

## **Final Report**

# **The everyday collective laboratory: The old North Shore**

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### **Executive Summary**

The project's aims were to identify areas and structures of special heritage character on the North Shore of Auckland City, research and document the history of the site(s) identified and establish contacts with the local community, especially the community groups that are involved in the preservation or heritage architecture and landscapes. The approach taken was one of gathering information and photographic images, both archival and commissioned, making contact with stakeholders and producing artworks based on these resources. The most important findings can be grouped into two categories; the first is the discovery that three heritage sites and four heritage buildings can be linked to create a heritage walking trail, that if created would protect the sites and lead to a restoration and design project of regional significance. The second is that any project that is based on an inclusive and consultative program with the local community has to be given a reasonably long timetable, and has to be designed to fit in with local meetings and events. This project is achieving something rather than has achieved something, as it is through necessity ongoing into 2011, but it is successfully establishing a methodology for collaborative inter-disciplinary projects designed to work within communities regarding disputed and neglected sites. It has proven the importance of using a mixture of advocacy and consultation as a pre-cursor to design when working within communities on sensitive sites. The conclusion of this project required two stages, to complete it to the stage a final design project that demonstrated complete engagement with the local community, Iwi and stakeholders could take place. The first stage was a public exhibition of the research findings and the artwork based on it. The exhibition allowed the community to see the findings as a celebration of their environment and as a document of work they can contribute to. This document is being used to lobby for political will to protect, restore and design a solution to create the walkway through presentations to Local Boards and finally the Auckland Council. There is now a body of work advocating for the sites that is being to be placed into cyberspace as living resource for future researchers.

### **Background**

As most Aucklanders would have become aware through the local media, the city has lost, and could lose a lot of heritage buildings, and it has become apparent that current methods of researching, documenting and advocating for heritage architecture and landscape have not been effective in preventing the destruction. Research has shown that a large majority of the knowledge and expertise generated within institutions, stays within institutions, and is mostly presented at Conferences and Seminars largely attended by other academics. So by using a pool of talent and expertise that only exists with Tertiary Institutions to form a collaborative group, involved in effectively transferring knowledge from the institution into a community, was seen as a progressive use of resources. And an important step towards increasing UNITEC's profile within the community is in promoting its capacity of an asset that is outside government, but able to play a meaningful role in key decision making regarding the environment. The findings from my MLA concluded and argued successfully that site analysis needed to be extended through multi-disciplinary methodologies, and it was important to work within an extended timeline to fully test new ways of approaching the analysis of place.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aims of identifying and documenting places of special character and neglected heritage sites remained the same to those from the proposal. But the objectives of staging events, exhibitions and publishing the findings moved due to the extended timeframe required to work effectively with local stakeholders and within the established political frameworks and timetables. It was necessary to apply for funding into 2011

to complete the objectives. The project began as one that I would carry out alone, but as discoveries were made that demanded collaboration, collaborators were sought from the Faculty and a team was established to apply to continue into 2011 with a second stage.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used had been established and proven effective the previous year through the findings of a project undertaken through a North Shore City Council Grant, and explained in more detail in my MLA thesis, which is available on the UNITEC Research Bank. This URC project was designed to build on these projects. No other options were explored.

### **Outcomes/findings**

The project has achieved the aims and objectives set, with both international peer reviewed presentation and publication of the projects findings, and an exhibition of the work for the aims of publicity and advocacy for the project's goal of a design solution. The project identified four sites of Heritage value that contained two buildings under threat of demolition, the project has ensured that these sites are now viewed within the context of a larger grouping, and the proposal to link them through the creation of a Heritage Walkway is in the process of being presented to the Local Board before going to Auckland Council.

### **Conclusions**

*Briefly summarise any conclusions that can be drawn from the research.*

The project has been hugely satisfying in the fact that it has lead to a collaborative project for the exhibition that is multi-disciplinary and runs across departments (Design and Landscape). It has laid the groundwork for a very exciting and innovative event planned for the Auckland Heritage Festival in September 2011 that could involve an extended collaboration between departments. The site analysis groundwork that this project created has paved the way for the establishment of a major cultural and recreational asset, in the form of a Heritage Walkway. And this project has enabled a well researched proposal to be tabled with local and central Government, that would have been impossible to produce outside a purely research environment.

### **Implications**

*Indicate who will benefit from the research, how, and why. Consider the future implications of your work and how others can build on it. What are the implications for other stakeholders, for users, or for the community? What work could be undertaken to build on your research or carry it further?*

The main beneficiaries of the work are the community groups who represent heritage preservation, and local researchers and students who are interested in new methodologies for environmental advocacy. UNITEC will also benefit, as the methodology explored could be used in further research projects or used to teach inter-disciplinary workshops based on live projects. The implications from the end result of this project and it's 2011 resolution, is that the Faculty will be credited with the preservation and creation of a major regional landscape asset. The methodology explored in this project could be trialed at a greater level of collaborative input, for example in partnership with larger public groups/organizations currently being formed to address heritage issues after the St Heliers Bay Art Deco houses debacle.

### **Publications and dissemination**

Presentation at the 2010 UNITEC research symposium.

Chapter in "Research Works" Dept. of D&VA research publication, November 2010.

Paper presented and published in proceedings at the Cumulus Design Conference Belgium, 2010.

Journal article published in Design Ecologies Journal, UK. 2010.

Exhibition of work at NKB Gallery, Auckland, March 2011.

### **References**

[www.collectivelab.wordpress.com](http://www.collectivelab.wordpress.com)