

Urban Strategies & Interventions
ARDN 712



Mechanics Bay **REPORT**

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ABSTRACT

About the Report



urban relationships between previous assignments undertaken in Urban Imagined and Urban Ecologies. This report contains in-depth research regarding Mechanics Bay in Auckland, and provides a proposal which aims to raise awareness of Mechanics Bay and the important history it holds. This report also includes related in-class readings, research methods and strategies, to help support the urban implications of this project.

The purpose of this assignment is to undertake focused research that will help us gain a better understanding of our major project and its urban implications.

This report excavates and uncovers the urban implications of my current major projects that are currently being developed in my major area of study. Here, we explore and develop the urban potential of our major project and identify how we can incorporate these aspects. This report also links the

INTRODUCTION

Issue and the Solution

This project is aiming to celebrate Mechanics Bay in a positive light. Not many people understand the value and history that the area has, especially regarding significant movements within New Zealand's transport. We believe that the area needs to be celebrated more, whether it is through permanent installations or site improvements.

In order for more people to know about the lands valuable history, a site installation and the extension of the viaduct will allow the area to be celebrated in a positive light. The only way that this will be able to occur is through the help of the Panuku Development. The Panuku Development is in charge of the wider Auckland development and turning spaces into enjoyable and safe areas for recreational activities.

In European countries, such as Spain, Italy and England, all have a common theme of public spaces, known as a square, Piazza or Plaza. These areas are public spaces in which people can interact and meet. Around the edges of the Italian Piazzas are small stores, restaurants, and on the weekends markets are often held there. While in England squares can be gardens or concrete areas that resemble courtyards. New Zealand is limited with these kind of areas.

Panuku Auckland is trying to develop areas within our city where the public can go and enjoy each other's company. What they have done at Wynyard quarter reflects New Zealand's laid back culture.

Across Asia there have been an increasing amount of playgrounds for the elder generation (Perry, 2015). This is a recreational area with a purpose. The playgrounds act as a crucial social service in a country where an increasing number of people live alone. Encouraging the elder generation to go outside and get exercise also allows them to reach out and be social. This is an aid in creating a longer life expectancy. These playgrounds are a positive use of public space and have a larger impact on people as it encourages more than just human interaction.

Our proposal is to involve Panuku development in the development of Mechanics Bay, through the extension of the aesthetics of the Viaduct Harbour, that represents the rich history and culture that the area has in a positive light. The Viaduct Harbour and areas such as Silo Park once were very industrial-like areas and have since been converted today into a beautiful area that is welcoming to people. Vibrant colours, signs that tell you about the area, and things such as a playground, have given new light to once a rather gloomy area, much like what Mechanics Bay is today. The heavy flow of trucks and tall fences have an unwelcoming feel towards bypasses, with no opportunities to learn about the area and its rich history it holds.



URBAN RELATIONSHIPS

Current Major Projects Connections



Figure 1: Pan Am Plane

1

This project requires redesigning the identity and brand strategies of a once successful brand that has now gone under.

- Travel
- Tourism
- History
- Hospitality
- Connectivity



Figure 2: Waitangi Day Celebration

2

This second project requires a written report; exploring into the lack of celebration surrounding Waitangi Day in Auckland.

- Celebration
- Cultural (Maori/Pakeha)
- History
- Lack of understanding
- Land Rights



Figure 3: Mechanics Bay Aerial Shot

PROJECT 1 & 2 CONNECTIONS

- Auckland being well respected
- Celebrating
- Connectivity
- Travel
- Historic event/movement
- Pakeha and Maori

Both current Major Projects revolve around history and historical moments. Pan America, as shown in **Fig. 1**, is an American airline company that commenced in 1927 (Pan America World Airways, 2016). It was the largest international air carrier until the company collapsed in 1991. A connection, in the Pan Am assignment, to the urban was made through the finding; the first official New Zealand airmail flight left Auckland's Mechanics Bay for San Francisco on Pan American Airways' *Samoan Clipper* (Pan America World Airways, 2016). Through this discovery, further research was undertaken on Mechanics Bay in Auckland. It was then revealed that Mechanics Bay holds a lot of history, including; the first flights to New Zealand, and it being the bay that the Maori's would dock their wakas (canoes).

In the second current Major Project the study is based around Waitangi Day, (as shown in **Fig. 2**), and the lack of celebration in Auckland. As a group, we believed that it would be more effective and interesting to combine both current Major Projects with the urban, instead of just choosing one. Therefore we decided that our project would be based around Mechanics Bay and creating a proposal that celebrates the history it holds.

Previous Urban Projects Connections



Figure 4: Urban Imagined Project

URBAN IMAGINED

In the first assignment for Urban Imagined, we researched into the idea of the tourist and detective gaze, which was also revisited in our Urban Ecologies exhibition piece. These gazes represent how locals and tourists view Auckland City. Baju (2011) suggests, "tourist gaze expresses the dynamics associated with construction of tourist experience" (p. 1). The tourist gaze is what you immediately see in front of you. The tourist gaze is simply viewing or seeing objects or places from

what they are and look like from the outside, without having a deeper connection, but viewing them from afar (Bahu, Mishra & Parid, 2008). In contrast, the detective gaze is when you are submerged by the surroundings; you are living amongst it and have a stronger connection to what's around you. In this Mechanics Bay project, I believe that these gazes are vital when researching and undertaking our proposal as it gives us the opportunity to be able to engage with both Aucklanders and tourists.

For the second project in Urban Imagined, as shown in Fig. 4, our task was to investigate what is

public. We did this by creating an installation on the Viaduct Bridge, which was made to bring people together to create interaction amongst the public. Aspects of this assignment will be taken into consideration for this project as part of our aim is to influence interaction between the community and the environment.



Figure 5: Urban Ecologies Project

URBAN ECOLOGIES

In one of the assignments for Urban Ecologies, we were questioned about the future of Auckland and what we can do to improve it. We approached this by creating a manifesto which raises the issue of commercial food waste and provides a solution to prevent wastage in Auckland. This manifesto method can also be similarly used in the Mechanics Bay project, as we are creating a proposal to improve Auckland and to celebrate its history.

In the second part of Urban Ecologies, as shown in **Fig. 5**, similarly to the second project in Urban Imagined, our

assignment was involved around the tourist and detective gaze. We believe this method is very important to use in our assignments as Auckland is an incredibly diverse city that revolves around both tourists and residents. This way, we can attract both tourists and Auckland citizens with our proposal of extending the viaduct area to Mechanics Bay.

Our main approach has been the tourists gaze verses the detectives gaze, all about first impressions of an area as well as the history that it holds. A tourist may see Mechanics Bay as an industrial area of Auckland that is illogically placed right in the CBD area of Auckland, however from the detectives gaze there comes a deeper understanding that the city built around Mechanics Bay right from before the land was reclaimed, and this was the land of the local Maori who used the area to take their Waka's out to sea.

RESEARCH

Research into Mechanics Bay

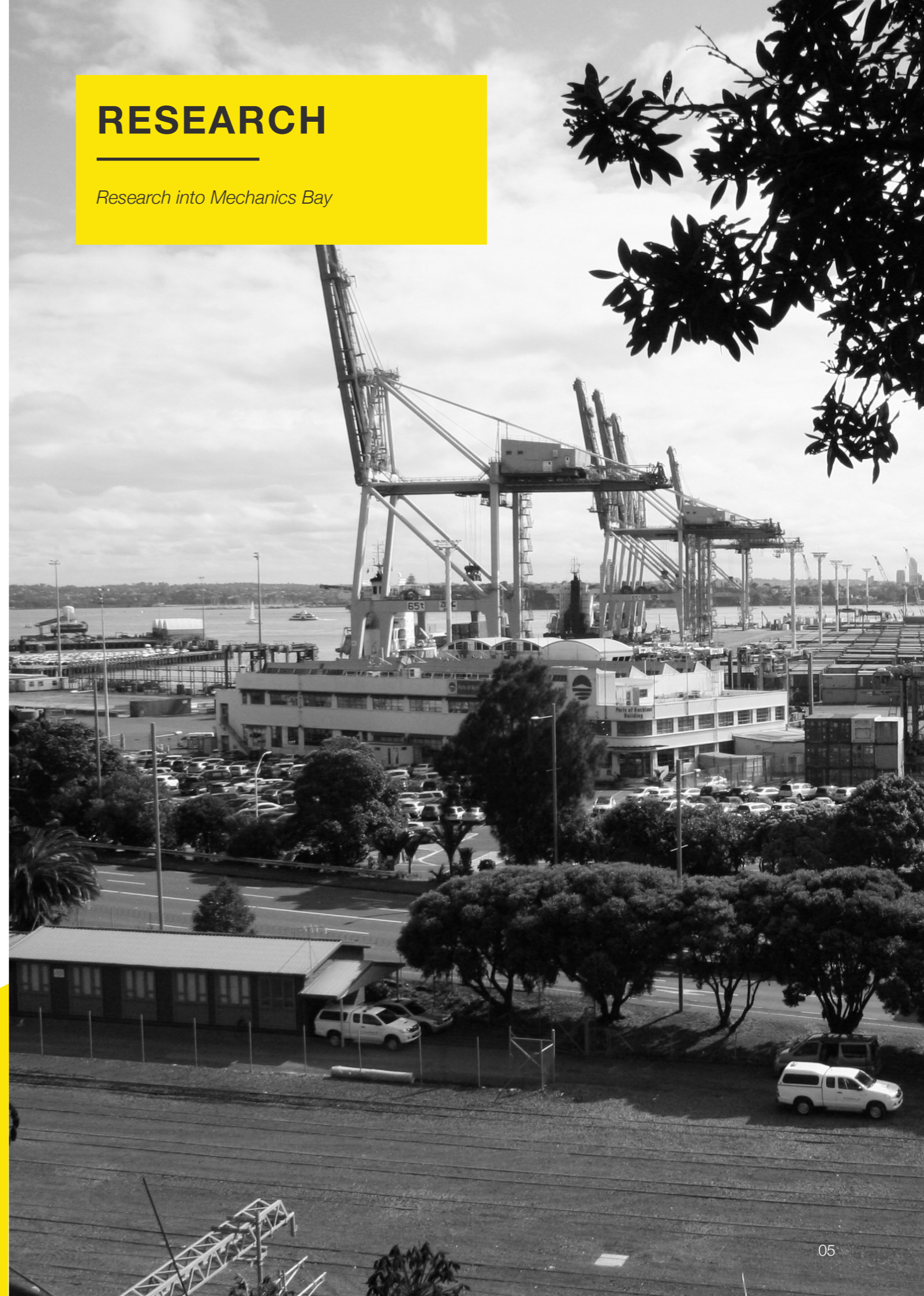


Table 1. Downtown Auckland



Mechanics Bay Maori History

During the 1930's Mechanics Bay became New Zealand's gateway for the rest of the world. Tamaki, "the destination of voyagers," is an ancient name for Auckland. The narrow piece of land, known as New Zealand, between the Pacific Ocean and the Tasman Sea was a perfect location where Polynesian Settlers would arrive on their wakas with new seed stock and migrants. With great gardening soils, fish stocks and natural fortification, Tamaki (Auckland) became the largest Maori civilisation in the world.

Te Toangaroa, the Maori name for Mechanics Bay, which also translates to: "the dragging of waka a long distance," is where the Maori would arrive in New Zealand. However, unfortunately low tide at Mechanics Bay would stretch back far offshore, so if high tide was missed, it would lead to a punishing task of having to drag the wakas up towards the end of the beach, to where is now known as Beach Road (Auckland City, n.d).

The area was named Mechanics Bay as this marks the location where mechanics and workmen called home while they built the first capital houses in Auckland (Mechanics Bay, 2016).

Mechanics Bay Airport

By the end of 1916 the reclamation period was over and Mechanics Bay and its surrounding bays were all filled in. This allowed Mechanics Bay to be once home to New Zealand's first international airport. Airlines such as Pan America and Imperial Airways landed their flying boats in Mechanics Bay, which was the first international aviation in New Zealand until the 1950's. From 1962 to 1989, Mechanics Bay was also the home to Mount Cook Airline and Sea Breeze Airways that offered transport to people needing access to the Hauraki Gulf (Pan America World Airways, 2016). Charter flights were also available which took passengers to other areas such as, The Bay of Islands, Manukau and Kaipara Harbours.

Mechanics Bay Now

Mechanics Bay is now the site of a container terminal for the Ports of Auckland. Mechanics bay is also called the Fergusson Container Terminal. It is one of New Zealand's main ports for overseas imports. It is always active with around the clock activities and is labelled as New Zealand's busiest terminal. Fergusson Container is located on the Mechanics Bay premises. Here is the largest refrigerated port in the southern hemisphere. For the public there is a 400 m walk along the side of the terminal. Here you can view the 5 Chinese made cranes that can lift 2 containers at a time. The walk comes to an end to quickly and is the only way that you interact with the Mechanic Bay area.

The Mechanics Bay also has a heliport where Inflight Charters offer helicopter rides, private planes and boat charters around Auckland CBD, beaches and Islands. It also has a base for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter.

In 2006 there was a proposal stating for a new rugby stadium to be built on the Auckland waterfront in time for the 2011 Rugby World Cup. The idea of this stadium has raised a lot of issues including damaging the look of the Auckland waterfront and skyline. The proposal was rejected, as there wasn't enough time for it to be built.

Mechanics Bay has always worked around the idea of transport. From the early wakas that landed on its shores to the seaplanes that Pan Am flew in from America. Now just to the left of Mechanics Bay is Britomart, the hub of Auckland transport. Here is where thousands of citizens and tourists come through daily to experience Auckland and what it has to offer.



READINGS

Connection to Readings

HENRI LEFEBVRE: THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Henri Lefebvre's: The right to the city talks about a "city on a hill" as an area that can't be hidden. We can't hide the past so let's embrace it. To us, the people of Auckland, Mechanics Bay has seemed to be hidden. Very few people know about Mechanics Bay and the intriguing history that it has. So we decided to propose the idea of an extension of the Auckland waterfront area to the right of the port. Here will be an area that informs the public about what this area once was and how it has come to be what it is now.

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MARK W. WESTMORELAND: INTERRUPTIONS

Hospitality is all about making yourself vulnerable in sacrifice of making another comfortable (Westmoreland, 2008). Mechanics Bay was once the host to many of New Zealand's foreign people because it was our only international airport and our gateway to the greater world. Today it still acts as the host but it is more the host towards goods (shipping containers) and the port workers rather than tourists. Creating an area that is a nicer place to work and be is a must for this area.

.....

ANDY MERRIFIELD: METROMAXISM

Mechanics Bay is a place of constant work, a place with around the clock workers. Like mentioned in Metromarxism (Merrifield, 2002) "work life, private life and a leisure all became fair game". I feel this reading is particularly relatable to the issues surrounding Mechanics Bay as it has become a place of work. An area that has workers 24/7 becomes neglecting of the other important things like private life and leisure. In contrast the Viaduct Harbour shows a balanced lifestyle of these three elements, the workers of the shops/restaurants, the guests visiting the area for leisure purposes and the private life of the people passing through. Mechanics Bay largely supports the workers element and some of the private life of those people driving by to get to Auckland's waterfront suburbs.

Lefebvre also asks if the city is "...a technical object or and aesthetic object?". Many areas of a city have fallen into this generic idea of functionality over enjoyment, taking away the things that are visually pleasing and exchanging them for things that will help people achieve their goal as fast as they can. Things such as taking away green areas or seating areas which are pleasing to the eye have been replaced with something functional such as a parking lot making the city a technical object rather than a place of enjoyment.

Mechanics Bay is solely orientated for business, with the most efficient tools to get the job done. The aesthetics of the area have been lost making it an unwelcoming area to anyone who does not work there. If some aesthetic elements were to be brought back to this area, it would become a place where people may want to spend time and enjoy the area, much like what has been achieved at the Viaduct Harbour.

METHODS

Project Methods and Strategies

In order for this proposal to move forward we will need to follow certain steps. We will begin by looking further into the Viaduct area and the current industries that reside there. Small installations such as interactive sculptures, artificial grass with chairs and the numerous open shipping containers with books and pianos inside create a welcoming atmosphere for by-passers of any age.

Our aim isn't to interfere with the current industries, but to enhance the history behind their development and making the public more aware about Te Taongaroa. The area from the right of the Viaduct to Mechanics Bay isn't celebrated to the length that it should be. We will begin by investigating further into the surrounding area and its history. Much like the Silo Park area, Mechanics bay is a hazardous area and isn't something that can just be made open to the public. However in contrast, Silo Park has a small area dedicated to the public, a pedestrian area to walk around, Silo's that have been painted bright colours and information regarding its history. Not far from this there is a children's playground and a water feature. All these elements work together to make a once gloomy and industrial area seem appealing and a place of belonging, where one would want to spend time and walk around – all without disrupting the current industries. Incorporating similar ideas to Mechanics Bay would change the way people currently avoid

the area and make it a place where one can see and learn about Auckland's history and enjoy it for what it is today.

With the information that we will gather, we will write a formal proposal and send it to the Panuku Development to get their opinion. We will also get in contact with the shop owners who are located in between the Fergusson Container Terminal and Auckland Transports train tracks, to ask about their opinion for our proposal, as-well as how this area is currently working for their business. Research into the growth of this area may benefit us to understand whether the shops or train tracks were there first, and what future intentions may be. This is an area which we feel is stuck in between two industrial areas and is neglected by the public with a strong disconnected feel from the rest of the city.

The public's opinion is important to us. We will conduct a survey into how much people know about the Mechanics Bay area and would they benefit from it being made more into a leisure environment. The data that we gather from the survey needs to be used as evidence when sending our proposal through to Panuku Development.



1. Collect Further Research



2. Create Surveys



4. Write a Proposal



3. Collect Feedback & Opinions



5. Send to Panuku Development

CONCLUSION

Project Conclusion



Mechanics Bay history needs to be celebrated. Its valuable and very few people recognise or are familiar with the history that it holds. Our proposal will reinforce the idea about celebrating Mechanics Bay in a positive light.

Researching into this area has taught us that you don't always fully understand what is behind everything; that there is always something new to discover. This assignment has taught us about what it is like to be a host and a guest. Auckland is the host to visitors and should ensure that their experience is positive. This includes allowing guests the opportunity to learn about what has happened in the past for Auckland to become what it is today. Mechanics Bay has been an area of interest for a very long time but is only recognized for what it is currently – the Fergusson Container Terminal. Passed assignments have helped us to find the appropriate way to address this issue and create a proposal to improve the way that Mechanics Bay is presented.



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