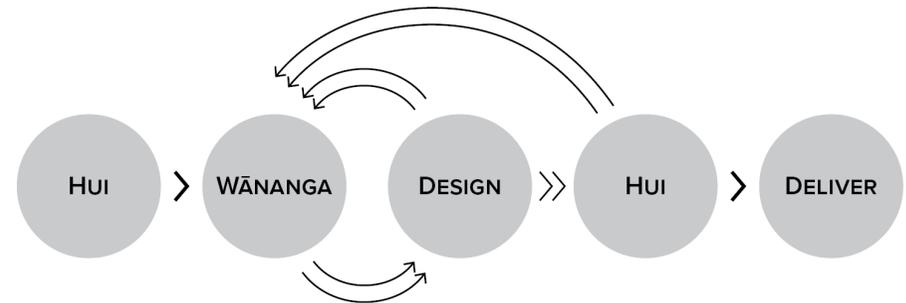
Conventional infrastructure programmes typically use a linear consultation process to engage with Mana Whenua. The DIDP rejected this limiting approach, instead Mana Whenua were integrated into the programme as co-design collaborators through design phases. This approach enabled a stronger recognition and integration of Mana Whenua values and design thinking throughout the programme.

## The Te Wānanga Design Partnership

Mana Whenua mandated the Kāhui Kaiarataki collective (Māori ecology & design specialists) to collaboratively develop the Te Wānanga design with Isthmus (the design firm responsible for delivering the project).

The Kāhui Kaiarataki process included regular studio co-design wānanga with Isthmus. This co-design process was undertaken kanohi ki kanohi, pokohiwi ki pokohiwi (face to face and shoulder to shoulder) in numerous studio and workshop sessions. Key themes and values were discussed and then developed from concept through to detailed design. All design thinking was presented back to Mana Whenua for feedback in monthly hui.

The active and iterative design collaboration between the Kāhui Kaiarataki and Isthmus allowed Mana Whenua values and Māori design to be brought into the project in a more effective and meaningful manner than is typically achieved through a conventional linear design consultation approach with Mana Whenua.



# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

## DIDP Design Principles

A set of overarching design principles were initially developed with Mana Whenua for the DIDP. These principles were used to guide the design of the programme's six individual projects. The overarching DIDP design principles are:

- **Mīharo** - Extraordinary
- **Manaakitanga** – Hosting, generosity
- **Auckland to Tāmaki Makaurau**– an authentic Tāmaki Makaurau

Alongside these, Mana Whenua contributed three other design principles adopted by the DIDP:

- **Tāmaki Makaurau; Herenga Tāngata, Herenga Waka** – provide authentic stories of place
- **Taiao Whakaruruhau** – protection and enhancement of the environment
- **Mana Whenua Cultural Footprint** – celebrate Mana Whenua histories and futures of place

## Te Wānanga Design Principles

For the Te Wānanga project, a specific vision was developed with Mana Whenua - *ki uta, ki tai* (of the land, of the sea). This provided the framework for the design partnership.

Mana Whenua also laid the expectation that the design should be inspired by Tangaroa (deity of the sea), and to reflect the 'breath' between low and high tides - *tai pari, tai timu*.



*Isthmus design studio-based co-design process with Mana Whenua kaitiaki (Auckland Council)*

# TAIAO/TOHU ACKNOWLEDGING LANDSCAPE

The DIDP is located in a rich cultural landscape that has, with the exception of some remnant landform, been obliterated through the development of the current urban form.

The historic coastal edge present in 1840 has also been lost through successive land reclamations. The original sandstone landforms that bordered the harbour's edge have been lost, along with their natural marine and terrestrial habitats and ecologies. Despite this, a new ecology of lichens, barnacles, mussels, oysters and sea squirts has developed on the hard structures of wharves, piles and seawalls.

The proximity of *Te Roukai*, a traditional gathering site for kai moana and in particular shellfish, provides valuable clues as to why Māori historically occupied this area and what was important for those people – a point of intersection between coastal and human ecologies.



Cultural landscape elements (Isthmus)

Tidal sandstone shelves typical to Te Wāitemata (Isthmus).

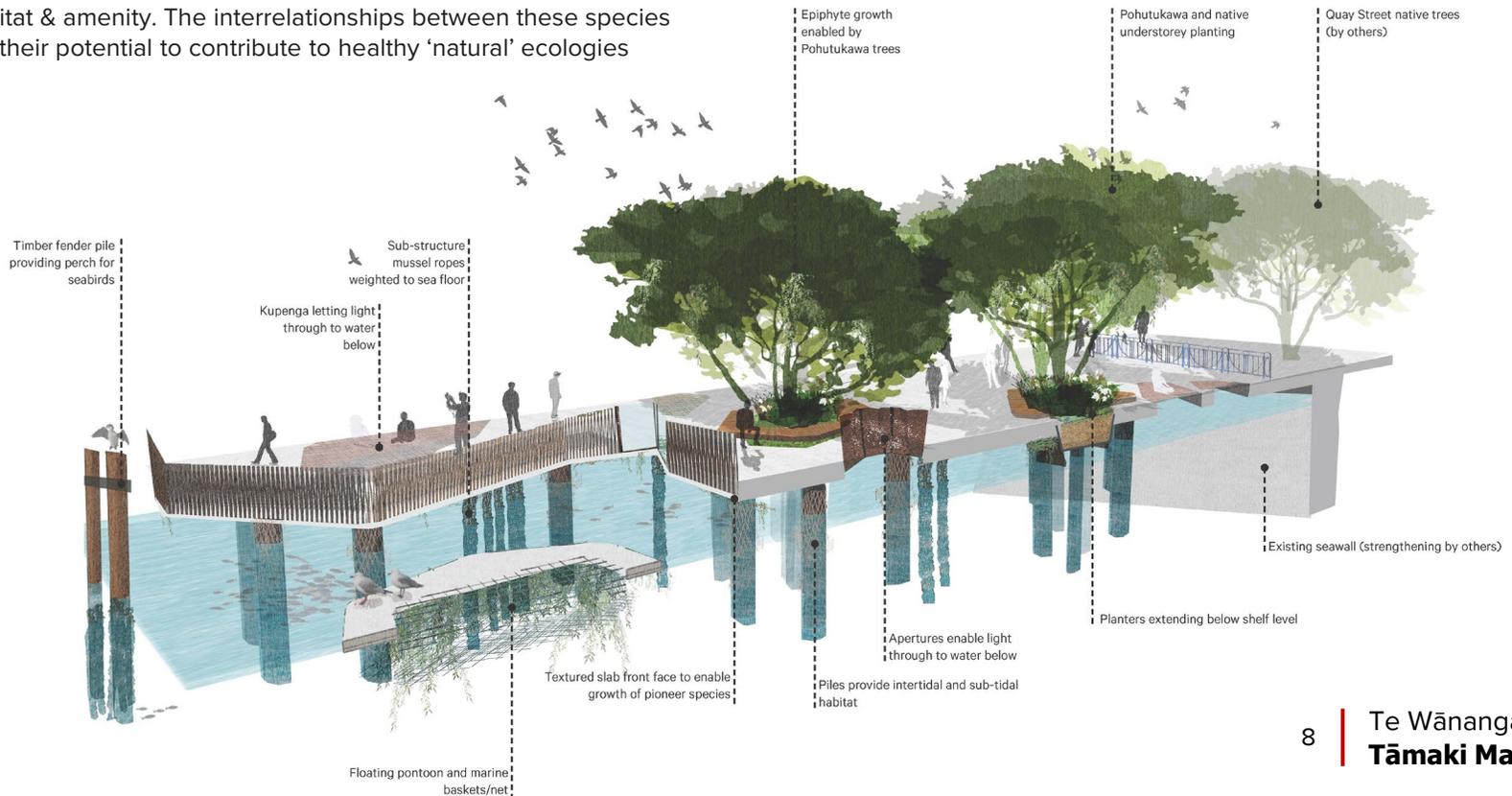
# MAURI TŪ RESTORATION OF MAURI

The restoration of mauri is one of the primary objectives of the Te Wānanga project. This has been achieved through the following:

- Mana Whenua engagement through the design partnership, bringing mātauranga (traditional knowledge) and contemporary knowledge to the design and function of the new space
- Stormwater and water quality issues addressed using natural systems
- Ecology, habitat and water quality initiatives made visible to raise public awareness of the impacts of the urban environment upon the mauri (essence/spirit) of Te Waitematā
- Species endemic to the natural environment are reinstated in place to create habitat & amenity. The interrelationships between these species intensifies their potential to contribute to healthy 'natural' ecologies

- Planting has been designed to allow users to experience and understand natural environmental indicators, in line with the maramataka Māori (traditional lunar calendar)
- The incorporation of rongoa and raranga (weaving) species will encourage the practice of kaitiakitanga (Mana Whenua stewardship) and care of these taonga (treasured/special) species by Mana Whenua
- Spaces have been created that recognise and provide for the needs of both people and coastal life

*Mauri Tū diagram (Isthmus)*



# TAIAO/MAURI TŪ MARINE HEALTH & WELLBEING

## Waka Floats - A Million Mussels

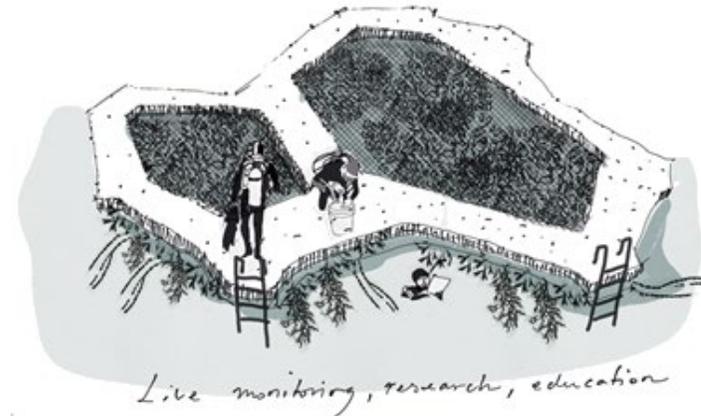
The design aims to build on efforts by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, Revive Our Gulf and other local scientific and community groups to revive the ecological health and mauri of Te Waitematā.

Te Wānanga establishes and visibly promotes the concept of 'living systems' in the urban marine environment. Kāhui Kaiarataki members Richelle Kahui-McConnell (Ngāti Maniapoto) and Jarrod Walker (Ngāpuhi) worked with the Isthmus team to integrate a suite of marine ecology features into the design, these include:

- Marine ecology ropes with kūtai (mussel) waka are anchored beneath the public deck. These support the reestablishment of the rich and extensive kūtai beds that used to cover the seabed of Te Waitematā.
- Marine ecology ropes are suspended across the pontoon apertures and textured surfaces and crevices in the concrete structure provide places for coastal marine species to establish and flourish.



Kūtai Waka  
Float (Isthmus)



Floating  
Pontoon  
(Isthmus)

*Live monitoring, research, education*

## Maritime Ecology Pontoon (not to be delivered within first stage)

The Te Wānanga design integrates floating pontoons offshore from the public deck. These pontoons continue the Te Wānanga design language of tidal shelf apertures and the coastal edge. Moving vertically with the rising and falling tide, the pontoons (and kūtai waka floats) are a visible expression of the Te Wānanga specific narrative - ***tai timu, tai pari***.

The pontoons feature marine ecology ropes fixed across their open apertures in a grid / net form. These nets are designed to provide habitat for marine species.

The pontoon also has the potential to become a 'floating research station', containing scientific equipment measuring various indicators of water quality and marine species health. This initiative has the potential to be linked to an environmental education hub operated through a Mana Whenua/Auckland Council partnership.

# TAIAO/MAURI TŪ TERRESTRIAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

## Terrestrial Ecology

The rakau rangatira (chiefly tree) Pōhutukawa is reintroduced at the meeting point of Te Waitematā and the City Centre as part of a new coastal forest grove.

Kāhui Kaiarataki member Richelle Kahui-McConnell (Ngāti Maniapoto) and ecology expert Charmaine Baillie (Ngāti Whātua/Te Uri o Hau) worked with the Isthmus team to develop a unique plant palette that:

- Recognises and regenerates original ecosystems of cultural significance to Mana Whenua, including epiphytes
- Provides protection and enhancement of the mauri of Te Taiao
- Provides for the active ahi kā (presence/occupation) of Mana Whenua through the inclusion of taonga raranga and rongoa species
- Provides for areas of shade, shelter, interest and amenity for all users of Te Wānanga
- Responds visibly to natural seasons and conditions, reinforcing the relevance and use of the maramataka Māori
- Provides habitat, roost and kai (food) for manu (birds) and tuaiwikore (invertebrates), including tūi, korimako (bellbird), tieke (saddleback), mokomoko (geckos and lizards) and te aitanga pepeke (insects).



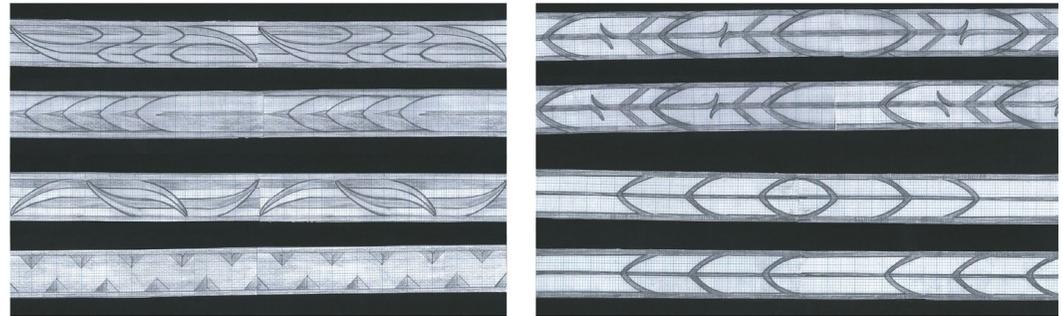
*Impression of planting area and seating (Isthmus)*

# MAHI TOI CREATIVE EXPRESSION

## Te Wairere Whakairo – Balustrade Handrail

Kāhui Kaiarataki member Reuben Kirkwood (Ngai Tai ki Tāmaki) provided the **Te Wairere** motif which also features in two other DIDP projects. **Te Wairere** is an expression of the immutable bond between whenua and moana, and is symbolic of the dynamic relationship between land and sea.

Reuben worked with the Isthmus team to create a specific whakairo (carving) expression of **Te Wairere** for Te Wānanga, and this is incorporated along the timber handrail at the edge of the public deck.

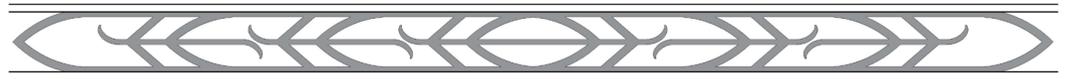


*Te Wairere design exploration for handrail (Reuben Kirkwood)*

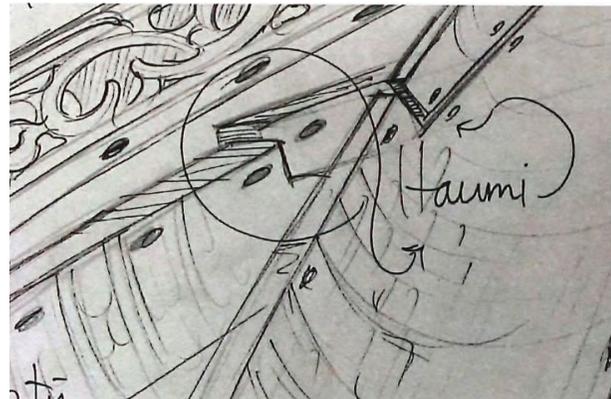
## Haumi Binding – Balustrade Handrail

Another design motif that is incorporated across a number of the DIDP projects is that of **haumi**, which relates to the notion of joining together. A rich and well known expression of this is the particular way that the hull components of a traditional waka Māori are brought together through careful and precise timber joints. This joins are bound together by cord comprising of natural fibres to create a strong and lasting bond.

Kāhui Kaiarataki member Tessa Harris (Ngai Tai ki Tāmaki) has provided an expression of **haumi** within Te Wānanga. Tessa worked with the Isthmus team to create a binding design that has been incorporated as part of the timber handrail at the edge of the public deck.



*Final Te Wairere whakairo design detail (Reuben Kirkwood)*



*Reuben Kirkwood*



*Haumi balustrade binding prototype (Tessa Harris)*

# MAHI TOI CREATIVE EXPRESSION

## Kupenga – Public Aperture Nets

**Kupenga** (nets) are an essential tool for the traditional offering of manaakitanga through the provision of kaimoana, and are an expression of the enduring bond Mana Whenua maintain with Tangaroa.

Identified as one of the key Mana Whenua design elements integrated within Te Wānanga, **Kupenga** allow members of the public to literally feel the breath of Tangaroa as they lie safely above Te Waitematā on safety webbing slung across a series of large apertures formed in the Te Wānanga deck.

Kāhui Kaiarataki member Tessa Harris (Ngai Tai ki Tāmaki) worked with the Isthmus team and manufacturer Bridon Cooke to identify and select an appropriate woven pattern for the nylon webbing of this design feature. This is the first time that this material has been utilised for this purpose, and has required meeting a number of standards focused on ensuring public safety and durability.

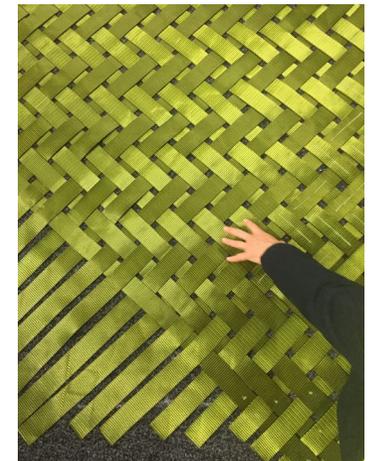
**Kupenga** brings together traditional weaving techniques and contemporary materials in an unexpected and playful way, at a supersized scale. This Mana Whenua design element is expected to prove extremely popular with users of Te Wānanga.



*Impression of Te Wānanga Kupenga (Isthmus)*



*Kāhui member Tessa Harris prototyping at Bridon Cooke factory (Isthmus)*



*Kupenga prototype (Isthmus)*

# AHI KĀ/WHAKAPAPA LIVING PRESENCE & NAMING

## Naming

The name **Te Wānanga** was provided by Mana Whenua to establish a new feature within a rapidly developing contemporary cultural landscape. **Te Wānanga** recognises, respects and supports the rich tapestry of place that underlays the urban form of the city centre and waterfront.

## Presence

A Mana Whenua landscape company and nursery has been engaged to install and maintain planting within the project, providing a rich and highly visible expression of kaitiakitanga and ahi-kā-tanga. This company will work with a Mana Whenua raranga rōpū (weaving group) to manage the taonga harakeke, and host public wānanga.

An initiative focused on refurbishing the existing historic Western Kiosk building to a new public marine education hub is currently seeking public funding. The hub's focus will be the health of Te Waitematā and Tikapa Moana (Hauraki Gulf), anchored by a Mana Whenua presence and perspectives. Housing a range of education and environmental advocacy activities in a pavilion-like exhibition and programming space, the hub will have a strong emphasis on youth education and engagement on environmental kaupapa.

The hub initiative is a partnership between Auckland Council and Mana Whenua and will be occupied by both Mana Whenua and Council environmental experts. Held under the mana and tikanga of Mana Whenua, the hub will provide the city centre and waterfront area with a permanent Mana Whenua presence and is a potent expression of a thriving Māori identity for Tāmaki Makaurau.

*Historic  
Western Kiosk  
building:  
(Auckland  
Council)*



*Impression of  
potential Te  
Wānanga  
environmental  
education hub:  
(Isthmus)*



# LESSONS LEARNED

The Isthmus design team offered the following reflections.

## **Engage with Mana Whenua as early as possible.**

This is critical to capture key considerations and values, to define important issues and concerns, to refine or clarify the brief and to understand ‘what is the mana whenua perspective’

## **Listening is key to the process**

Opportunities for Mana Whenua to put forward thinking prior to things being drawn is valuable, with noting and reflecting back in diagrammatic form or spoken word being helpful to designing the concept and brief. This is a really important opportunity, as opposed to having to respond, add, or adjust retrospectively to a brief they have had no part in forming.

## **The process of working with mana whenua and alongside the Kāhui group has enabled a deeper understanding and articulation of cultural values**

This is fantastic as a way of bringing more depth of thinking into the design. Expert input into the design process is invaluable and delivers more meaningful design outcomes. The selection of a Kāhui of design expertise is best agreed to and signed off early in the process. There should also be room for flexibility as sometimes a need might arise for additional expertise not present in the group eg ‘national’ mātauranga experts.

## **Co-design delivers more meaningful design**

Processes that involve Mana Whenua design and expertise not only benefits projects, it also improves the understanding and capability of all the designers involved. This is critical for design offices that are more often than not privileged in the design space. Design language can then become more inclusive, interesting and reflective of a diversity of thinking – and therefore should and will become more sophisticated.

## **The co-design process has enabled positive & ongoing working relationships**

Barriers are broken down and we get to experience each others humanity and learn from each other. This is a two-way street and the relationships are only strengthened through reciprocity.

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