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Local groups key to establishing a thriving performing arts centre

As a cultural and community hub, the Sir Howard Morrison Performing Arts Centre needs to keep pace with what users require.

The centre needs earthquake strengthening and Council proposes upgrading it at the same time.

We have the opportunity to make improvements that will maximise the use of an important community facility for all types of performing arts – theatre, musicals, opera, kappa haka, dance and much more. Improvements are also needed to enable us to keep attracting visiting shows and performances.

“Let’s take this opportunity to have a cultural and performing arts centre in the city that allow us to do it all,” says Events and Venues Rotorua acting general manager Joelene Elliott.

“We want to bring vibrancy back to the centre and as well as investing in our own local performing arts community, upgrading as well as strengthening the centre will help us attract local, national and international performances for our arts hungry community.”

The Sir Howard Morrison Performing Arts Centre has been under-utilised in recent years with many conferences and large events now held at the Rotorua Energy Events Centre. Council consulted with the performing arts community to assess and consider their needs and feedback highlighted the need for improvements to the centre.

“The feedback received showed a clear need by performing arts groups and the community, for greater access to the centre,” says Ms Elliott.

“We’ve taken a collaborative approach to coming up with a proposal – we want the arts community to have a sense of ownership.”

“A great example of successful collaborative communities is The Arts Village, established in late 2002. Now home to more than 20 arts and cultural groups, it’s a great example of how a central community hub is able to thrive and bring people together.”

Council’s proposal for the centre involves modifications to the Concert Chamber to allow use of the spaces by community and local performing arts groups timed around commercial productions and major ticketed events.

The proposed upgrade allows for seating for up to 250 people and includes redevelopment of the stage and providing a floor surface able to be used for various types of performances.

Dressing rooms, new bar facilities and bathrooms would also be added.

The main entrance would be re-oriented to fit with the building’s heritage features and create a sense of presence with a feature ceiling. It would connect to plaza like car parking on Haupapa Street.



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In evaluating all its buildings Council determined earthquake strengthening was required in the performing arts centre. It made sense to at the same time consider the potential to improve facilities in the centre to meet current and future needs and increase use.

There are three options for Council to consider:

- > Earthquake strengthening and the proposed upgrade;
- > Earthquake strengthening only;
- > Do nothing.

The total project cost of strengthening and upgrading is approximately \$6.5m. The project would be spread over two years with \$3m proposed for 2017/18.

Costings for strengthening alone are not yet available.

