

Background and context for the Te Aro area

The Te Aro area has a strong history for both Māori and Chinese communities. Considering the history of a specific place is important when designing a new park, as it can help us to create a space that reinforces the community's identity and brings connection through reflection of times past. For the design of Frederick Street Park we are working in partnership with mana whenua to incorporate cultural narratives within the design and create a space that is respectful of mana whenua values.

By understanding and incorporating the history of the site, we can create a park that is a source of pride for the community and contributes to its sense of place.

Geographically, the site of Te Aro Pā sits within the inner-city suburb of Te Aro, located in the southern part of Wellington's central business district. The Te Aro kāinga was situated east of the Waimapihi stream. By the 1840s, the pā covered around 2 hectares and extended in survey to the low water mark that was inland of Wakefield Street, and the people of Te Aro had cultivated a total of 60-80 acres of land on the hills immediately to the rear of the pā. This project site falls within the wider Te Aro Pā area and specifically within the area of cultivation that served this kāinga.

Te Aro's central location has made it susceptible to change as the city grows. Little of the site's history could be known when visiting the area today, but this project will strive to uncover some of that history through its design.

This area, was also previously known as Wellington's Chinatown, and served as a physical location for Chinese networks, providing support and refuge for the community. It was a place where Chinese people could gather, form associations, and support each other. Both Frederick Street and Haining Street were the central hub for this community.

The Chinese Mission Hall adjoining the park's location held cultural significance for the Chinese community, with the space serving as an important gathering place for social functions and spiritual practises.

We have been engaging with the Chinese community to identify their aspirations for the park, capture their views on the Chinese Mission Hall building, and be informed about the stories that are important to this community. This work will seek to bring recognition of Chinese heritage within the site.

The proposed park is also located adjacent to the new residential apartment block at the rear of the site.

The residential apartment block has been developed by Kirva Trust and is an exciting social housing initiative that will provide 75 new apartments for people who've faced barriers to having a home to call their own. Long-term tenancies will be offered to tenants of social housing providers Emerge Aotearoa Housing Trust and Homes of Choice.

Like any community, the residents will be a diverse mix of people, including disabled people and whānau who have experienced homelessness or emergency housing. What's common to them all, however, is the desire to have a place to call home.

Everyone who makes Frederick St their home will be fully supported by a variety of agencies, such as disability support provider Spectrum Care and community support provider DCM (Downtown Community Ministry).

A lot of thought has gone into the design of the building to ensure a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for both householders and their community. It includes a ground floor lobby that will host concierge and tenancy staff. Through regular visits by support agencies, people will be well connected to appropriate wrap-around services.

The team working on the Frederick Park project are working closely with the community agencies as well as the people they support.

The Chinese Mission Hall adjoining the park site is intended for refurbishment, to be repurposed for community and/or commercial use. The timeframes for this are yet to be determined, but the Council will work closely with the owners to ensure a positive relationship between the park and the Chinese Mission Hall building is established.