

4. HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The quarter is one of the older parts of the city centre (from the perspective of European settlement). It is home to many significant heritage buildings such as the superb Lippincott Building of Smith & Caughey's, the T & G Building, the former Public Trust offices, the Civic and St James theatres, the Edwardian Town Hall and the Auckland Art Gallery. Buildings such as the CAB, Bledisloe House and the Aotea Centre are the product of a more recent modernist, mid-century era of architectural design, but contribute nonetheless to the built environment (although they have created some difficult edges to the public streets and spaces).

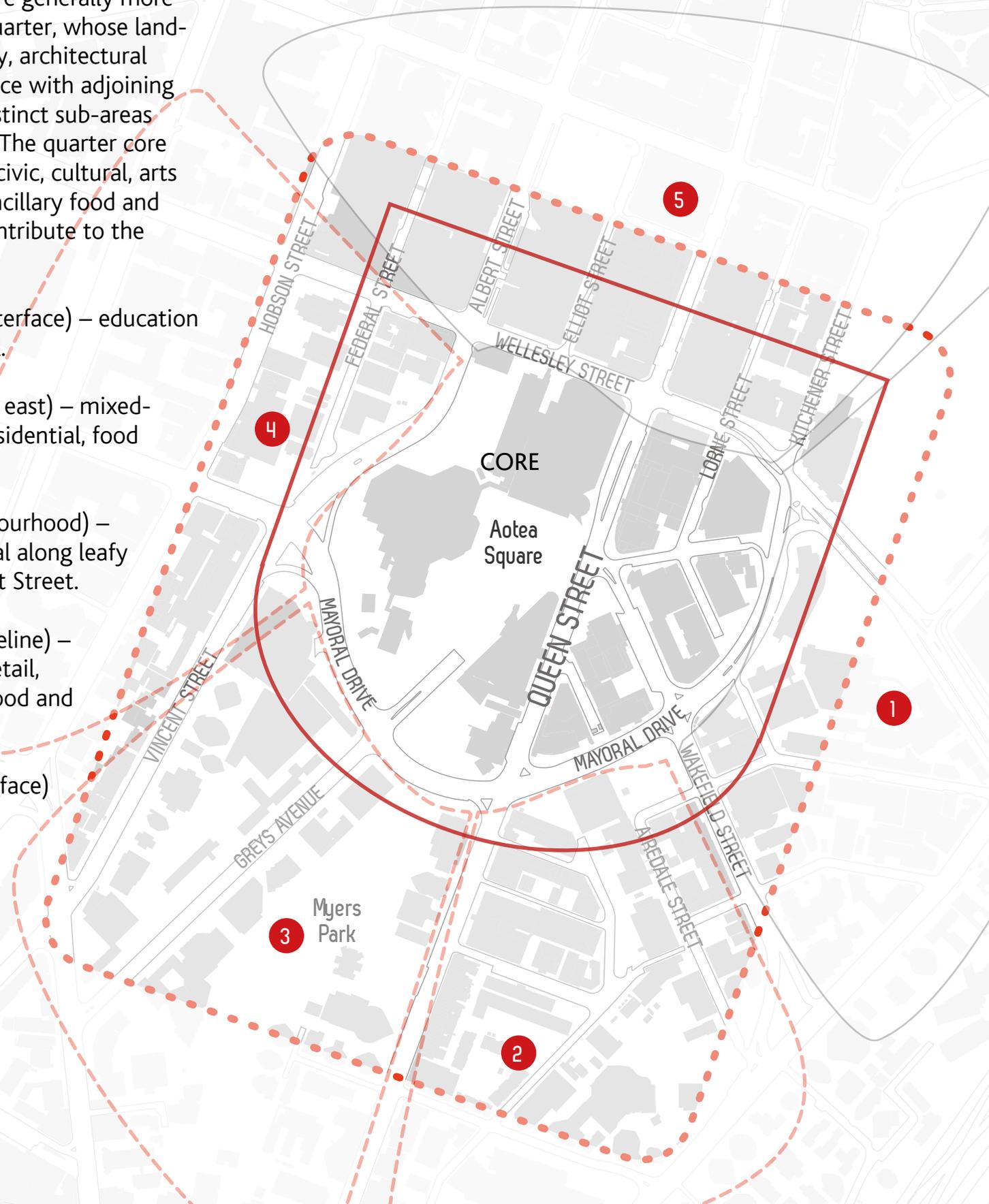
Further development should add another layer to this rich architectural story.



5. LAND USE

The other city centre quarters are generally more homogenous than the Aotea Quarter, whose land-use is as varied as its topography, architectural and street character. The interface with adjoining quarters creates a number of distinct sub-areas within the Aotea Quarter itself. The quarter core is almost entirely given over to civic, cultural, arts and entertainment uses, with ancillary food and beverage. The sub-areas also contribute to the diverse identity as follows:

- 1 East (Learning Quarter interface) – education and associated residential.
- 2 South-east (Queen Street east) – mixed-use: retail, commercial, residential, food and beverage.
- 3 South (Myers Park neighbourhood) – residential and commercial along leafy Greys Avenue and Vincent Street.
- 4 West (Hobson Street ridgeline) – mixed-use: community, retail, commercial, residential, food and beverage, entertainment.
- 5 North (Engine Room interface) – commercial and retail.



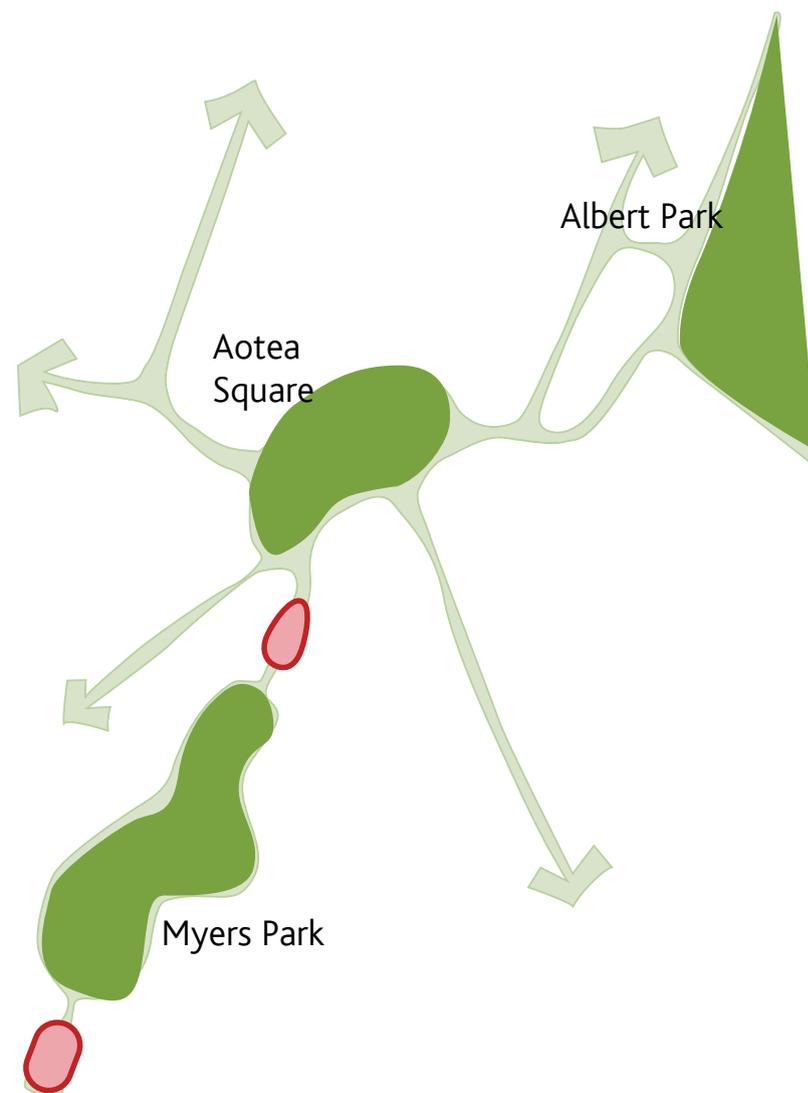
6. PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Sitting at the heart of the Aotea Quarter, Aotea Square – opened in 1979 by Sir Dove-Myer Robinson and upgraded in 2010 – was designed as the city’s premier civic and outdoor events space.

The large, mostly hard-surfaced space designed to be an events space, plays host to visiting attractions and events including arts festivals, concerts, ice-skating rink and public gatherings including graduation day, protests and cultural celebrations.

Directly to the south, running downhill from the northern slope of the Karangahape ridge lies Myers Park. Formed in 1914 out of an overgrown gully, it was purchased for £9000 on behalf of the city by the former mayor Arthur Mielziner Myers. The 2.4 hectares were transformed into a model of a ‘reform park’. It offers a contrasting experience to Aotea Square, being almost entirely green, more enclosed and used for more passive activities and recreational play, including the popular and recently upgraded children’s playground.

The quarter’s streets also offer comfortable and attractive public spaces. Greys Avenue, which boasts 55 London plane trees between Pitt Street and Aotea Square, has the greatest level of walkability and neighbourhood amenity, although Vincent Street comes a close second. The opportunity exists to redefine Mayoral Drive as a lush, arcing avenue, with a greater level of amenity, connecting both ends of Wellesley Street.



7. ECONOMIC AND MARKET PICTURE

The Aotea Quarter suffers from the continuing trend of commercial office space to drift to the waterfront and downtown, which can only realistically be stemmed if the quarter becomes a more attractive destination. Also, a rapidly growing number of people are living in repurposed office buildings on the fringes, and in new residential towers. This trend towards residential use (currently the quarter provides 11.4 per cent of the total city centre supply of apartments) is predicted to continue through the current market cycle. The peak of the next commercial property cycle, once current demand has been met, is predicted to coincide with the completion of the CRL project and opening of the Aotea Station in 2023, suggesting scope for commercial office space attraction around this time.

Retail remains well occupied and is considerably more favourable than the area's commercial office market. Nearly a quarter of retail in the quarter (24 per cent) is in the food and beverage category, reflecting the Aotea Quarter's tourist and student population (collectively there are 40,000 students in the Aotea and learning quarters). But the quarter suffers from a lack of contiguous retail frontage which, coupled with the fact that it is a throughway for pedestrians rather than enticing people to dwell, means that it does not function as a retail destination – an aspiration for all retail activity. There also remains a distinct lack of a comprehensive grocery offer and limited mid-market food and beverage.

¹ In preparing the Aotea Quarter Framework, Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) provided an insight into commercial market trends in the quarter and advised on an appropriate land-use strategy for the underused council-owned development sites, to realise the vision for the quarter. The JLL report informed this section of the framework document.





WAHANGA TUATORU / PART C:

THE RESPONSE

The place features and shapers, as well as identified opportunities and challenges, are captured in the vision and detailed in the following four outcomes. To achieve the vision, over the next 20 years the council, its Council Controlled Organisations and stakeholders will drive the delivery of these outcomes.