

02

INTRODUCTION

02.01 BACKGROUND

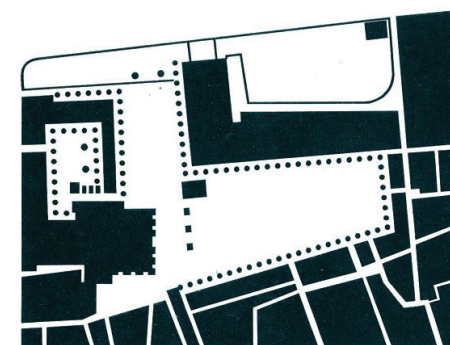
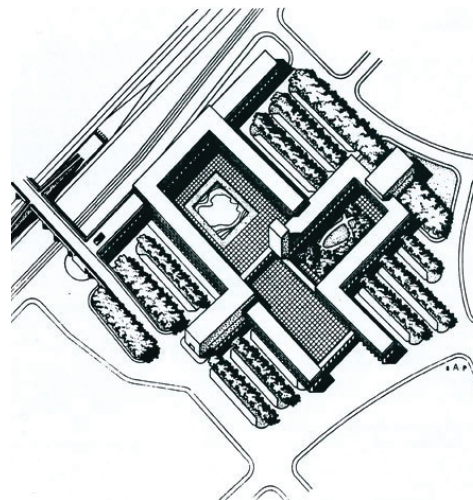
Naenae is a suburb of the city of Lower Hutt. Māori have lived in the Hutt Valley, and the Naenae area for hundreds of years, although little of this is documented. Naenae does however have a significant place in the history of planning, architecture, and urban design in New Zealand.

In 1945, at the end of World War II, it was identified as a potential model suburb and “designer community” and formed part of an international “garden city movement”. (Kiddle, R., 2020, and Schrader, B., 1996 & 2012) During the period 1942 to 1943, Ernst Plischke, an Austrian architect was commissioned to design the Naenae town centre, or community centre as it was called then. The design included a shopping centre with three landscaped pedestrian courts, car parks, a theatre, gymnasium, hall, library, reading rooms, committee rooms, office buildings, swimming pool, skating rink, and hotel. The design was inspired by St Mark's Square in Venice with a large central square intended to be the focus of community life.

The Naenae community centre was never fully completed owing to the great demand for housing in the area. As a result, much of the land was developed as housing. A community hall was opened in 1954 and the post office was eventually completed and opened in 1966. The design was fundamentally altered by government architect Gordon Wilson to the urban form we see today. The community hall wasn't entirely successful as the focal point of the suburb, that role taken by Hillary Court, New Zealand's first pedestrianised mall. (Kiddle, R., 2020, and Schrader, B., 1996 & 2012).

The architecture of buildings in Naenae were unapologetically Modernist in character. They were simple, elegant, well-proportioned buildings of human scale with stripped down detailing typical of the International Style. Over time the introduction of poor colour and signage decisions have robbed these buildings of their simple elegance.

In recent times the swimming pool and community hall along with several retail buildings have had to be closed owing to earthquake vulnerability. The pool was closed in April 2019, and the community hall the year before. Prior to this the local supermarket



Figures 2,3 and 4 - Original design drawings by Ernst Plischke and the inspiration from St Mark's Square, Venice.

(Image sources: E.A Plischke: 1947: *Design and Living*, Wellington)

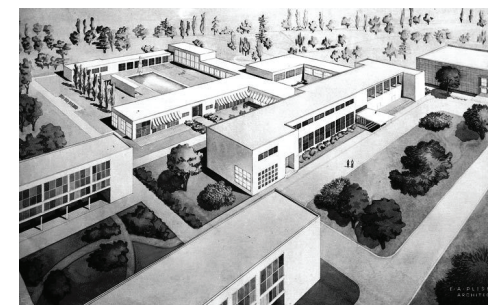


Figure 5 - Naenae town centre under construction. 1958.

(Image Source: Evening Post newspaper)

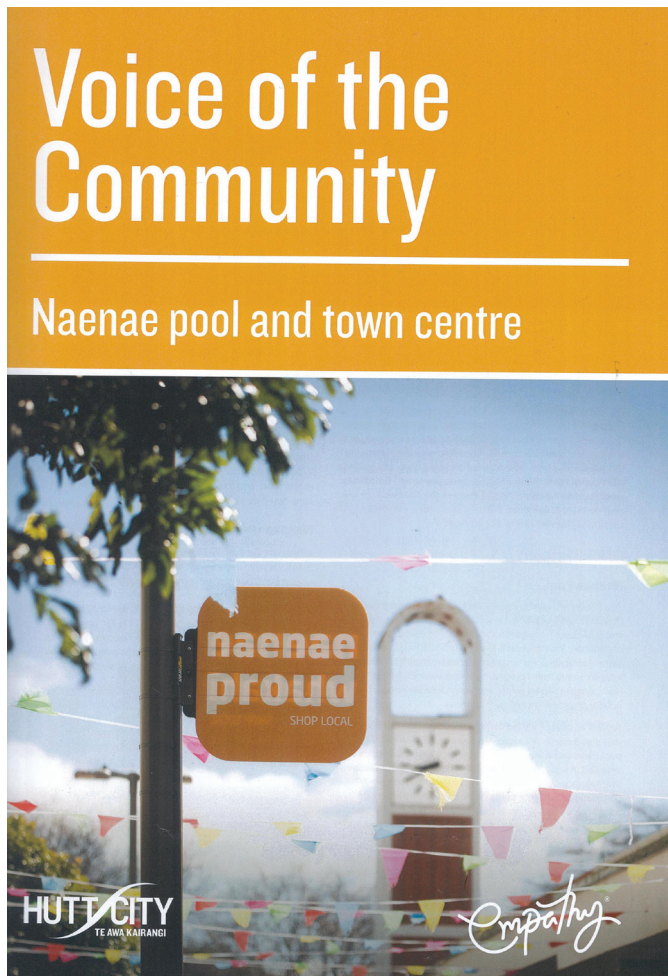


Figure 6 - Cover of *Voice of the Community*

To read the report, please go to:

<http://portal.huttcity.govt.nz/Record/ReadOnly?Tab=3&Uri=5470086>

located on the western side of Vogel Street was closed, and the economic performance of the centre diminished.

Hutt City Council initiated a community consultation process as part of a strategy to revitalise the Naenae town centre. This Spatial Plan forms part of that effort along with other parallel projects such as the swimming pool reconstruction and the Naenae Activation Strategy. A key document was produced following intensive community engagement in 2019. This is *Voice of the Community*, a document prepared by Hutt City Council and consultants Empathy.

02.02 VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

Many of the aspirations for Naenae are recorded and contained in the document “*Voice of the Community*” prepared by Hutt City Council and Empathy, a team of design researchers based in Wellington. The document contains a record of workshops, open days and interviews with community members following the closure of the Naenae public swimming pool. Community aspirations are clearly articulated and listed. The document outlines the local community desire for Naenae to be:

A town centre where people can *do the basics*.

A town centre where people can *stay active*.

A town centre where people can *support local people*.

A town centre where people can *connect regularly*.

A town centre where people can *gather* at meaningful times.

A town centre where people can *make memories*.

A town centre where people can *come together as a community*,

A town centre where people can *be safe and satisfied*.

What is clear from community aspirations is that *people* are at the centre of these aspirations. These aspirations are at the centre of this Spatial Plan and the background urban design, movement, and economic analysis. A key question that has focussed the evidence-based analysis has been to assess whether the town centre in its current form and current performance supports people and their aspirations? If not, then what needs to change?

The Spatial Plan process developed spatial and development options which were put to the community through a community engagement process. The result of this process is the Naenae Spatial Plan.