

Cultural Diversity: Interaction in the Public Realm
Cultural Diversity: Interaction in the Public Realm



“Architecture is not only the reflection of the space created but an appreciation of the space left over.’
Ian Athfield

1131520

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It is an honor.....

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The True Ecology

And where is home? Home is not the neighbourhood, nor in a community. Home is in the unexpected welcome of the stranger. Home is in the charity reflected in the chance encounter. Home is what you want to make of the city when you are the object of kindness. Home is what you return to in the gathering of people, in coffee shop, street corners - in those zones where you met the human eros. It might have been a tollbooth, at a counter, in a gallery, a parking lot, on the most ridiculous or fortunate of places.

The unseen city is in the happenstance - the boulevards and paths and piazzas and atrium or on the choreography of people that build a city as homage to what they found in each other. The city is built after the architecture of care has improvised. And the roots of it are not logistical or prudently designed. The roots of it are in the mystery of grace, the appetite for each other, the gusto of being curious about each other before the conventions of the world. It is the invisible city that is the Valhalla of the civic dream. The structure of a city is for the furthering of kindness and inter-civic munificence. We will not have livable cities until we find a reason for living in each other.¹

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco (2007)

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco is the Poet Laureate for the City of Toronto

¹ Phil Wood and Charles Landry, *The Intercultural City : Planning for Diversity Advantage* (London ; Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2008).

Abstract:

This research is premised on the understanding that there is definitely an architectural problem, the lack of socially cohesive public space to accommodate the diverse cultures in Auckland. The research sets out to refine this problem into an architectural question that will aid in design decisions regarding the architectural solution. This research aims to explore the cultural diversity of the Auckland region (predominantly South Auckland communities) and to consider the role architecture plays in cultural intersection. The proposition is that the built environment does not adequately reflect the city's cultural diversity or the significance of its cultures.² In the *Intercultural City*³ diversity should be seen as the basis for building a socially sustainable eco-system.

² Brecknock Consulting, *A wellspring of ideas, a meeting of people: Auckland case study report*, South Australia, 2006 p,3.

³ Intercultural City Publication- Refer: section 2.4 for background

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the project:

The purpose of the project is to establish the essence of interculturalism in Auckland as a meeting of people, resulting in the exchange of ideas, knowledge, creativity and innovation; “a wellspring of ideas”.⁴ The research focuses on the elements required to create a welcoming and open society, where people can meet in an environment of trust and respect. The research aims, more specifically, to look at ways in which **public buildings** and the **urban environment** can assist infusion into a culturally diverse community. It also seeks to **enhance the interaction** between cultures, not simply to respect and support people’s right to diverse cultures.

1.2 Research question

Can architectural design and research enhance the intersection of diverse culture within public buildings and spaces, and improve the existing benefits of social exchange within diverse communities?

⁴ Brecknock Consulting, *A wellspring of ideas, a meeting of people: Auckland case study report*, South Australia, 2006 p,3.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The intent is to create an urban environment with multiple programmes in a diverse community that lacks cohesive public spaces, in order to increase opportunities for cultural interaction. What are the public places and buildings that allow cultures to meet and interact? The research will identify appropriate public/community buildings that can promote social interaction at all levels and, in doing so, improve social life and cultural understanding. The research sets out to understand the relationships between cultural identity and architecture.

1.4 Keyword/ Definitions

Intercultural: intercultural is used in the context of people from different cultural backgrounds coming together in a common desire to build on the cross-cultural potential of a multicultural society with its ethnic and cultural diversity

Urban Square: *An urban square or a plaza is both an area framed by buildings and an area designed to exhibit buildings to the greatest advantage.*⁵

⁵ Cliff Moughtin, *Urban Design : Street and Square* (Oxford ; Boston: Butterworth Architecture, 1992).p.87

2 Current state of knowledge

He huihuinga taangata he pukenga whakaaro

A meeting of people, a wellspring of ideas⁶

This Maori proverb encapsulates the very essence of interculturalism as “a meeting of people”, resulting in the exchange of ideas, knowledge, creativity and innovation; literally “a wellspring of ideas” that is vital to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the people and to the sustainability of the city.

2.1 Why interact?

Humans are social beings that need to interact for their survival. They have a biological urge to mate, they find safety in numbers, making addressing security easier, and they have a social need and desire for companionship. The interaction of people leads to efficiency in work, as more hands accomplish tasks quicker, while communicating with others leads to greater speed in solving problems and inventing solutions.

Current cultural trends have created certain threats that could reduce social interaction. A risk-averse culture is creating conditions around public spaces that do not support interaction. The signs and symbols around cities focus on things on discouraging certain

⁶ Brecknock Consulting, *A wellspring of ideas, a meeting of people: Auckland case study report*, South Australia, 2006 p3

activities: 'No entry', 'Do not skate', 'Do no run', 'No dogs', 'Do not feed the ducks'. The physical form reminds us of many 'no-go' areas such as those with security control points and 24-hour surveillance, controlled gates, high fences one cannot see through, and the car-dominated culture of the city where highways slice through communities and threaten pedestrian activity. This forces us even further into our cars and away from each other. Technology increases opportunities for social contact while reducing physical and social interactions. The use of the internet is reducing interaction that might previously have taken place at shops, libraries, medical centers and other similar public services. There are more inhabitants of the virtual world, those who treat their internet social life as a 'second life'. At the last count, users of such sites as *Facebook*, *My Space*, *Twitter*, *Bebo* and other similar social networking sites numbered well over 500 million people.⁷ The incarnation of a life imagined and created in cyberspace that avoids face-to-face contact in the material world is creating a world reminiscent of 'the classic ghetto'⁸, which excludes others.

The proponents of cultural diversity argue that interacting physically should be an important part of one's routine, as we all live side by side, and only then will we foster empathy by learning more about each other and therefore reducing the distrust between people and cultures. 'Mix has been said to promote social harmony by

⁷ Mashable- the social media guide "Social Network Guide 2009"- www.mashable.com (accessed September 20, 2009)

⁸ Wood and Landry, *The Intercultural City : Planning for Diversity Advantage*.p86

reducing social and racial tensions, by reopening channels of communication and interaction, decreasing mistrust and hostility and promoting a better understanding between groups.⁹ In a world of hyper-mobility where the make-up of cities is becoming more diverse every day, there needs to be a change in the mind set of the community: that interaction with those with whom you share the community is necessary for the health of that community.

2.2 The intercultural city

Some parts of the world are now entirely homogeneous. Migrant numbers are increasing as people leave their homelands for a better life elsewhere; democratic, political issues and natural disasters also force people to move. Global refugee numbers currently exceed 11 million. Today's world is intercultural, and the identities of cities are continuously changing. Walk through any city today and you will encounter many different faces. But are people really mixing and taking advantage of this 'melting pot' or do we have a risk-averse approach when it comes to other cultures? As cities increase in diversity and complexity, there is a sense that the time of the intercultural idea is coming. Phil Wood and Charles Landry, authors of the *Intercultural City - Book 1: Planning for Diversity Advantage*, describe themselves as '... two white guys interested

⁹ Ibid.p106

in crossing cultures'.¹⁰ There is a real belief that cultural diversity is an advantage, as cities will only become more diverse over time.

The intercultural city concept is based on the premise that in the multicultural city we acknowledge and ideally celebrate our differing cultures. In the intercultural city we move one step beyond and focus on what we can do together, as diverse cultures in a shared space, to create greater wellbeing and prosperity. The intercultural approach requires a commitment to "think, plan and act culturally"¹¹ in a way that acknowledges and respects others.

¹⁰ Ibid.p.i

¹¹ Brecknock Consulting, A wellspring of ideas, a meeting of people: Auckland case study report, South Australia, 2006

2.3 Diversity - The changing mix in Auckland

Auckland is the most populous and fastest-growing region in New Zealand. At the 2006 Census, the total population of the Auckland region was around 1.32 million – just under one-third of the nation’s population. Auckland City has the largest population (just over 400,000 people), closely followed by Manukau City, with around 329,000. The Auckland region has a high proportion of Pacific Islanders (around 14%), many of whom reside in Manukau City. The diverse cultural mix of Pacific Island migrants includes those from Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, the Cook Islands and other small Pacific Island groups. Auckland City must cater for the wide range of Pacific cultures mixing with Asian and other migrants, and also with the local Maori and Pakeha (European) community.

Ethnic composition (2006)

	NZ European %	Māori %	Pacific Islands people %	Asian %	MELAA %	New Zealander %	Other %	Not elsewhere included %
Rodney	78.4	8.3	2.0	2.9	0.2	12.3	0.1	4.1
North Shore	65.7	6.1	3.2	18.1	1.7	9.5	0.1	2.7
Waitakere	55.5	12.3	14.4	15.2	1.5	7.8	0.0	6.0
Auckland	51.4	7.4	12.4	23.1	1.7	7.1	0.0	5.5
Manukau	38.2	14.4	26.3	20.3	1.4	5.1	0.1	5.7
Hamilton	62.4	19.0	4.0	10.1	1.4	10.1	0.1	4.3
Tauranga	72.3	16.0	1.8	3.3	0.4	13.3	0.0	3.0
Porirua	54.0	19.9	25.3	4.3	0.5	8.4	0.0	5.0
Hutt	63.4	16.7	10.3	8.6	1.1	9.8	0.0	2.3
Wellington	67.6	7.4	5.0	12.7	2.0	10.2	0.0	3.6
Christchurch	73.3	7.4	2.7	7.6	0.8	12.5	0.0	2.8
Dunedin	76.2	6.2	2.1	5.2	0.2	13.1	0.0	3.2
Total 12 cities	60.4	10.4	9.9	13.9	1.3	9.3	0.0	4.2
Rest of NZ	70.3	18.6	2.4	2.4	0.3	12.3	0.0	4.1
Total NZ	64.8	14.0	6.6	8.8	0.9	10.7	0.0	4.2

Data source: Statistics New Zealand, Census 2006²

This table looks at and breaks down of the diverse range of cultures that dominate the Auckland region (This is shown in the red box) The research topic focuses on the South Auckland area that includes suburbs south of Auckland City and the whole of Manukau City.

Currently, there is limited cross-cultural exchange at the personal or neighbourhood level. The development of a design process that supports interculturalism and reflects the influences of Auckland's diverse cultures is a key challenge. The public realm also

has a vital place to play in creating an opportunity for the “meeting of people” to take place.

Auckland needs **urban form** and infrastructure that promotes a sense of belonging and community cohesion. This can be achieved through the design of its public spaces, safe and appealing neighbourhoods, and transport and communication networks that allow for cultural diversity to be accessible to everyone. At present there are only a few opportunities within the community where this interaction can take place.

By 2050, Auckland will have 41% of the New Zealand population but the different in the mix, numerical balance and age structure of its population will be very different. Auckland will be younger, more Asian, more Pacific, less European and possibly less Maori, than the rest of New Zealand. Immigration will continue to be a dominant force.¹²

The government has shown its interest in promoting cultural diversity to bring the community together. Government sectors such as Te Manatu Taonga - Ministry for Culture and Heritage, work to help communities understand the implication of their own cultural diversity.

¹² Auckland City Council-“*Cultural Diversity and Community Cohesion for Sustaining Auckland Region Together Project*”, New Zealand 2007 p.5.
www.arc.govt.nz/albany/fms/main/Documents/Auckland/Sustainability/Cultural 9accessed April 10, 2009)

2.4 Government

'Councils will need to work with their communities to identify their values and shared beliefs, including hapu and iwi values and beliefs'¹³

The Ministry for Culture and Heritage has a broad interpretation of "cultural wellbeing".¹⁴ The implications of the above phrase include many of the amenities that local authorities already provide, such as **libraries**, museums, parks and **recreational centers**. A lot of what currently happens takes place on the fringes e.g. festivals and events, not the infrastructure - festivals such as the Lantern Festival in Albert Park, the Pasifika Festival at Western Springs, the Hindu Diwali Festival of Lights at the Viaduct Harbour, and events such as the Chinese New Year celebrations. To achieve real intercultural activity, more effort needs to be invested into expanding a festival's impact through education programmes and supporting material. There is evidence that Auckland's libraries are currently doing excellent work with cultural education programs.¹⁵

¹³ Government NZ, *Ministry for Culture and Heritage* <http://mch.govt.nz/cwb>
Hapū: clan, tribe, independent section of a people; modern usage – sub-tribe; to be born
Iwi: Maori word, people, nation; modern usage – tribe; bones Courtesy of
<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/maori-language-week/100-maori-words>

¹⁴ Government NZ, *Ministry for Culture and Heritage* <http://mch.govt.nz/cwb>

¹⁵ Brecknock Consulting, *A wellspring of ideas, a meeting of people: Auckland case study report*, South Australia, 2006 p3

'Cultural wellbeing' is one of the four elements of a healthy community as identified in the Local Government Act 2002. This intersects with and impacts on the other three 'wellbeings': Social, Environment and Economic, none of which should be viewed in isolation. The best outcomes are likely to occur at the intersections of all wellbeing.¹⁶



[fig.1]¹⁷

¹⁶ Government NZ, *Ministry for Culture and Heritage* <http://mch.govt.nz/cwb>

¹⁷ Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "Cultural Wellbeing" Diagram www.mch.govt.nz/cwb

3 Architectural Precedents and Literature Review:

3.1 Making public buildings, David Adjaye

One of Britain's leading contemporary architects David Adjaye combines the human social dimension with a conceptual approach to the fundamental elements of architecture. Adjaye treats his public buildings like public rooms, marked by an informality 'that is about everyday reality.'¹⁸ For Adjaye, public space is always contingent, always in the process of realization. *We do not build public space; we construct it through a variety of individual governentalities. Therefore it is not so much the institution or buildings designated as such, rather it is the silent but obvious amenities (recognised by everyday users as symbols of the publicness of space) that he as an architect must constantly make visible for any aspect of his architecture to acquire the quality of public space.*¹⁹ In this sense, public space is not a thing but a value-added quality to an already existing structure.



¹⁸ David Adjaye et al., *David Adjaye : Making Public Buildings : Specificity, Customization, Imbrication* (London ; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2006).p.6

¹⁹ Ibid.p.9

Image- www.adjaye.com (accessed September, 2009)

Henri Lefebvre has a fluid and rich concept of social space. It is a place of multiplicity: a meeting space indivisible from the diverse urban identities that inhabit it that binds together a contemporary city's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural communities and memories. According to Lefebvre '[social] space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their inter-relationships in their coexistence and simultaneity [...] Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur [...] social space implies a great diversity of knowledge.'²⁰

Public space, therefore, is not a corporate place that promotes events for profit maximization; it is an active space to be enjoyed by the community and one that draws the community in as one. Architects such as David Adjaye are designing more than just the built infrastructure when designing a building; they equally take on the role of the intellectual broker between the most complex issues, such as moderating between ethics and politics, public space and civil society, popular sovereignty and public sphere, La Ville and La Cite.²¹



Rivington Place is the first public gallery to be opened in London for 40 years

²⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).

²¹ Adjaye et al., *David Adjaye : Making Public Buildings : Specificity, Customization, Imbrication*.p.11

Image- www.adjaye.com (accessed September, 2009)

3.2 The library as a social space

A strong case has been made for the role of public libraries as ‘one of the few remaining cross-cultural meeting places’²² Libraries provide opportunities for casual interaction in a safe, trusted environment. But, too often, the resources cannot match the ideals of the librarian. Libraries are often housed in inadequate or even unappealing premises ‘harking back to more hierarchical and monocultural times, or are unable to afford enough stock to reflect the cultural diversity of their neighbourhood.’²³ Far from being the dynamic hub of a vibrant intercultural community, libraries appear to be fighting merely to survive. The public library may be in trouble but it’s far from dead just yet. A new confidence is emerging, perhaps best exemplified by the new breed of libraries being developed by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for what is one of the most diverse local communities in the world, the Idea Store.

‘When is a library not a library? When it is not just a library but a café, a nursery, a dance studio, and lots of other spaces designed to make it part of its community. The Idea Store is an inspiring concept combining modern architecture and social spaces.’²⁴

²² Audunson R, "The Public Library as a Meeting Place in a Multicultural and Digital Context," *Journal of documentation* 61, no. 3 (2005). p.429

²³ Wood and Landry, *The Intercultural City : Planning for Diversity Advantage*. P.188

²⁴ Idea Store “Library Information” www.ideastore.co.uk (accessed July 16,2009)

Designed by architect David Adjaye, the Idea Store looks like no other library, and is planned to eventually replace all libraries in the London Borough. The council's objective is: 'to bring the community together and to employ individuals to help themselves, whether it is learning to read, pursuing hobbies, expanding their knowledge or seeking a job... An Idea Store is an ideal place to browse and borrow books, read magazines, learn new skills, surf the net or to relax and meet friends over a coffee in a fun and stimulating environment.²⁵



David Adjaye- Idea Store, New Concept for mixed use Library²⁶

²⁵Idea Store “Library Information” www.ideastore.co.uk (accessed July 16,2009)

²⁶ David Adjaye Associates, Projects. www.adjaye.com (accessed July 16,2009)

3.3 Intercultural City:COMEDIA

The Intercultural City is based on numerous case studies world-wide. The series of books and other publications media analyses the links between urban change and cultural diversity. It draws on original research in North America, Europe, Australasia and the UK. The publishing critiques past and current policy and introduces new conceptual frameworks for a cultural diverse city. It provides significant and practical advice for research into understanding cultural diversity.

In a world of increasing mobility, how people of different cultures live together is a key issue of our age, especially for those responsible for planning the cities. New thinking is needed on how diverse communities can operate productive harmony instead of leading parallel lives. Policy is often dominated by mitigating the perceived negative effects of diversity and little thought is given to how a 'diversity dividend' or increased innovative capacity might be achieved.

The intercultural city aims to changing mind sets, creating new opportunities across cultures and integrating strategies to support intercultural activity in existing and future Council policies, strategies and programming. It's about thinking, planning and acting interculturally. It identifies public consultation and engagement, urban planning and development, schools and education, arts and creative industries and sports as some of the tools need to aid in understanding diversity

4 Otahuhu - A complex multi-cultural community

A brief history

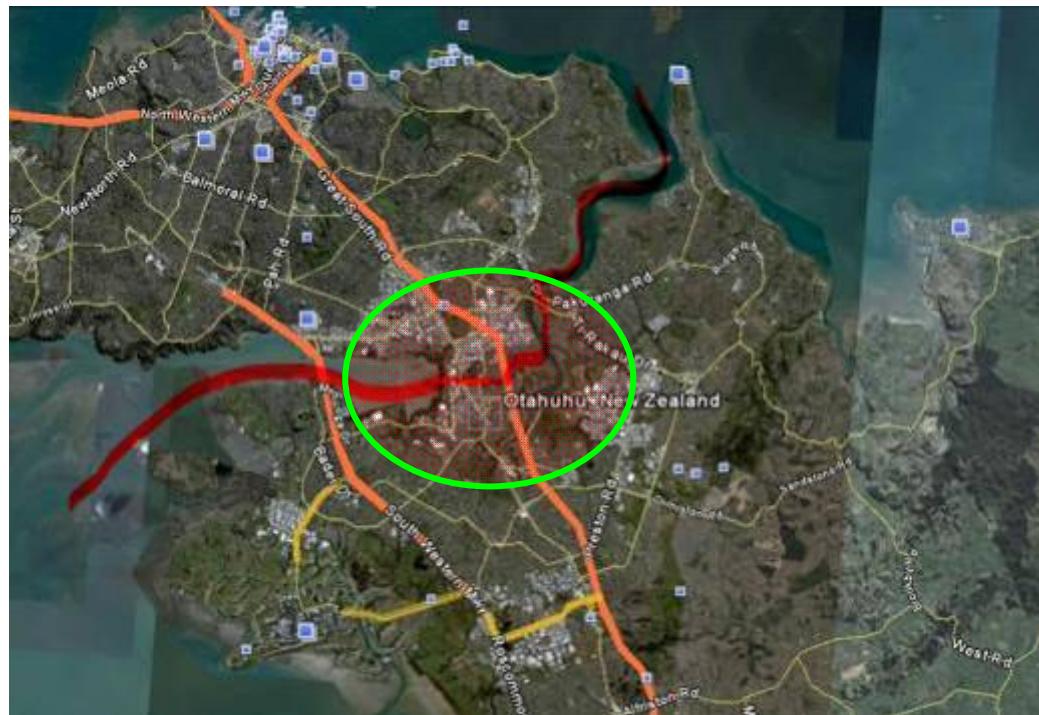
Cultural-interaction research has led to the discovery of a suitable community where which the research can be put into practice. The selected community is the town of Otahuhu in South Auckland's CBD. Otahuhu is a vibrant, multicultural community with a rich history. Like other areas around the city, Otahuhu has grown and changed since people first decided to settle in the area.



Otahuhu main retail street: Great South Road

Strategically located on the narrowest point of the Auckland Isthmus between an arm of the Manukau Harbour to the west and the Tamaki River estuary to the east, [Fig 1] Otahuhu has always been of great tactical, cultural and spiritual value to Maori. Otahuhu is one of Auckland's oldest suburbs, and featured pre-European villages. The Europeans capitalized on the location due to the portage, which was used to transfer the waka between Manukau Harbour and the Hauraki Gulf during the 1847 New Zealand Land Wars.²⁷

²⁷ Otahuhu Livable City Plan page 7



[fig.2]

www.google-earth.com

In 1912 Otahuhu was a borough. After the Great Depression of the 1930s, the area's shopping centre experienced a period of rapid growth, with new blocks of shops added to the main street on Great South Road. During the 1960s the area changed again, this time affected by the industrial and commercial boom. It evolved from being predominantly residential to significantly commercial and industrial. Since the 1980s,

Otahuhu has been affected by larger neighbouring service centres such as Manukau City and other nearby centres in South Auckland.

Otahuhu today

In the 10 years from 1996 to 2006, the population of Otahuhu grew from 7515 to 11,046. In the same period, residential dwellings increased from 3147 to 3228. Otahuhu is still a relatively youthful area with 34% of the population under 25 years old. In 2006, 43% of the population was Pacific Island peoples (compared to 12% in Auckland City as a whole); 19% were European (compared to 50% for the City), while 15% were Maori (compared to 7% for the City). So, in comparison to the Auckland City average, the local population is more culturally and ethnically diverse.²⁸

The government has planned to re-establish older suburbs such as Otahuhu due to its growing population²⁹. The plan is to redevelop the town over the next 15 years with a number of community projects. This fits in well with the proposed design ideas based in this research – a community-based project that looks into how architecture can assist the infusion of cultures.

²⁸ Auckland City Council “Otahuhu Livable Community Plan” www.aucklandcity.govt.nz (accessed April 30,2009)

²⁹ ibid

This project is focused on the socially complex communities of South Auckland, such as Otahuhu. Particular attention is directed at social amenities and public space – places of social intercultural interaction. In many older South Auckland suburbs, like Otahuhu, educational and leisure facilities are often lacking or need redevelopment as high-quality places of casual social interaction. This project seeks to identify these facilities and to bring different programmes onto one site with the aim of increasing the opportunities for cultural interaction within the community at a casual neighbourhood level.



4.1 Public spaces

It is very easy to think of the city as its physical form- the familiar elements of its civic infrastructure such as the city hall and railway station, its shopping streets, office blocks, warehouses and residential apartments. This leaves out one vital but too easily overlooked zone - the space in between. Okwui Enwezor talks about this in his writing on David Adjaye, entitled *David Adjaye's Architecture of Immanence*. He says that as an architect, "Adjaye pushes elaborating within his buildings a 'third space', a kind of illusionary and concrete zone of maximum interaction and social discourse between publics, individuals, communities, experts, and non experts."³⁰ Enwezor bases his reference to the 'third space' on Edward W Soja's *Third Space: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Soja aims to encourage people to think differently about the significance of space and related concepts that compose and comprise the inherent '*spatiality of human life: place, location, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography.*'³¹ Public space has been accorded formal status within the city since the Greek agora and the Roman forum, and our modern city spaces are influenced particularly by the great piazza of Italian renaissance cities such as the

³⁰ Adjaye et al., *David Adjaye : Making Public Buildings : Specificity, Customization, Imbrication*.p.9

³¹ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace : Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996).p.1

Campo in Siena. Soja suggests that he does not want one to forget the old and familiar ways of thinking about space, but rather that we should question them in new ways.³²

As a community Otahuhu lacks a community public space for casual interaction. Open public parks are well provided for but these are located away from other programmes and in isolation to the main town centre. In recent times good design ideas have been lost and many public spaces are very poorly designed. People create public space, often in places least expected or intended by their designers: a busy street corner dominated by cars, the semi-abandoned patch of grass between buildings where teenagers can avoid the prying eyes of adults, the beach or riverside away from the community network.

This research looks at opportunities for leveling the playing field so that people of different age groups, backgrounds and incomes can participate in and enjoy their community. "Public institutions are developing new ways of positioning themselves within their broader community and starting to play different roles than in the past-- and they are doing this in many ways."³³ One way is through location.

³² Ibid.p.1

³³ Project for Public Spaces. "Leading from the Ground Up-How Civic Institutions Can play a Pivotal Role in Improving Communities" www.pps.org (accessed May 7,2009)



[fig.4]³⁴

The chart in [fig.2] shows Community Institutions of the past and today. Existing public buildings in older suburbs such as Otahuhu sit on their own, generally surrounded by a car park or facing a busy street. Otahuhu has a range of community facilities and services, including a town hall, several places of worship of different denominations, a number of schools from primary through to college, a post office, a recreation centre

³⁴ Project for Public Spaces. "Leading from the Ground Up-How Civic Institutions Can play a Pivotal Role in Improving Communities" www.pps.org (accessed May 7,2009)

and a library. These public buildings are isolated from each other and away from public zones.



[fig.5]³⁵

Choosing to locate community services adjacent to other related institutions, ideally in city centers, will create a more comprehensive destination, resulting in increased attendance. [fig.3] The research aims to bring together many programmes to one site as a broader whole: the aim is that the activities they generate will build off each other

³⁵ Project for Public Spaces. “Leading from the Ground Up-How Civic Institutions Can play a Pivotal Role in Improving Communities” www.pps.org (accessed May 7,2009)

and create a stronger overall community impact. To really succeed, the third space in between buildings must take into account a host of factors that extend beyond its physical dimensions.

No community body can be the same but there is a need in every community to provide a place to bring people together. Creating a public space is only the first step towards an intercultural city – the public space must be used. The success of any public space is programming. The buildings surrounding or framing the space must appeal to that particular community. The inside must be woven into the outside. If you go to Paris or Vienna and visit the town hall, you will always see something going on; they are full of life and activity. Cynthia Nikitin, Vice-President in charge of the Project for Public Places in the UK, stresses the importance of these kinds of public activities in strengthening communities "A concert hall or YMCA would fail if it wasn't programmed. It's the same with public spaces. People won't just show up, as if by magic, when there's nothing to do there."³⁶

³⁶ Project for Public Spaces. "Leading from the Ground Up-How Civic Institutions Can play a Pivotal Role in Improving Communities" www.pps.org (accessed May 7,2009)

4.2 The target age for interaction in Otahuhu:

Otahuhu is a youthful community, but in recent times it is the youth of the community that has put Otahuhu in the media spotlight for the wrong reasons. In nearly every corner of New Zealand, there is a problem with young people. Some use drugs or drink alcohol, but in the last two years youth gangs have really hit the headlines, with an increase in gang-related activities in South Auckland. The government has put resources into finding the causes of violent gang behaviour amongst the youth of these communities. It has announced an Action Plan to improve outcomes for young people and reduce youth offending in Counties Manukau and Otahuhu. Research done by Ministry of Social Development shows that a range of factors is driving youth gang membership in South Auckland, including economic, parenting, peer pressure and **disengaging** issues.³⁷



Source: scoop.co.nz

Youth gang members. The gangs identify and represent themselves with the use of coloured item of clothing. Pictured here is the 'Bloods' Gang, usually associated with local Tongan youth and rivals to the 'Crips' Gang who wear the colour blue and have mainly Samoan youth members.

The research is aimed at finding out how these issues can be avoided, and on improving and maintaining the quality of life. By providing leisure and recreational facilities on one site that promote healthy lifestyles, it hopes the youth of Otahuhu will interact culturally, and that this interaction will filter through to create more opportunities for casual interaction within the whole community. Research shows that young people are

³⁷ Scoop Independent News "Action Plan for Counties Manukau and Otahuhu Youth"
www.scoop.co.nz (accessed 15 April 2009)

a good target audience to which to introduce cultural interaction programmes. School, church and sport have been nominated as key centres for interaction. It was suggested that it is important to look to young people as they are less affected by cultural barriers and are exposed to cultural mix at schools. Their understanding is not affected by prejudices.³⁸ Intercultural interaction is happening amongst the young people of the community is vital to plan for the long term survival as cities grow in the cultural mix. Combining physical programmes with the excitement of activity seems to be the recipe for success. This helps people connect up in an informal, often random, way. A sense of community, of shared interests, grows in functioning public spaces where streets, shops, cafés and public institutions help to weave together our private worlds.³⁹

“.... sports are not carried out primarily on an ethnic basis, but on the basis of common interests, beliefs or values, that require shared physical and social spaces, centres and meeting places.”⁴⁰ Sport, especially team sports, generates strong social ties within and across cultures. Athletes in a team have more tolerance towards racial differences and a better understanding through sharing a common endeavour. The city of Leicester in the UK uses sport as a means of integrating refugees and asylum seekers.⁴¹ Newcomers

³⁸ Brecknock Consulting, “*A meeting of People, A well Spring of Ideas*” for Auckland City Council, March 2006

³⁹ Wood and Landry, *The Intercultural City : Planning for Diversity Advantage*.p.173

⁴⁰ Bloomfield Jude and Bianchini Franco. "Planning for an Intercultural City" Londaon; UK; Comedia 2004 p39

⁴¹ ⁴¹ Wood and Landry, *The Intercultural City : Planning for Diversity Advantage*.

to suburbs seek sporting opportunities to get their children involved in the community. Sport increases the level of interaction and provides a great environment for casual social interaction within the community via team members, sporting supporters from within the community, and support of various family members.

Facilities such as recreation centres and public pools need to be redefined more broadly as community-wide institutions that have a physical facility/public space that is part of the larger neighborhood, and a programme that involves the community. Both the physical facility and the neighborhood it is placed in need to merge and partner with other institutions that are part of that community.

4.3 What Otahuhu lacks: community analysis

Otahuhu as a community is very rich in culture. This mix of diversity needs to show through in public facilities around the community. Youth activity in the community is limited to the fringes and mainly in parks with few opportunities in the main town. There is a lack of safe shared public space that generates a mixed use within all age groups in the community.

The Sunday marks in the Atkinson Avenue carpark are the best example of the community sharing a public space that allows for casual intercultural interaction to take



Otahuhu Sunday Market

place. Even a public space such as a carpark can be transformed into a market for half a day to bring out the bright and vibrant mix of the community. A market is a great tool to generate social cultural mix within a community.

One of Otahuhu's existing public facilities that generates youth use is the recreation centre located just off the central retail grid. Although the building is quite new (designed and build in 2005), it has already had a lot negative feedback from the management and users. Lack of research and surprisingly poor design decisions have meant this new facility does not meet its potential for use. Overheating issues and lack of thought into material selection has left the new project out of favour. Some design issues have been deemed unsafe by Occupational Health and safety NZ, and threaten to close the facility down. Some of the poor design and safety issues are shown below.



Otahuhu Recreation Centre



Photos 1 and 2 show the use of steel columns on the edges of the basketball courts. Occupational Health and Safety NZ deemed these very dangerous, and there are still

concerns that they will cause serious injuries. Temporary padding has been installed so that the centre can continue to be used. The use of louvres on walls around the multi-use courts, as shown in Photo 3, is a complete failure. Due to frequent contact by balls, broken panels are replaced almost weekly. Photo 4 shows the unnecessarily wide corridor. As a result, court sizes do not meet the international size requirements by a metre.

Another public facility that Otahuhu lacks is a public swimming pool. The community was recently involved in protest march demanding a public pool for Otahuhu. The protest was covered in the community newsletter: the Otahuhu Voices June 2009 issue



Source: Otahuhu Voices

Otahuhu residents protest for a public swimming pool

Otahuhu Fights for Its Swimming Pool

Passionate locals are fighting to get the Otahuhu Swimming Pool back into the Auckland City Council's 10-year plan. In May, they staged a protest march down Great South Road from the Town Hall to the Rec Centre, safeguarded by many excellent Maori Warden volunteers. After speeches and a sausage sizzle, at least 30 people made submissions to Council. Many more have made written submissions, written letters to the newspapers, signed the Pool Petition and attended sometimes rowdy public meetings. In June, Otahuhu residents will be going into the Council to speak in person and supporters are welcome to come along – safety in numbers!

Public swimming pools are a great tool to generate use by youth and also the wider community. This will aid in the research aim of casual intercultural cultural interaction.

Libraries have already been identified as a great public place for interaction. However, research shows that some older communities, such as Otahuhu, may have an outdated infrastructure that does not appeal to the youth of today. The photo to the left shows an uninspiring community library that requires most lights on during the day. The atmosphere is not inviting and, as a result, use of the library is decreasing, as people prefer to use the internet at home to do things that may have been previously been done at the library.

David Adjaye's 'Idea Store' is a great example of the change in the appearance and use of libraries. They are no longer treated as building full of books and approached with the idea of 'pin-drop silence'. Instead, they need mixed programmes that encourage the public to favour library use. Libraries in South Auckland communities are changing. Recently, new public libraries have been built in the neighbouring suburbs of Mangere and Onehunga. 'Architects JASMAX were contracted by Manukau City Council to create a "community hub". Opened in November 2002 the (Mangere) Library has succeeded beyond expectations with the recorded usage increasing more than 200% from the



Otahuhu community Library



The changing face of libraries in South Auckland: Onehunga Community Library (top) and Mangere East Community Library (above) designed by JASMAX

previous library building on the same site.⁴² This change in appearance and design ideas has boosted the visitor numbers and helped bring the community library back on the fun-places-in-the-community-to-visit list.

Otahuhu Community Library is in need of change. Libraries are a great place for kids to interact and Otahuhu needs a library to be the catalyst for the future development of the youth of the community.

Although there are plenty of parks in the community, it lacks a safe park that residents of all ages feel at ease using. With much youth vandalism occurring in parks, parents feel unsafe sending younger children there alone. If the park is in a controlled environment where the public eye acts as the security, it still promotes a casual interaction point. Skate parks and running tracks also encourage youth interaction, while an amphitheatre creates a place for casual social performances to take place, drawing in a diverse crowd.

Art can be used to counter vandalism through graffiti. If the talent of young artist is channeled, rather than wasted on the illegal graffiti activities, it can produce some

⁴² News Scoop Independent News “Mangere Library wins architecture award” <http://www.scoop.co.nz> (accessed May 14, 2009)

great pieces. Communities need to look at the positives and guide residents in the right direction from a young age, when change is still possible.

5 Project development

This project is aimed at creating a public urban space where social cultural interaction can take place within the community. By using different programmes on one site, and blurring the boundaries between buildings, a public square can be generated. There, opportunities for interaction can be improved by the range of different users of the facilities.

5.1 Project outline:

The analysis of Otahuhu has outlined facilities the community needs to generate interaction among youth and the wider community. The project will be based on the design of a public sphere framed by three main public facilities: a recreational centre, a public swimming pool and a new, improved community library. These facilities will need to tie in with the existing surrounding infrastructure and also with the design of a public park with a running track, café, children's playground and cycle and exercise tracks that will add value through casual social interaction opportunities.

5.2 Generating use: Safety

The project's driving ideas are based on active living and casual interaction in a safe zone. Safety is one of the most important issues in the community – residents of Otahuhu do not feel safe using the existing parks and public spaces due to the crime rate and negative youth activities. This has created a risk-averse culture that the project aims to change.

Public space is not a static concept. If a point where teenagers gather becomes too formalized, they may move elsewhere or if they are perceived to be of a concern, authority may move them. The project aims to encourage teenagers to use this space and not feel threatened. Placing three different facilities onto one site generates continued use throughout the day. It is a social space that teenagers feel the freedom to use without being supervised, but one where residents feel safer in numbers as the programme generates significant foot traffic. The intention is to find balance – a space where all ages can mix and interact. The writings of Newman and research carried out in Britain by Coleman suggest that an unowned space is the ideal setting for crime. ‘That there may indeed be a relationship between patterns of crime and environmental form.’⁴³ The project hopes to encourage people to use the public space as a community, not just as individuals. Interaction means a wellspring of ideas and shared

⁴³ Moughtin, *Urban Design : Street and Square*.p.137

knowledge, which lead to better understanding of diverse cultures and creates trust within the community.

5.3 A suitable site: Outline

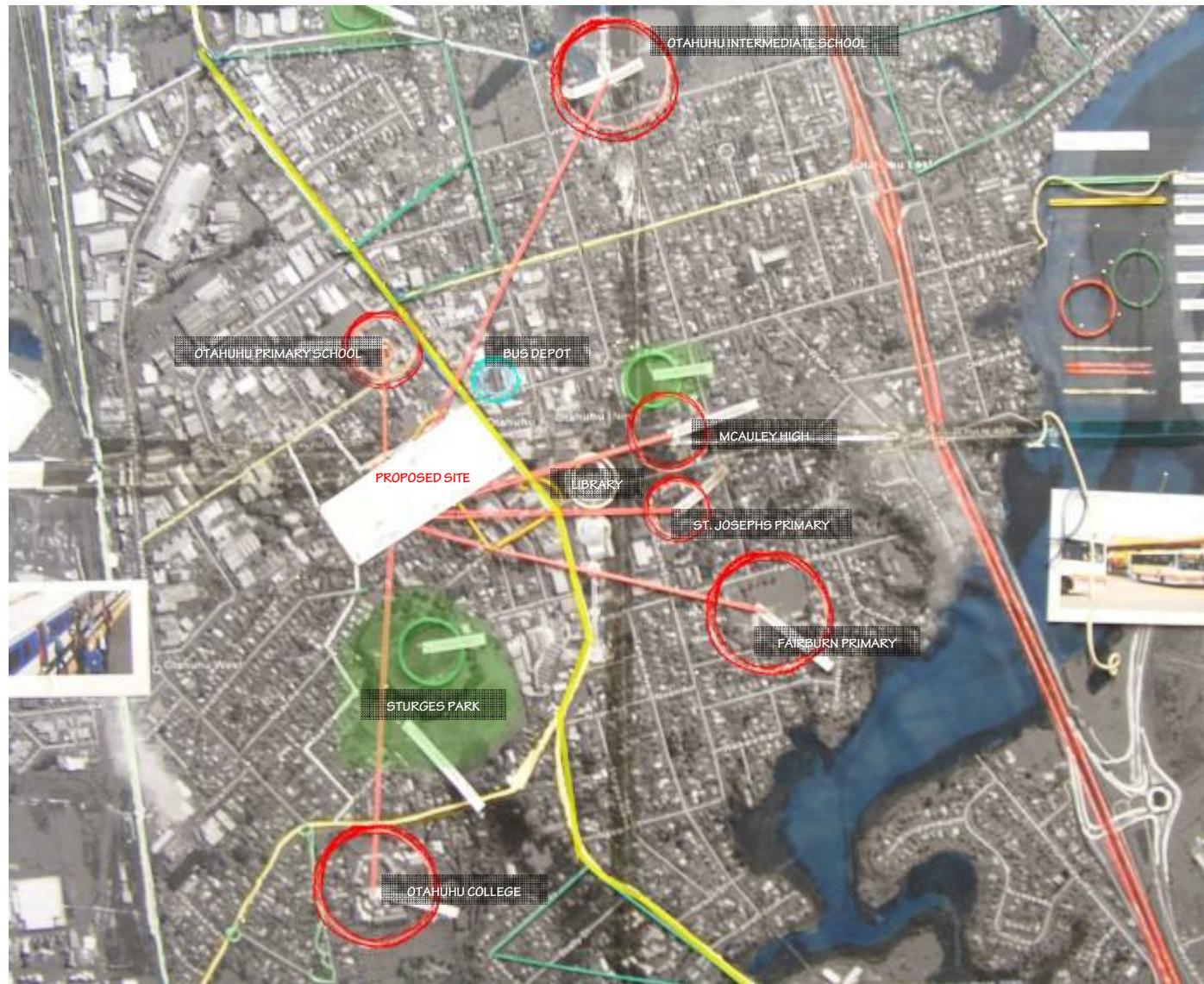
The site for the design project outlined needs to meet the following requirements:

- There should be enough space to meet the project outline of three public facilities
- It needs to be central to the community- links to both residential and retail area
- A place that will generate use at all times of the day
- Central to local schools to encourage use by youth
- Close to the town transportation links
- It needs to have the potential to be the hub of the main town centre
- Have street presence to safety
- Can adapt to a pedestrian friendly environment

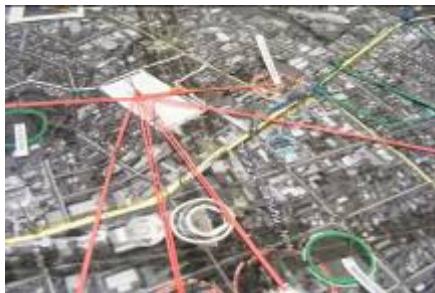
5.4 Site analysis

Otahuhu is very well located with regard to the Auckland Region's main transport links, with State Highway 1 on the eastern edge and the Metro train line on the western boundary. The town is also bisected by Great South Road, which runs along the north/south axis through the middle of the town. The main town centre is located on Great South Road with a retail zone that runs along one axis system. The main shopping area is framed by double-storey shops on both sides of Great South Road and stretches for approximately 1km. There is no escaping the foot traffic on the main street of the grid, the town lacks the urban pocket that shoppers and other users can use to escape the busy retail zone. The main street is dominated by cars and is not very pedestrian friendly.

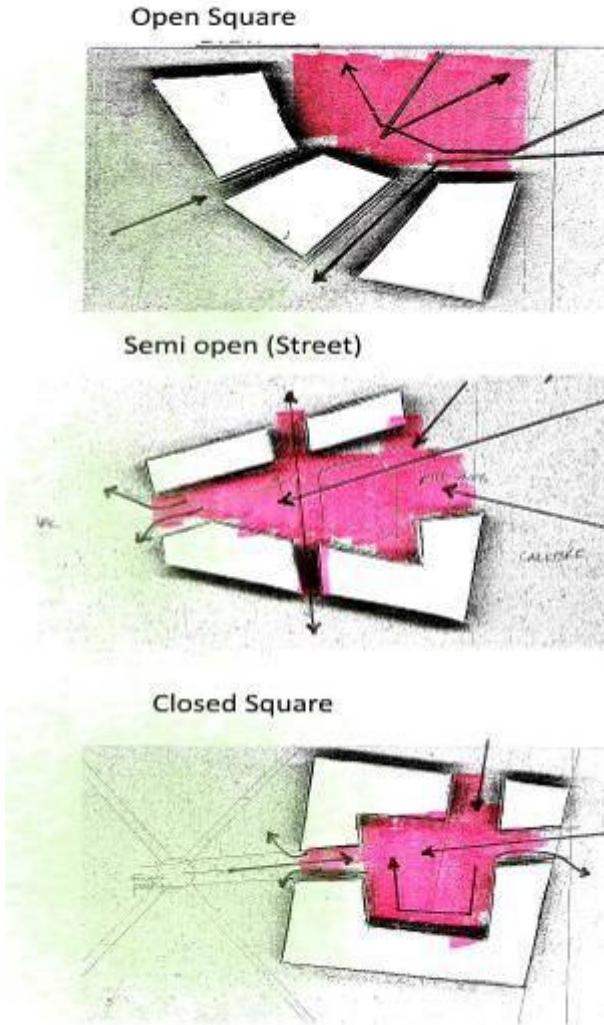
The site chosen for the project is located off the main axis of Great South Road with Mason Avenue to one side and Hall Avenue on the other. The design of the proposed facilities needs to look at ways of pulling foot traffic off the main grid on Great South Road and onto this site. There should be a link from the site to the main retail zone to provide a point where users can leak out from the busy main axis of the tightly squeezed shopping zone. An open space with parks and trees would attract users of diverse background.



The proposed site is located centrally to all the schools in the community. This is important to the project as it aims to provide a safe public zone that encourages use by the youth of the community. The site is close to the Otahuhu bus depot, a popular hangout for students after school. It is important to provide youth with appropriate facilities during the period between the end of the school day and the time their parents get home from work. Gang activities and negative activities usually start at this time of the day, as the students have no supervision and get caught up bad behaviour. One of the benefits this project will provide for young people is a place to spend time after school. This can be achieved through after-school programs at the library or recreation activities at rec centre, swimming pools or the park. The bus route could be remapped to allow students to be picked up from the proposed site of the project.







5.5 Types of squares:

A quick look at different types of building arrangement and public spaces suitable for the chosen site in Otahuhu:

Open Public Space:

This layout may also fit under what, in his theory of classifying the form of the square, Paul Zucker outlines as the dominated square: where the space is directed towards the main building or a group of buildings and all the surrounding structures are related.⁴⁴

- + Open space feels safer for some
- Endless space - lack of framing, undefined space

Semi-open Square:

This special arrangement has an element of street space, where the main axis runs right through with a semi-enclosed space to one side. It feels as if it is funneling traffic through to something at the opposite end. There are enough elements present to define a quality public space that could work well with the thoroughfare.

The closed Square:

The overriding quality of this spatial type is a sense of enclosure. The square becomes an outdoor room. Generally speaking, the more open the corners of the square the less the sense of enclosure, the more built up or complete they are the greater the feeling of being enclosed.

⁴⁴ Ibid.p.105

- The open space layout does not have a defined space and lacks the characters of spatial boundary. For the site, this would leave the open public space leaking out to the street and car-dominated area.
- The closed square protects users from the winds but may not let in enough sunlight and also lacks connection to the street.

5.6 A successful public space in Otahuhu: [Key ideas]

Urban design is an important but often neglected aspect of planning. ‘It is the interface between architecture and planning but is quite distinct from both disciplines.’⁴⁵ People make the place; a sign of a successful space is seeing it in use. If the space is left unoccupied, it tends to have a negative impact on the community. It leads to the space being vandalized and encourages other illegal activities that portray the place as an unsafe zone and discourage users even more.

In its *Making Public Places Newsletter*, Project for Public Spaces (PPS)⁴⁶ identifies some principles of a successful public square. These ideas can be applied to the public square in Otahuhu. While they are small details, they add up to creating a great place.

⁴⁵ Ibid.p.1

⁴⁶ Project for Public Spaces is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. Founded in 1975, .

Image and identity is the first key point identified as being important to the square. Historically, squares identified the entire city, and the image of the square was closely tied in with the public buildings that surrounded it, such as the town hall or library. For this project, the intended public space will aim to create a place that identifies Otahuhu as a culturally diverse community.

Attraction and destination is another key feature of a good space – any great square has a variety of smaller ‘places’ to appeal a variety of uses. Outdoor furniture, fountains, sculpture, and performance spaces are some of the design ideas that generate these smaller spaces. Otahuhu lacks a public space for performances. Art and sculpture that identifies Otahuhu can also be used to design some smaller spaces within the bigger square. There is currently a sculpture on the site of the recreation centre erected in memory of former Prime Minister David Lange. This can be incorporated into the design of the space to generate a place within the space.



Sculpture representing the diversity of Otahuhu erected in memory of former Prime Minister David Lange

A public space should feature amenities that make it comfortable for people to use. Benches and terraces in the right location can make a big difference. Lighting can also play a role in the space, and highlighting activities and entrances or pathways also influences the use of the space. The chosen site for this project has multiple street entrances, and pathways needs to lead users into the space with ease.

Flexible design is also a key point identified by PPS. Programmes play a vital role in the success of the space. Public space can become boring if it is not flexible to change. Design decisions should look at multiple uses of elements within the space. For example terrace seating can double as a skate feature. Festivals and seasonal changes also bring life into the square; i.e. annual events that the public look forward to. The Otahuhu weekly market can be incorporated in the design. Seasonal change within the space will allow for the continual use of the space during the changing weather of Auckland.

The last key point highlighted by the Project for Public Space is the role of the management of the square. The public space needs to make a positive impact on the user, one that brings them back to the square time and time again. One of the ways this can be achieved in Otahuhu is by keeping the space safe and lively. It needs to be clean and well maintained; many parks around Otahuhu are littered and vandalized with graffiti, which drives the users away.

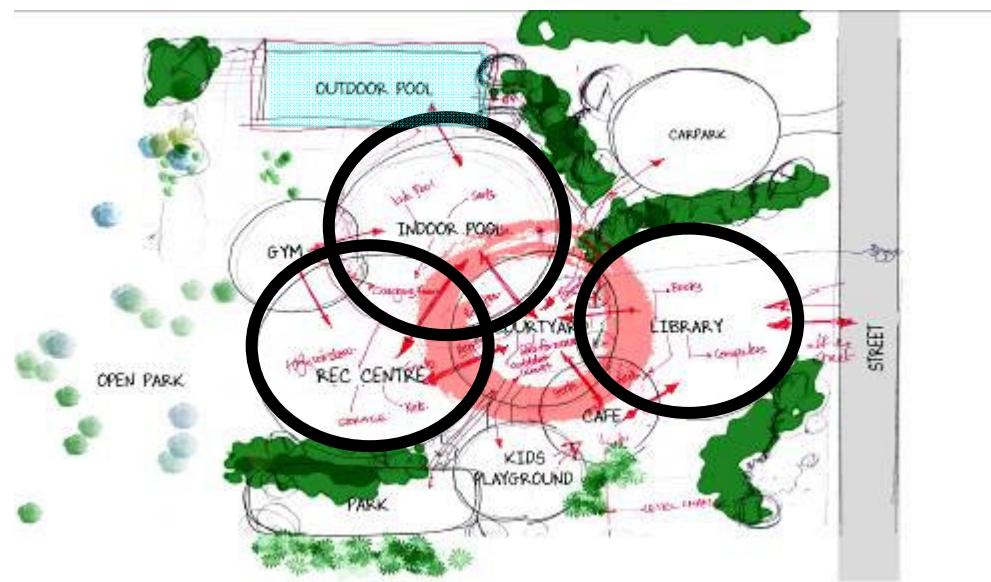
5.7 The master plan:

The project carries its strengths on the multiple programmes it runs on the site to generate maximum use during the day. Master planning of the project is a very important step in the design process. The design of the multiple programmes should complement each other, the proposed facilities and, more importantly, the existing infrastructure and context. There are many architectural rules and elements to consider while planning for a public facility and the ‘third space’.

When designing a stand-alone building, the site conditions and sun angles generate many of the design decisions. But when designing multiple facilities with a goal to creating an inviting and safe third space in between the design, the rules become more difficult. The building now has to address the streetscape and entry and also the community public sphere. The design must address both sides of the building while still using the sun and site conditions to its advantage. The orientation and flexibility of the buildings become quite important, as the design must now resolve issues such as two ‘front’ façades or no rear façade. Links between the buildings need to be identified first before the master plan can continue.

The relationship between the facilities must be established with regards to types of use, time of use and street reference. The spaces in between the buildings should flow and

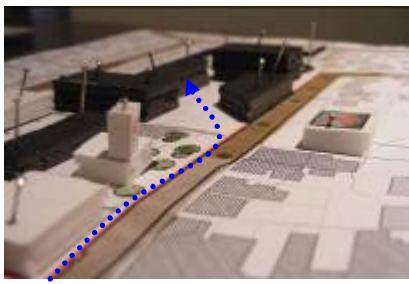
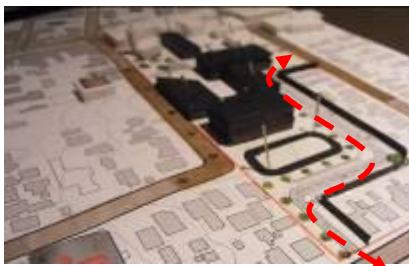
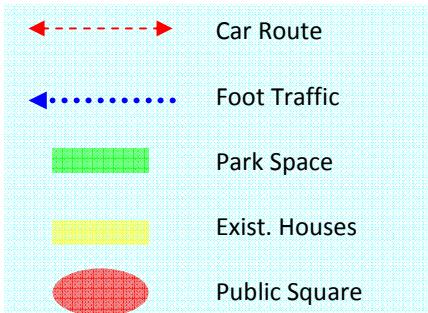
work well with each of the facilities. The bubble diagram study below illustrates the links that the design needs to create. At this early stage of the master plan, the diagram identifies the relationship between facilities, not the actual building location or any reference to the actual site.



Bubble Diagram

- The library is the quieter, more controlled environment and the recreation centre and the public pool are more physical facilities.
- Libraries link to the street.
- Rec centres link to the park.
- The physical link between the pool and the rec centre can be more dominant than the link with the library, which can be linked visually.
- The café is important to the project as a building that will be used by users of all programmes on the site. As such, it must link to the central square.
- The café needs to have a link with the main square but also other facilities.
- -links to the library and kids playground as mothers tend to enjoy a café visit while kids are left to enjoy their time playing
- The indoor pool needs a link to the outdoor pool and potentially to an open park space. Space for gathering must be allocated around the pool for activities such as BBQs, kids playing.
- Car park located adjacent to the street.
- Landscaping can be used to buffer the pedestrian zone from the cars.
- A dominant link is needed to the main street - Great South Road

5.7.1 Proposal 1:



This master plan deals with design issues such as:

- The existing houses on the southern and western boundaries of the site
- Site size
- A car park against the existing fence line
- Connections within the proposed buildings and the existing context
- The public square and its connections with all other programmes on the site
- Entries to the site

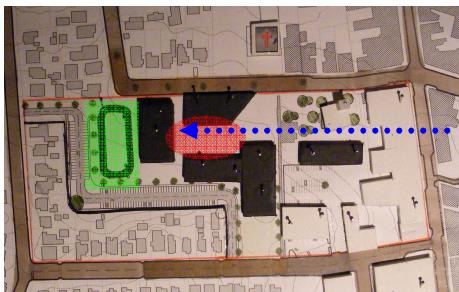
Here, the project deals with the existing houses being left on site and not relocated or demolished. The proposed park is located between the houses and the proposed buildings. This acts as a buffer in the change of scale in the building. It also allows for the residents to use the park as an extension to their backyards. The design incorporates a car lane between the houses and the park entrance from Hall Avenue on the south side and Nikau Road (shown in red) on the west to divide the public from the private space. This separates car traffic from the pedestrian zone. The users approaching the site from the two adjacent streets do not have to view it through a mass of parked cars. The vehicles are tucked away against the fence line of the existing houses.

>>Discussion in a design critique identifies the car lane blocking out the residents. It is felt that those residents are not being considered as part of the whole scheme. The site boundary is read as inside the fence line of the houses and the design disregards the residents on those two boundaries.

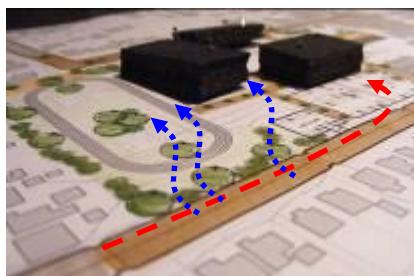
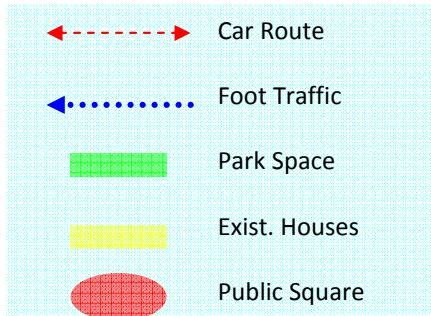


The placement of the three main facilities creates a semi-enclosed third space in between. The size of the space reads proportionally with the building mass.

>> Discussion in design critique identifies issues regarding the users approaching the site from Great South Road; these users hit a dead end and have not physical or visual connection to the park. This limits interaction between users of the square and the park. (Shown in blue)



5.7.2 Proposal 2:



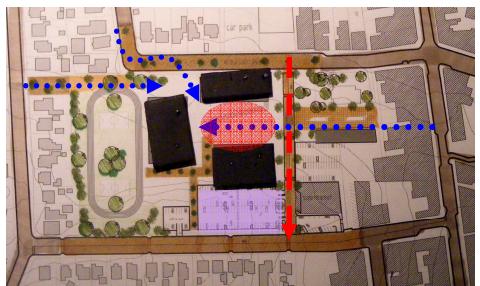
This master plan deals with design issues such as:

- The existing houses on the south side of the site being removed to allow for a bigger park and street front
- Car park being treated as a parking lot
- Connections within the proposed buildings and the existing context
- The increased size of the public square and its connections with all other programmes on the site
- Entries to the site-



This layout removes the existing houses along the south side of the site to open the site up to Hall Avenue. The park now stretches from Mason Ave on the top end to Hall Ave at the bottom. It makes the public access to the park easier and more visible to crossing traffic. The park does not feel squeezed by the houses as in the previous master plan.

>> Discussion in design critique identifies the lack of site sensitivity in the removal of the houses. Instead of resolving the issues of the houses, the problem was diverted. Not a solution and not a sustainable idea. The park is still blocked off by the rec centre and isolated from the public square.



The car park in this scheme was located off Hall Avenue on the south side (shown in purple). There is an introduction of a one-way lane from Mason Avenue on the north end to Hall Avenue on the south shown in red.

>> Discussion in design critique raises the issue that the car park dominates the arrival from Hall Avenue. For a pedestrian-friendly project, too much emphasis is on the car and the large car park. The one-way lane works well to bring people into the site; design needs to control the traffic speed with the use of materials and landscaping.

5.8 Design Concept:

The initial study using mass modelling identified some aspects of the master plan that needed further development. There were restricted links to some parts to the project. It was established that the park in both master plan studies did not read as having any link to the main square. The recreation centre blocked visual interaction between park and square. The square in between the three facilities lacked character and did not help tie the three facilities together. Also, it was felt that the main square was too large to create opportunities of personal casual interaction between users.



The project's driving idea of cultural interaction was then used for an abstract design concept. It was broken down into an architectural notion of interaction: intersection, folding, crossing paths, meeting points, axis, symmetry, **visibility** and **connectivity**. These terms were then portrayed through an architectural model. Lines of axis were drawn, identifying the site from different elements within the community. The idea of connectivity and visual connection were then used to further develop the project.

The design decisions are based on the three programs on the site having a connection to each other – either a visual or physical connection that will assist in creating interaction opportunities. The project will attract the residents through the different facilities. It is then up to the design of the spaces to make the users interact with each

other. For example how does a library user get the opportunity to interact with a user of the gym or recreation center?

Visibility of users to each other and social places to interact, such as the café, park terraces, amphitheatre space, stage, drinking fountain, will help achieve the goal of bringing the diverse range of users together. The design seeks to produce public spaces of visual connection, where users can have maximum visibility to others users. The angled façade helps strengthen the connectivity of the three main buildings.

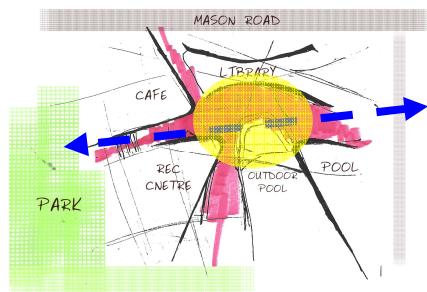
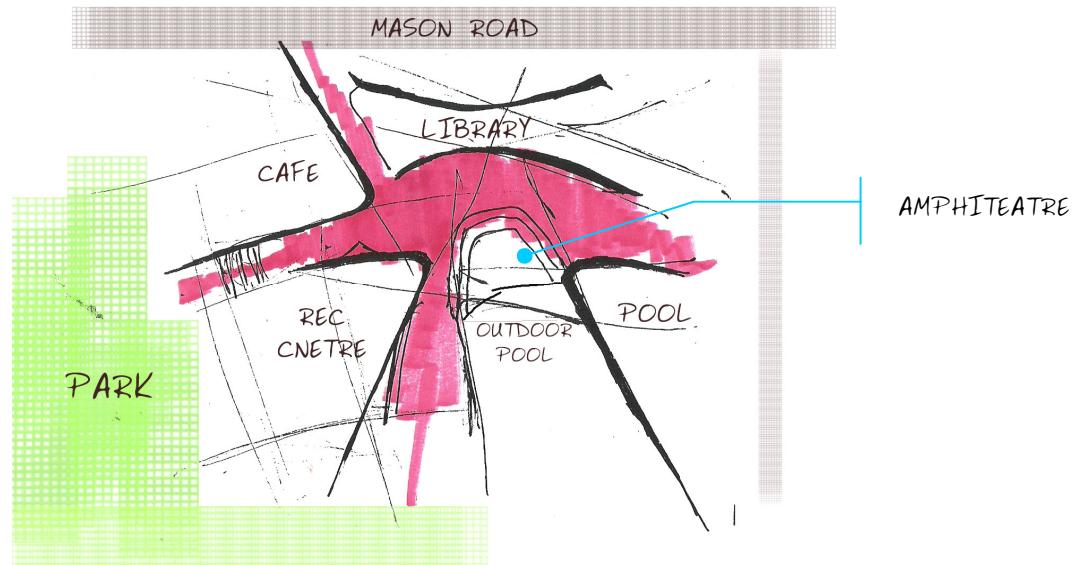


Fig 1



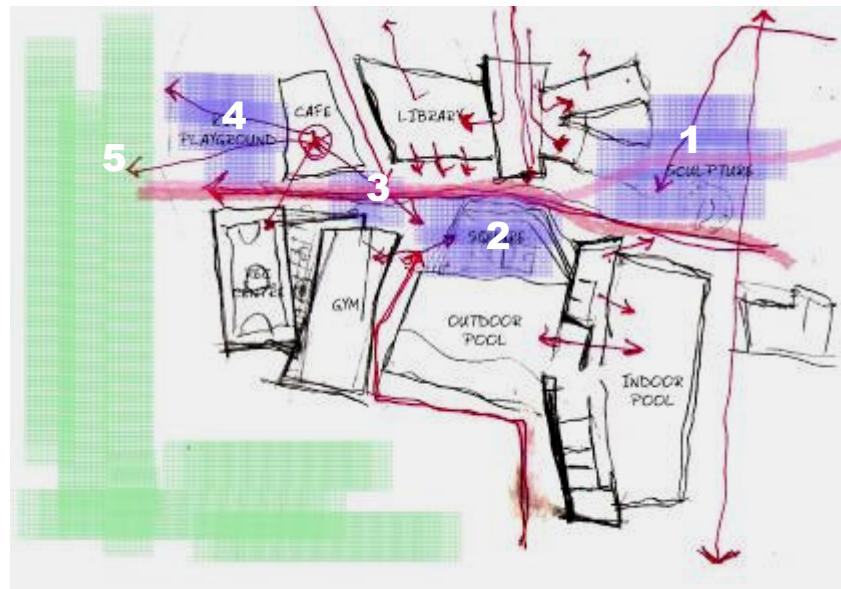
Fig 2

As illustrated in Fig. 1 the original model was then overlaid and intersecting lines were pulled out to create spaces with the aim of creating a public space in between. This would link the whole project as one with the idea of physical and visual connection.



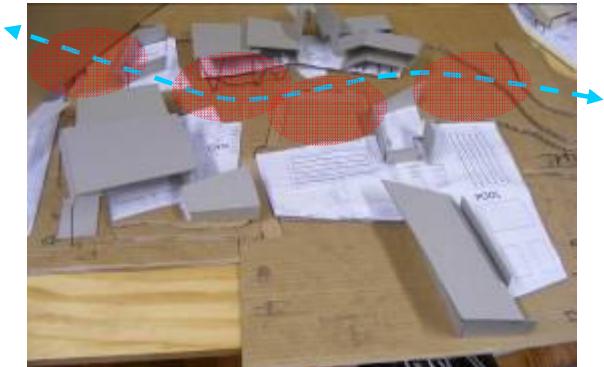
Christopher Alexander in *Pattern Language* states that the 'street should be for staying in, and not just for moving through, the way they are today.' His suggestion is to 'make a bulge in the middle of the public path and make the ends narrow, so that the path

forms an enclosure which is a place to stay, not just a place to pass through' ⁴⁷ This design concept focuses on treating the main space as a series of smaller spaces. It takes the form of that similar to a street rather than a square. It looks at the idea of the public domain as spatial sequence. Smaller spaces as earlier identified by PPS are an important key to a successful public place. The sketch shown below illustrates the transformation of the square from a previous design used in earlier master plans, where it was identified as being too large for opportunities of casual personal interaction.



⁴⁷ Alexandra, Christopher. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings and Construction*. New York: Oxford University Press 1977 p590-591

Smaller pockets of public spaces are linked to the main tread, which links the whole project to the main town centre running on the east to west axis. *Space 1*: Is a transition space as you approach the main square - it can house a sculpture or water fountain to create a point of gathering within that space. *Space 2*: is the main square designed as an amphitheatre space, the main path wraps around it. *Space 3*: is a transition space when approaching the site from the café, and can be used for outdoor half-court basketball or similar activities. *Space 4*: This space can be used for a children's playground as it has a good link to the café and the park. *Space 5*: is the end of the path, the tight squeeze before the space explodes into a large park full of activities.



Conceptual model- illustrating spaces- Models create special volumes and aids in better understanding of the space

The user approaching the public space from Great South Road will now have a visual connection to the 'main space' and the park. The design takes the user through a journey of wide and narrow spaces. The change in form sees the path as a street for circulation and also a place to occupy. There is visual and physical connectivity between all facilities on the site. The idea of connectivity aims to connect people to each other and connecting the facilities on the site to its surrounding context and users.

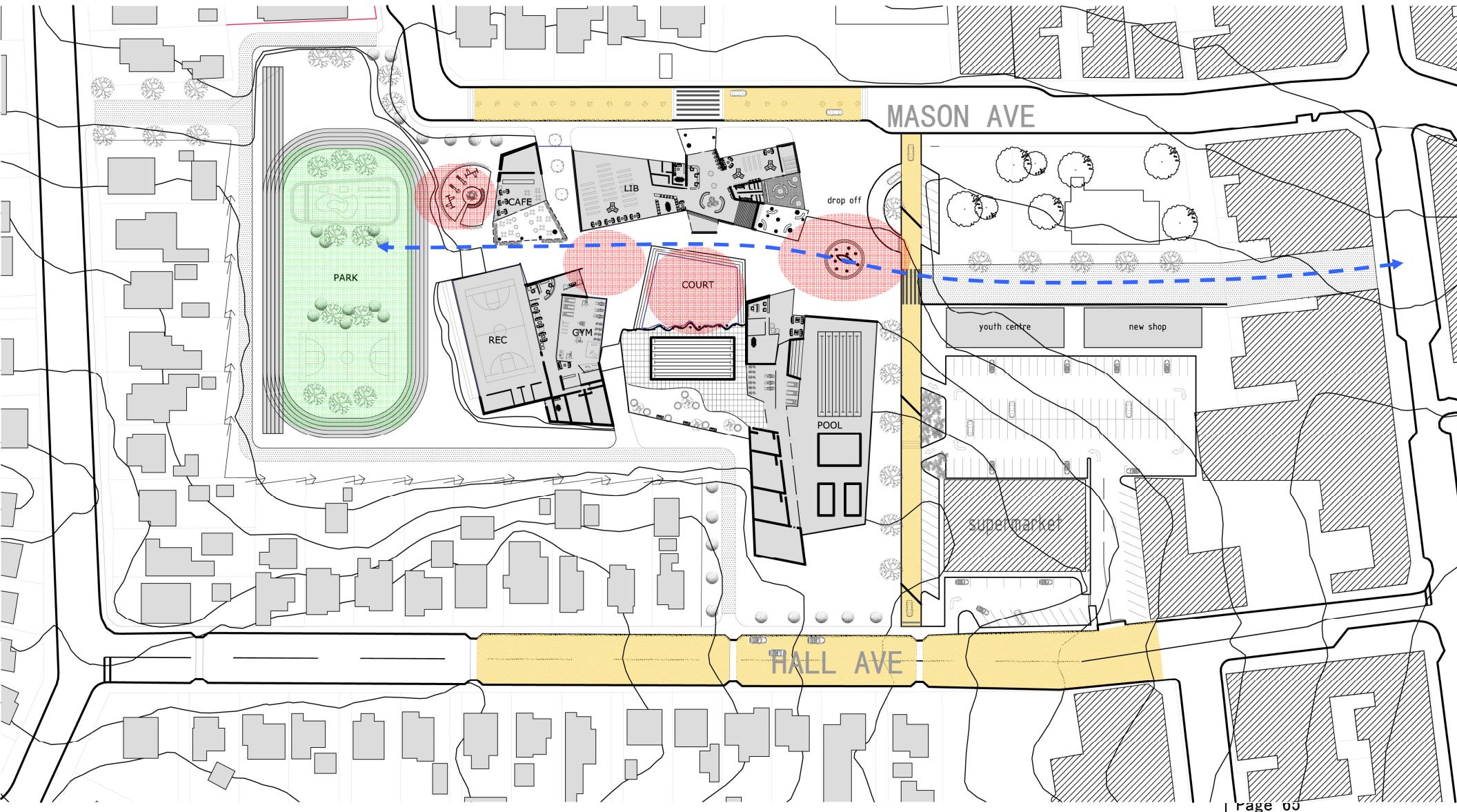
For safety reasons and to make the community feel secure, it was important to have a visual connection to the park when approaching the square. The community can use the park and public space during lunch breaks from work, or for a jog around the park after work without feeling at risk of danger. Visual connections with vehicles passing

through Hall Ave and Mason Ave are important as well to make the users feel safe in the environment. It is still essential to keep the environment pedestrian friendly. Design ideas such as a change in road material and speed control bumps, landscaping and sign can slow down traffic around the site, and make the environment user friendly for the everyday for residents. If the project generates a lot of pedestrians use, this will promote the site to those passing by in their car to be more active and use these public facilities.

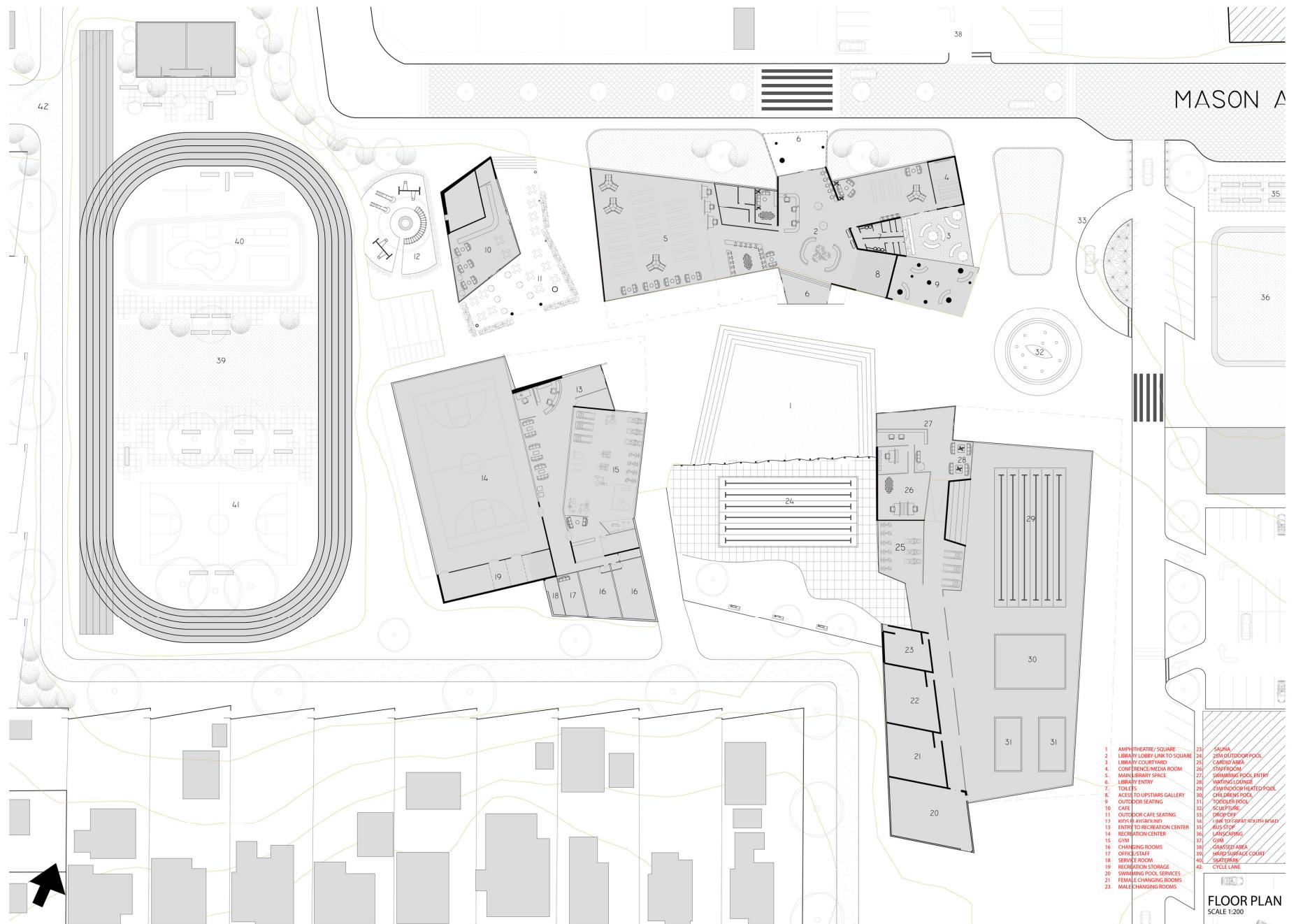
The public space should have easy access for residents on foot - it should not feel too formal, a casual walk off the grid, where residents can stroll through from different points. People do not interact on a busy shopping street; there is no place to stop and chat with friends and family, or have a casual conversation with a stranger in the midst of the fast-paced foot traffic of Great South Road. There are no amenities on busy main street, residents are instead encouraged to shop so they only visit the public domain when they need to purchase something. The project aims to draw the residents out to the public domain as a regular routine. Mixing different programmes will help achieve this by increasing the target audience to the site. Design elements such as the exercise track, sports teams (regular trainings), library use, the swimming pool, recreation centre, gym membership, the playground, supermarket visits, church visits, outdoor basketball courts, and Skate Park should encourage visitors to return at regular intervals.

5.9 Final Master Plan:





MASON A



The project is based on increasing the casual cultural intersection within the diverse suburb of Otahuhu. The idea of maximizing the physical and visual connection between all users was the main design driver. The final outcome hopes to have achieved this by:

The Park:

- A running track to encourage interaction amongst youth-
- A skate park to generate interaction with youth and create a theatrical audience from other users
- A bike and walking lane around the edges of the existing houses, and gates off the existing fence to allow for residence use the park
- A outdoor hard surface court in the park - Polynesian community members use the park for church youth group activities such a volley ball or basketball
- Grassed area for games such as touch rugby or soccer, which are quite common among the youth of Otahuhu
- Location is accessible from the street and the square
- Hard surface of the track means the park can be used during winter months
- Also flexible use of the track can be used to markets- set up around the park on the track on a Sunday morning

The Recreation Centre:

- Visual and physical connectivity to the park and square – a place for an audience to view the basketball court
- Gym for membership attendance - getting users into a regular routine
- Users of the gym having visual connection to the square to motivate youth
- South-facing court to avoid overheating and provide a comfortable space

The Swimming Pool:

- Provision of an indoor and outdoor pool - youth enjoy the freedom and space to run around – Outdoor pool with park and BBQ area for casual community gathering
- Toddler pool to help young children pick up important life skills - opportunity for interaction and intercultural friendship
- Training pool to get the non-swimmers of the community of all age groups involved and learning up new life skills
- Visual connection to square to encourage new users to participate.

The Café:

- Location central to the whole project - connection to the park, recreation centre, library and central public sphere
- Adjacent to playground- mothers using the café have visual connection to kids

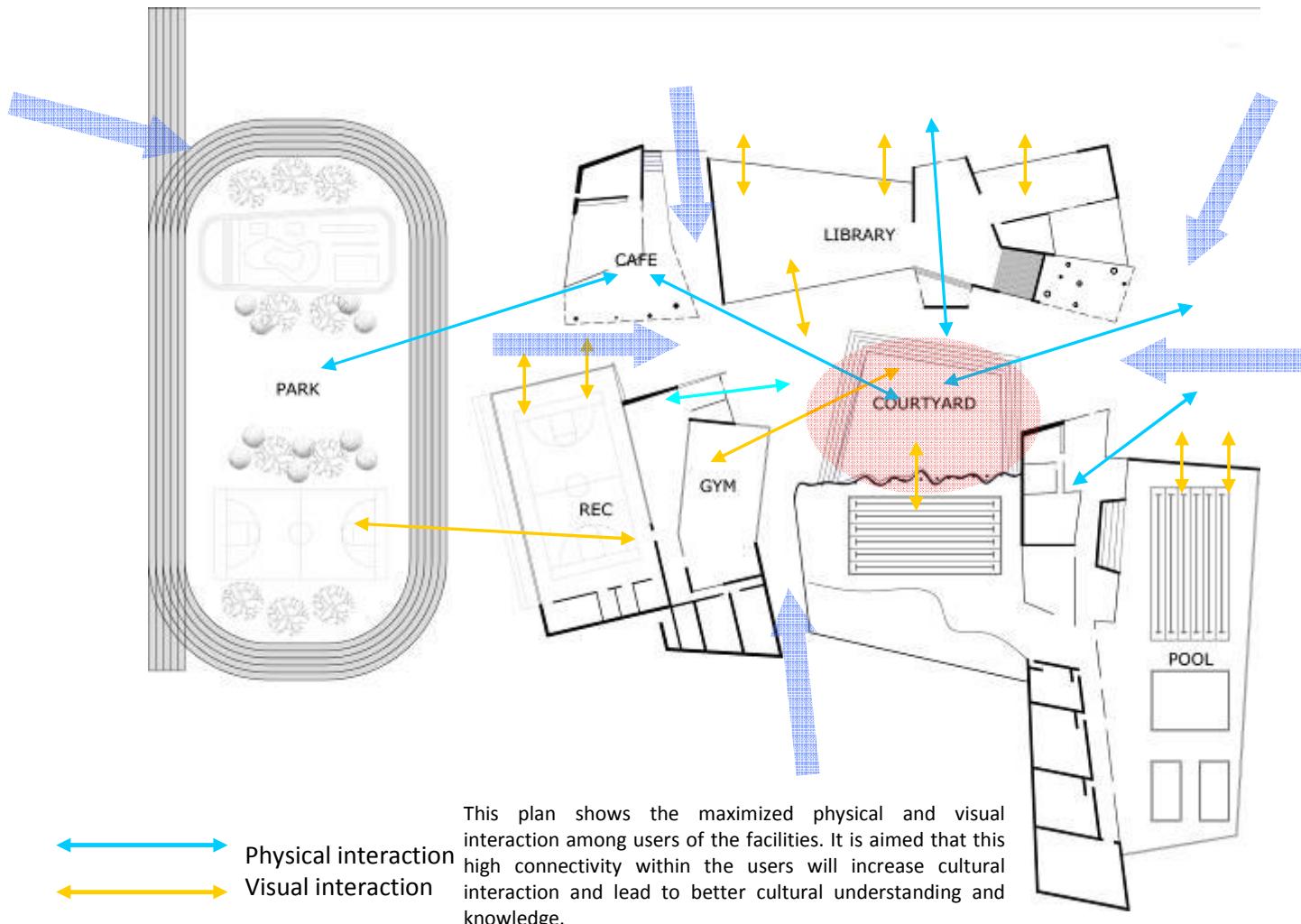
- Users of the library have easy access to the café
- Café is accessible from the street and the square

The ‘Third space’: public square

- A sculpture that engenders community pride is displayed to create a place of interaction as one enters the space from the town center
- Amphitheatre space for casual gatherings and/or performances - flexible use will allow for the space to be set up for half-court basketball games. Art display, water feature
- Covered space on the fringe of the square along the building façade for casual gatherings and protection from the elements
- Outdoor courts for sporting activities

The Library:

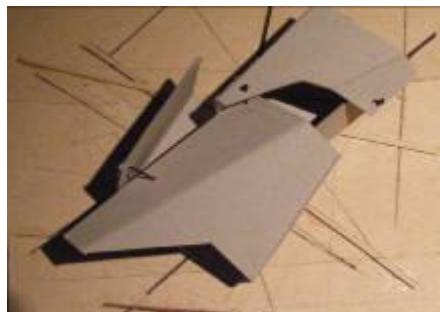
- The library entrance lobby is designed not only as a transition space but as a place to occupy with mixed use. It is not design to be the tradition quiet library entrance of the past.
- Connection to the square and street
- Courtyard designed not as a quiet zone but a place of casual interaction among other users. Smaller casual interaction points such as these give the users the opportunity to have a casual conversations.



5.10 In Depth study of the Library development:



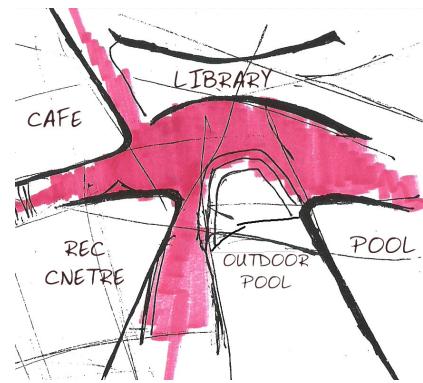
Concept model derived on the ideas of: connectivity, intersection, visibility, and axis



The idea of folding and intersection modeled



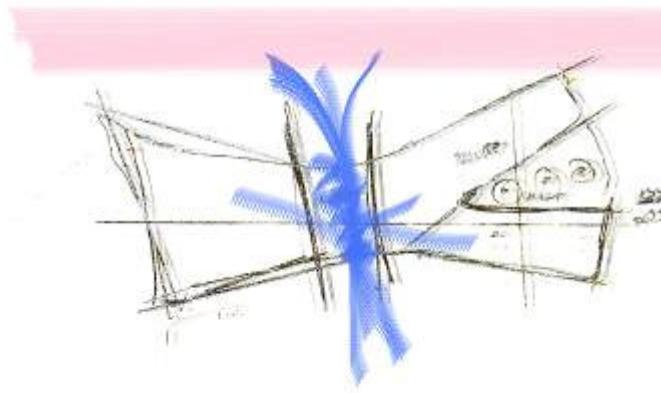
The driving form of the plan- developed through butter paper sketches



Model overlaid with butter paper to study spaces. Public Square as a street journey of smaller spaces



Folding model simplified to architectural form in relationship to plan



Plan developed into three main spaces linked to a lobby/transition space. Idea of informal spaces of interaction



Final floor plan of the Library:

Space divided into five smaller pockets

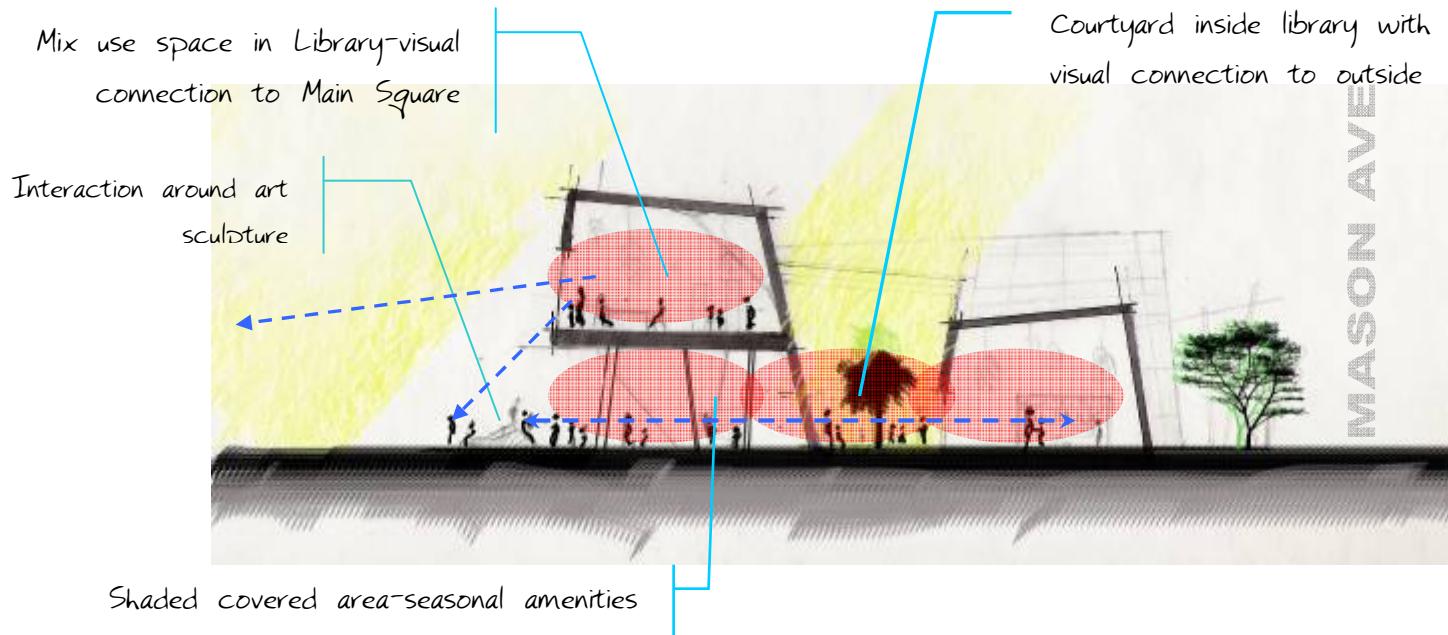
Lobby space seen as the driving force of the concept

Internal courtyard with visual connection to the square

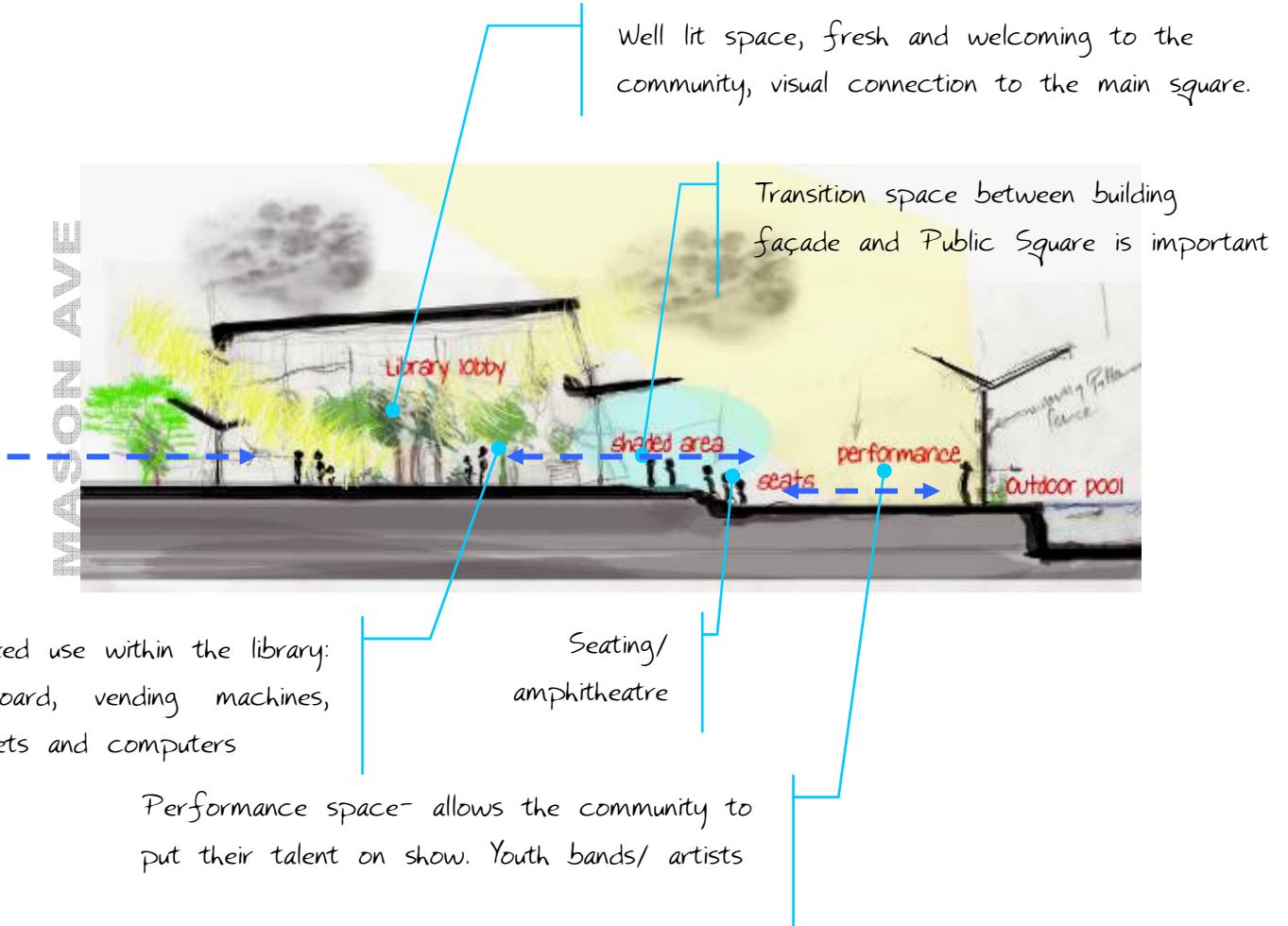
Finalized form of the library

Lobby space to allow in plenty of light

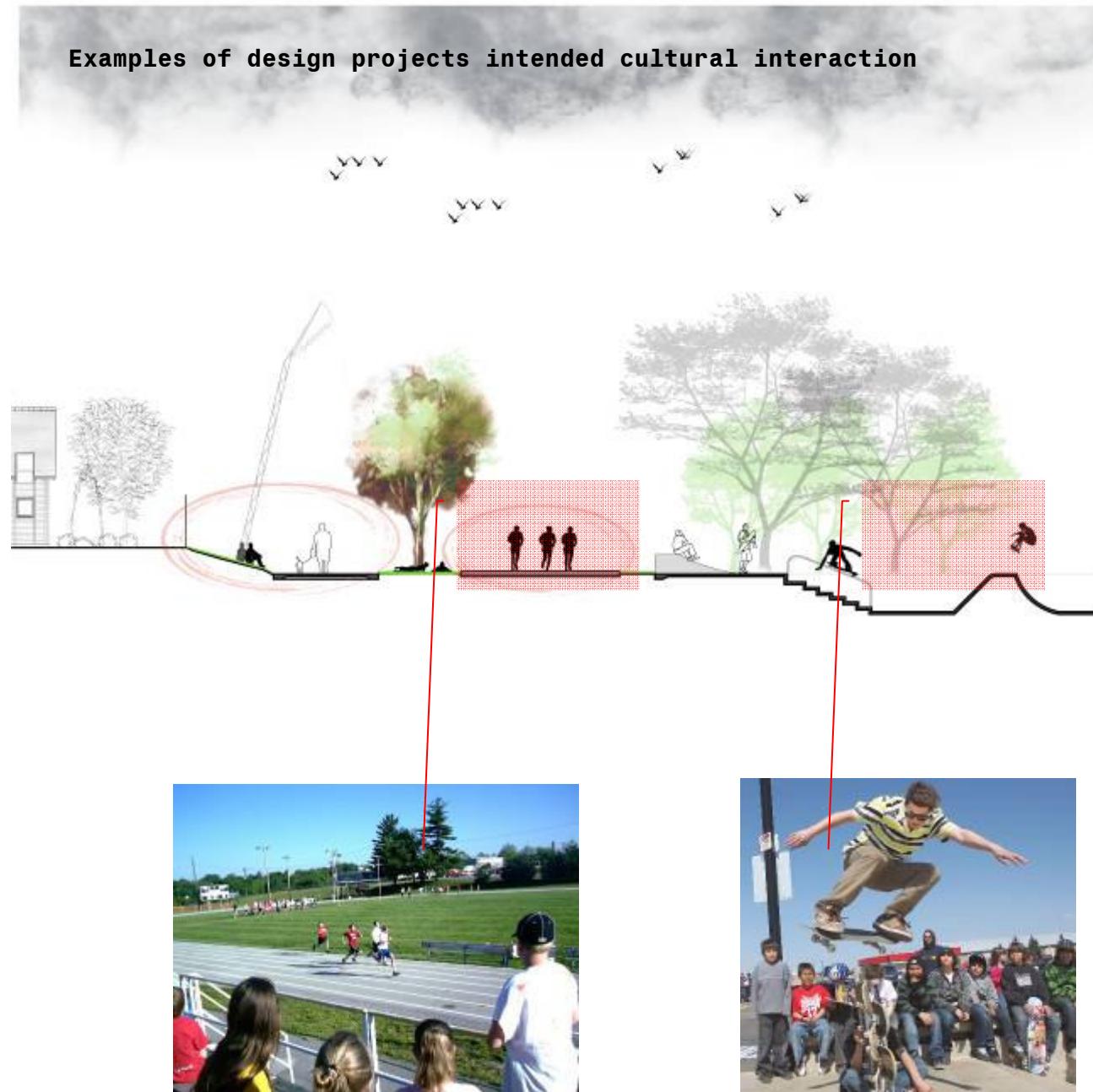
Covered canopy elements to be introduced to allow Users to occupy the edges of the form



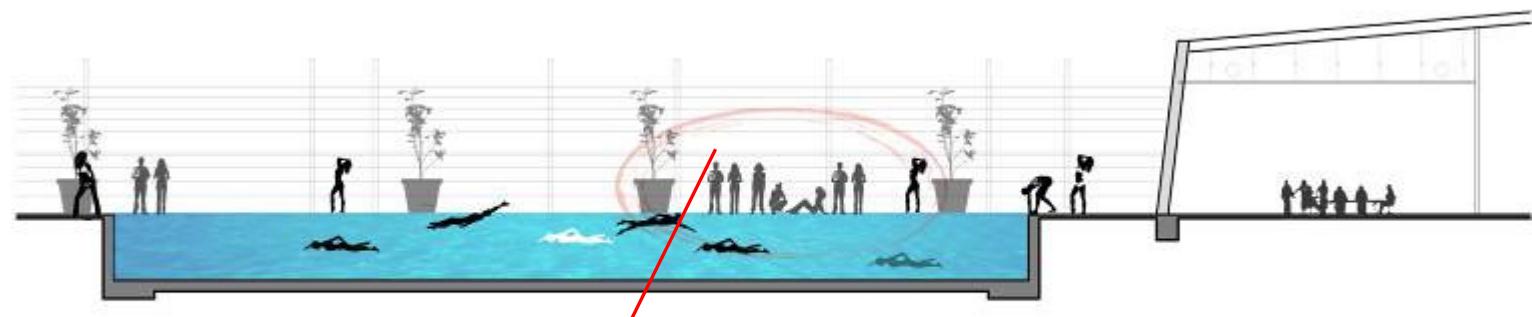
This section identifies interaction opportunities with the library users and those outside using the public space. Encouraged through visibility, the library gives the users many spaces within the facility to interact. The courtyard is designed with the idea of encouraging users of other facilities on the site passing by to experience the library from outside and draw them in. The courtyard space inside the library is a fresh change from the old dull library. It is based on David Adjaye's concept of the Idea Store, which mixes different programmes within the library to generate greater use and encourage more cultural interaction.



Examples of design projects intended cultural interaction









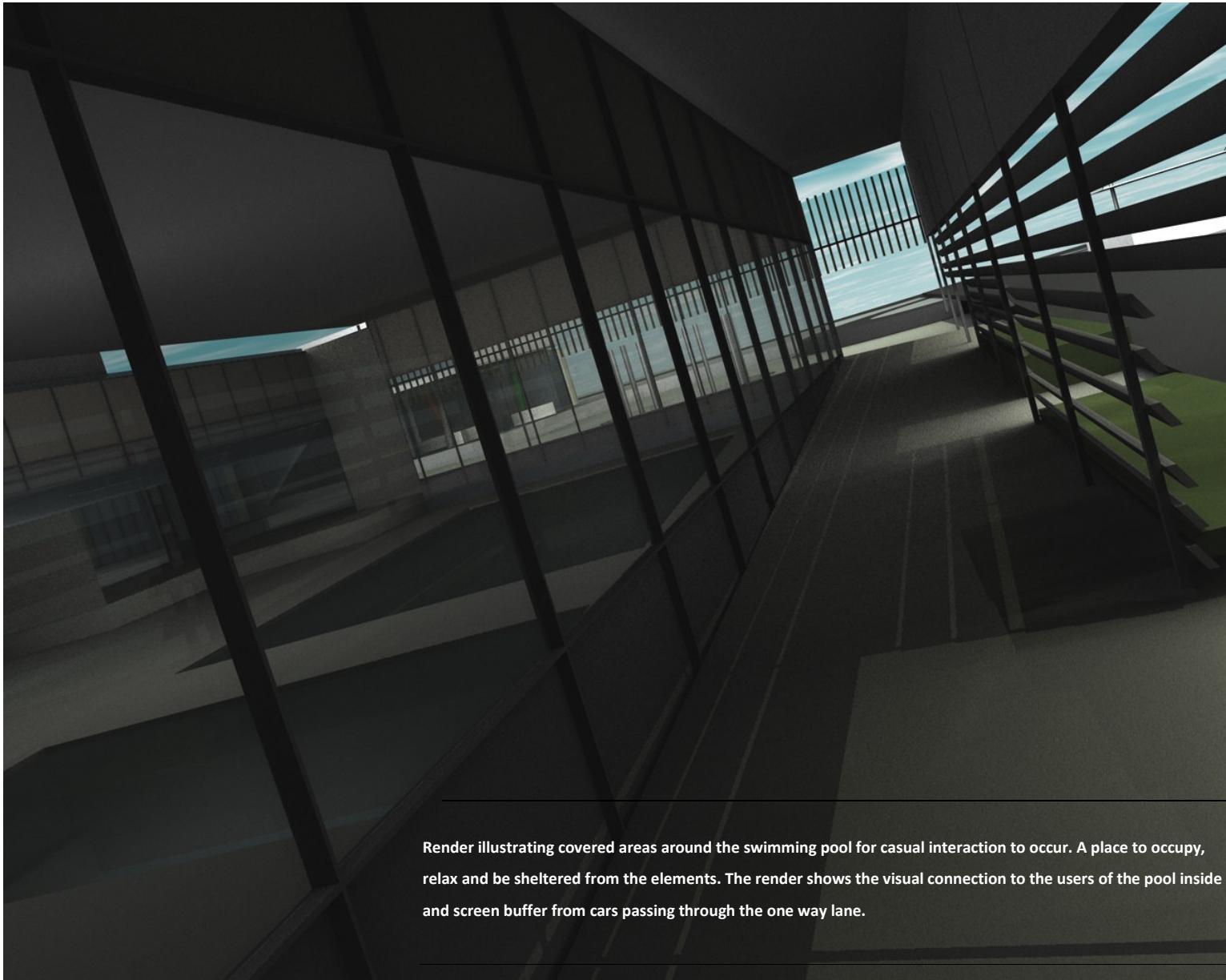
Render illustrating showing the square- an environment with a lot of smaller pockets where the community can gather and interact. The water feature to the left of the render, illustrates a place where one can sit and relax. There is a visual interaction to the library – also the space underneath the building- creates a sheltered pocket for reading, lunch and also place to sit and watch the performances in the square beyond.

APPROACHING SITE FROM MASON AVENUE
CULTURAL INTERACTION AT THE SQUARE



Render illustrating the park environment the scheme aims to achieve. A mixture of youth and adult use, but also visually linking the park to the square behind and the view into the recreation centre to the right- the running track and the small pavilion also provided place of interaction at a casual daily basis

VIEW FROM PARK TO RECREATION CENTRE
CULTURAL INTERACTION AT THE PARK



Render illustrating covered areas around the swimming pool for casual interaction to occur. A place to occupy, relax and be sheltered from the elements. The render shows the visual connection to the users of the pool inside and screen buffer from cars passing through the one way lane.

6.0 Critical Appraisal:

The community:

The design project is based on the essence of interculturalism in Auckland and the elements required to create a welcoming community. It seeks to find ways in which architectural public buildings and urban design can create opportunities for cultural interaction within the community. The research focuses on the South Auckland community of Otahuhu. A community rich in culture and history, it fits in well with the research idea of cultural interaction. It is a growing community with a young population.

Design issues concerning public buildings:

The research identified that public buildings do not generate as much use as they could due to their location and context, and many of them being out of date. As the community changes at a rapid pace with the increase in migrants, there is a change in the number of uses of the facility and the demand for its use.

The research identifies that community institutions of the past have mainly been designed as stand-alone buildings in isolation to other facilities, with the focus on what happens within the four walls. This design idea overlooked a vital part of the building experience, the space around it. This space is usually covered with car parks and only

people using the buildings visit these public facilities. Buildings in isolation to other public facilities lack the power to attract a diverse range of users. The research study deals with space around a public building and the possible advantages to the activities around its fringes.

Urban areas are places where the quality of the environment most directly affects our lives. The research identifies that arranging public buildings around a common public square or park is of vital importance for the diverse communities of today. This is an idea used by architect David Adjaye, mixing programmes within a common space increases user numbers and maximizes the use of the facility, and more importantly the ‘third space’ in between. The Idea Store is Adjaye’s new library design, where he mixes programmes such as art galleries and dance classes inside the library to increase user numbers and promote cultural mix.

Research identifies that the target group for the design project is the youth of Otahuhu, as there was an issue regarding youth crime rates and gang activities in the community. Youth are a good starting point for cultural interaction as they do not have prejudices about other cultures. If cultural interaction is introduced at a young age, there is greater cultural understanding and tolerance within the community.

This lack of cultural barriers among youth prompted research to identify public buildings in Otahuhu that would attract youth use. Community analysis identified that many public buildings in Otahuhu are outdated; the community library is a vital place of cultural interaction but Otahuhu is in need of a new library. The library is housed in a dull outdated box and has many unsustainable design features. As user numbers at libraries are dropping, new design ideas were to be applied to the community library. New public libraries have recently been built in the neighbouring suburbs of Mangere and Onehunga, increasing user numbers by almost 200%.

Sport was also identified as a good interaction tool for youth. There are many opportunities for cultural interaction within a team environment. Youth of all age ranges and cultural backgrounds partake in sports. A design study of the existing community recreational centre identifies many design failures and helps with design decisions for the project solution. The community also lacked a public swimming pool and the project sees this as another tool for casual cultural interaction.

Openness to public space:

The site for the project was chosen after a thorough community analysis to ensure it met certain requirements such as: central to the retail zone but still in touch with residential areas, enough space for a large-scale project and easily accessible by the youth of the community. It was vital that the site generate enough users for the

proposed community square and not be left vacant. The facilities identified help to generate use through the day and late evening. The location of the project promotes the public sphere to the community. It was perceived that the communities had a risk-averse culture when creating public domains, and there was promotion of 'no go' zones, which create 'no culture' and shape how one behaves in the public sphere. The project solution to this issue was to design flexible space that easily change in use and attract users of all background to the site.

Connectivity: physical interaction:

The project's master-plan study identified issues of connection between all three main facilities and other amenities on the site. A revised master plan still lacked connection from the park to the main square. The master plan study helped identify the location of the facilities on the site but was weak in terms of connectivity of users.

An abstract model illustrating some of the ideas of **connectivity**, such as intersection, folding and visibility, was used to derive the forms to be used in the study of connectivity. This model developed into identifying forms of connection solution. The initial idea of a square was later developed into a series of smaller 'squares'/spaces. This was an important tool for casual personal interaction driven by the project. Smaller condensed spaces create the opportunity for people to interact at a personal social level. The idea was portrayed as a series spaces attached to a main tread. These spaces

then created opportunities for gathering to be focused around amenities. Here, the project places a sculpture in the space as users approach the site from the busy town center. It acts as a transition zone, a place to gather before passing through the main space. The sculpture reflects the community's diverse culture, and visitors to the community can experience a little bit of the local history through the use of art around the public domain. Other smaller spaces on the tread use amenities such as park benches, café tables, amphitheatre space and landscaping. These all create an opportunity for cross-cultural fusion at a personal level. Throughout the project, proportion of the space is read as intimate rather than a large public square.

The facilities identified for the park through research of the community also generate diverse use. The park is also designed with multiple uses and with the idea of connectivity. The hard surface courts for sports games such as basketball and volleyball and the skate park draw in the community youth to use the facility. The bike lane around the site attracts residents, as the complex is promoting a safe environment. The project overcomes the issue of security and safety by designing with the aim of maximizing user numbers using multiple programmes. This way the public acts as the users and also the security. The design aims to let the residents feel proud of their community hub and treat it as an extension to their backyard.

Connectivity: visual interaction

Though the space was broken into smaller pockets, it was important to maintain a visual connection within the whole site from almost any vantage point. It was essential to have visual connectivity that tied the internal and external spaces. The design blurs the boundary between architecture public space and urban landscape. The idea for the project was to have maximum visibility between all the different programmes. Visitors to the site will use the different programmes on the site, and having a visual connection to all other activities around the site encourages users to step out their cultural comfort zone and to interact with others and try out new things.

The project resolves the issue of the existing residential fence line design issue by again blurring the boundary, this time using the fence as art canvas. This creates another opportunity to showcase the different cultural expressions of the community to the users.

Programmes:

The three main facilities on the site have been designed with the idea of providing casual social interaction to its users. The design maximizes visual connection to the users outside the building but still works around the orientation to the sun in not allowing the building to overheat. The existing recreational centre overheated and was

a failure in attracting users. The project locates the building with the court facing south, allowing a lot of southern light and visual connection to the park.

The library is a much-needed element to the community, with the old library well out of date and not appealing to the younger generation. The project emphasizes the lobby space as a mixed-use area of casual interaction in the proposal. The lobby was designed as an entrance to the library but also as a lane that connects the street to the main 'square'. Within the lobby space, landscaping was used to create the outdoor feel of a street; a lot of light is allowed into the space. The design is conceived as a casual gallery space, with connections to the library staff, checkout counter, toilets, and lounge areas for reading, computer station, vending machines and coffee stand. It promotes the library no longer as the quiet zone it was in the past. It promotes it as a networked space rather than a defensive space, with a culture of mutual respect rather than the rule of silence. The lobby space promotes the library as the living room city. It attempts to get the users returning to the facility. The casual loose design element of the flexible lobby space creates infusion within all users and knowledge is shared. This aims to promote cultural awareness within the community.

7.0 Conclusion:

The identity of our cities is changing with the increase in the cultural mix creating diverse and complex communities. This is the time for the intercultural ideas to change the infrastructure of the city with the aim of promoting cultural diversity.

The design solution of this research project makes no claim to solve all the issues of cultural diversity; it seeks, instead, to provide communities in South Auckland, such as Otahuhu and other similar communities, a better understanding of cultural differences through physical planning. The design solution derives from the ideas of interaction and sharing and creating opportunities for people in the community to work together in a culturally diverse public sphere.

The question: Can architectural design and research enhance the intersection of diverse culture within public buildings and spaces, and improve the existing benefits of social exchange within diverse communities?

It has been identified with this research that the public realm can enhance the intersection of diverse cultures. It has a critical role to play in building an intercultural city, as the built environment influences the development of cultural life in a community. Its success can be measured by indicators, such as comfort and safety, user

numbers, returning users, and the way people share the space to engage in different activities packed tightly together.

Public spaces can be designed to be neutral self-governing spaces where all citizens feel welcome and entitled to use the space, or they can be deliberately designed to bring about increased interaction between diverse peoples. The project ideas are based on multiple programming on the site that deliberately aims to maximize use and increase the social cultural interaction. The research challenges us to create built environments that are inclusive, and which stimulate and provoke active community participation.

“Cultural diversity as a positive and intercultural dialogue is a necessary element of culturally diverse societies. No culture is perfect or can be perfected, but all cultures have something to learn from and contribute to others. Cultures grow through the every day practices of social interaction.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Sandercock, Leonie [Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century, London, Continuum, 2003]

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