



The Sale of The Rex Community Engagement Report

Hepburn Shire Council

28 June 2022

Introduction

Max Hardy Consulting was engaged by Hepburn Shire Council to undertake community engagement on the current plans to sell the building purchased for the delivery of the Hepburn Hub at The Rex as this project is no longer considered financially viable.

The Community Engagement process documented in this report includes the following:

- An online survey that was open to all respondents across Hepburn Shire between 26 April and 20 May 2022.
- A conversation guide for key stakeholders and community groups to complete and submit.

This report provides a summary of the feedback from these two methods.

This approach was co-designed with the Council's project team to meet the project needs and engage at a 'consult' level on the IAP2 spectrum of public participation. This report provides a summary of the method used and the findings from this Community Engagement Process.

Project Scope

The historic Daylesford building that was to host the Hepburn Hub at The Rex project was purchased in 2016, however following initial building works, the contractor engaged in 2020 for construction mutually parted ways with Council in July 2021. As prices have risen due to the impact of extended time frames and Covid-19, Council has now voted to not engage a new contractor and instead sell the building located at Vincent Street, Daylesford.

The scope of this engagement is to understand the level of community support for this decision for the Council to sell The Rex building. Both engagement options allowed for participants to provide any ideas they might have as alternative uses for The Rex. All ideas for alternative uses for the building will also be considered but are subject to feasibility and cost.

It is important to note, that Council will not consider a revival of The Hepburn Hub at The Rex project and these comments will be noted but are outside the scope of this engagement process.

Methodology

Overall Approach

This section outlines the overall approach and key considerations for delivery.

This project included the following engagement components:

- Co-designed Process Detail
- A Conversation Kit/Guide for use by Community Groups
- Online Survey

These activities were undertaken at the 'consult' level on the IAP2 spectrum.

Community Group Self-Guided Conversations

The Conversation Guide was a flexible way for existing groups to provide thoughtful contributions to an engagement process within their own schedule. Group leaders are asked to find space in their regular meetings to consider the Conversation Guide content, provide space for conversations, record key outcomes, and encourage participants to also fill in the online survey. These conversations were estimated to take roughly 30 minutes to complete.

Max Hardy Consulting hosted a session for Council Officers explaining how the Conversation Guide can be used, with Officers then approaching groups they had existing relationships with asking them to complete a group submission.

Groups were asked to provide details on the group name, attendance at the meeting, awareness of the project, the level of support as a group and proposed alternative uses for The Rex building. Participation in a Guided Conversation with a community group did not preclude participation in the broader online survey.

Broad Online Survey

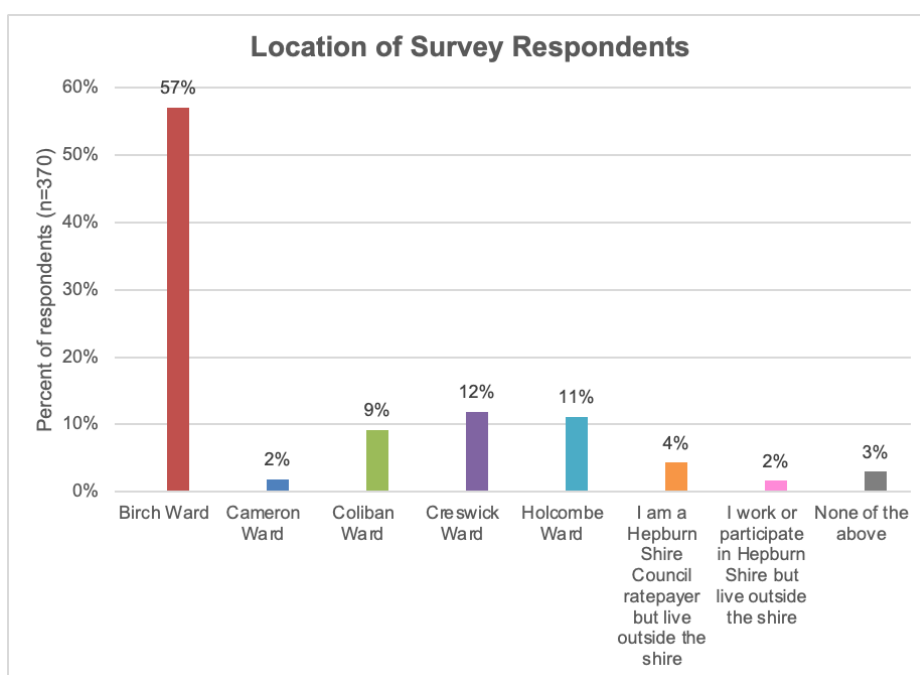
An online survey open to all residents of Hepburn Shire was run between 27 April and 20 May 2022 via Council's 'Participate Hepburn' Page. This survey was promoted broadly via Council's social media, local newspapers, email lists and community newsletters. The survey questions were the same as those asked in the guided conversation kit and included existing awareness of the project, level of support for the decision to sell the building, any alternative uses that Council might consider and some basic demographic questions.

Results

Survey Responses

The survey received 370 individual responses and of these responses, 89% (330 responses) had heard of Council's decision to sell The Rex building, 8% (31 responses) had heard about the intention to sell but didn't know the details and 2% (9 responses) had not heard about the decision prior to starting the survey.

Over half of all survey respondents lived within the Birch Ward (57%), with the next largest response areas including Creswick Ward (12%) and Holcombe Ward (11%) followed by Coliban Ward (9%) and Cameron Ward (2%). 9% of respondents lived outside of Hepburn Shire. The following graph illustrates the location of respondents who completed the survey.



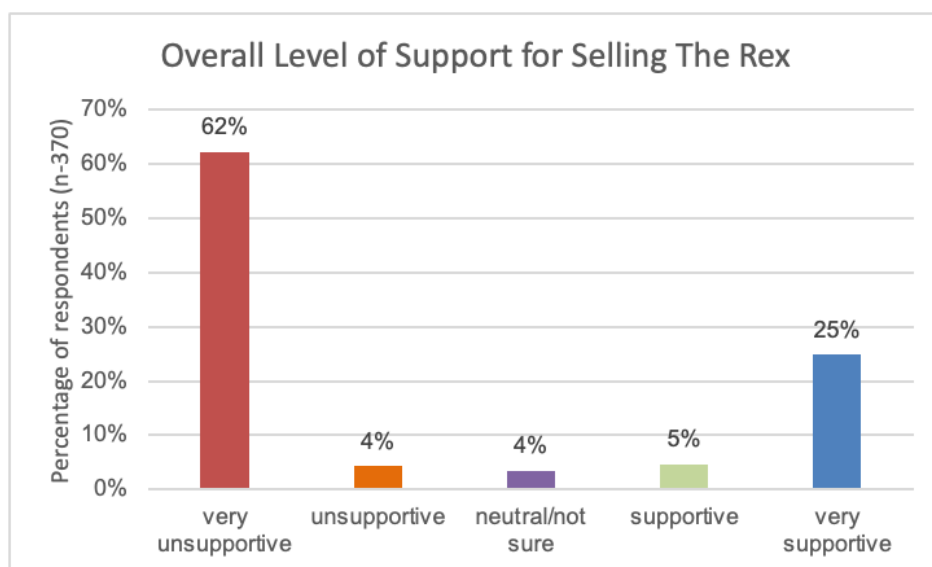
The survey also collected age ranges, which highlighted that the majority of respondents were between 40 - 59 years old (38%) and 60 - 79 years old (46%). The survey had a small number of respondents who were 20 - 39 years old (10%), 80+ years old (5%), and one under the age of 19.

Of those that responded to the survey, 15% of participants were the parent or guardian of a child under the age of 18, 12% identified as LGBTIQ+, 5% identified as a person with a disability, 2% spoke a language other than English as their first language and 1% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

This next section provides a review of the level of support for the decision to sell The Rex as well as an overview of alternative ideas that were submitted that could warrant the Council retaining The Rex building.

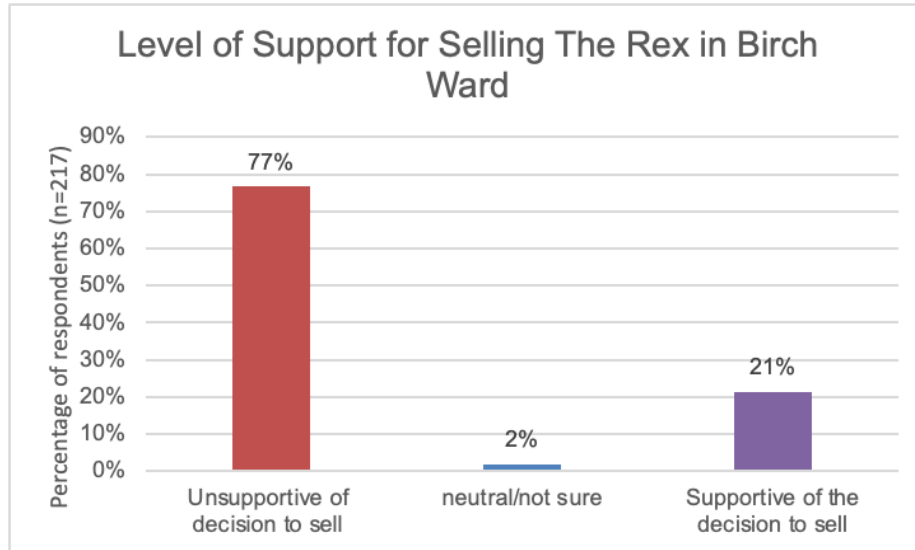
Level of Support

Over half of the survey respondents (62%) are very unsupportive of the Council's decision to sell The Rex and 4% are unsupportive. This can be compared to the, compared to 25% of respondents that were very supportive of that decision and 5% that were supportive. 4% of respondents remained neutral or were unsure about the decision.



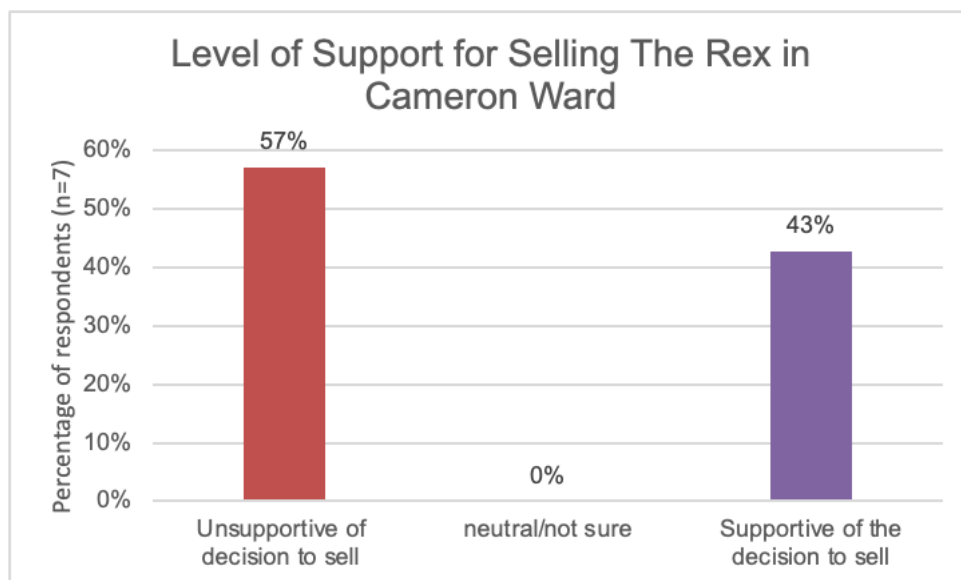
This indicates the polarised nature of responses and a limited number of those that did not respond as (1) very unsupportive or (5) very supportive. For the remaining analysis results have been included as unsupportive (1 or 2), neutral/not sure (3) or supportive (4 or 5).

When looking at the responses from those within the Birch Ward (including Daylesford, Hepburn, Basalt, Kooroocheang, Leonards Hill, Musk Vale, Sailors Flat, Shepherds Flat, and Yandoit) the majority of responses (77%) were very unsupportive or unsupportive of the decision to sell The Rex. 21% of respondents were supportive of the decision, and 2% remained neutral or unsure.

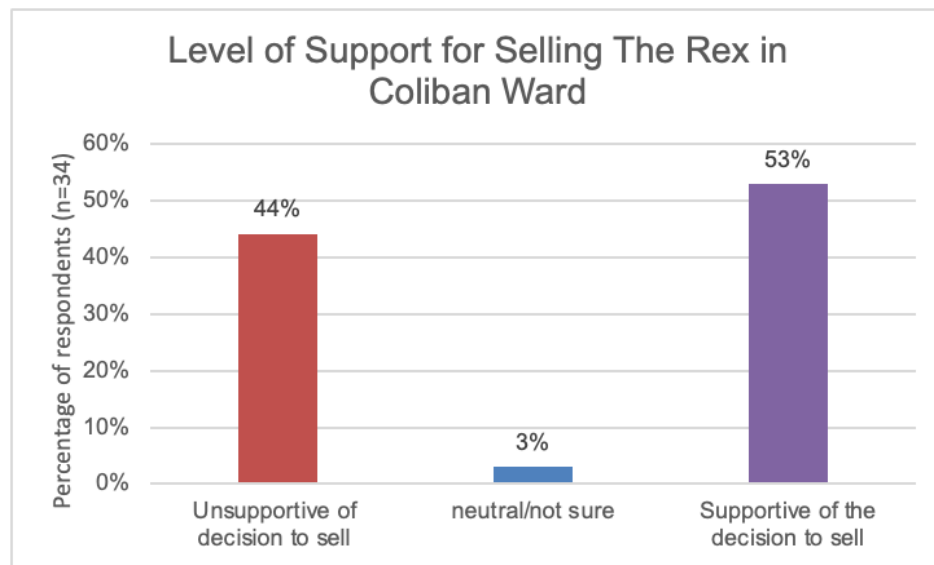


For all other locations excluding Birch Ward, more than half of the responses are unsupportive of selling The Rex (58%), and there were a higher number of respondents that are supportive (37%) and unsure (7%). Though there were smaller sample sizes for the other wards, the response for each ward is provided in the graphs below. Care should be taken when interpreting these results as smaller samples are unlikely to provide a representative opinion of the views in that location. This analysis identified higher levels of support in the wards of Coliban (53% supportive of selling) and Creswick (57% supportive of selling), and more unsupportive responses in Cameron (57% unsupportive) and Holcombe (79% unsupportive of selling).

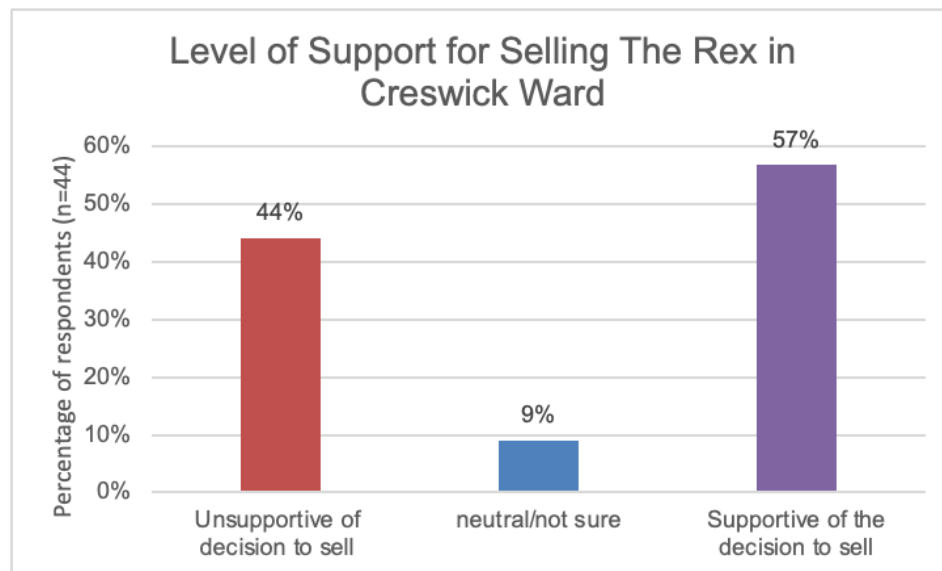
Cameron Ward



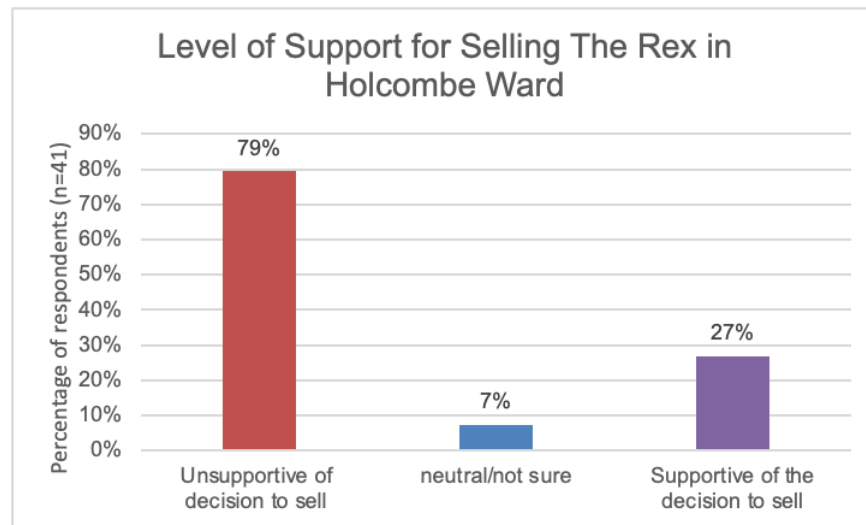
Coliban Ward



Creswick Ward



Holcombe Ward



Reasons for Level of Support

Survey participants were asked to provide a brief reason for why they had identified their chosen level of support for the decision to sell The Rex.

Unsupportive

This section outlines the most common responses from those that identified they were very unsupportive or unsupportive of the decision to sell The Rex. The most common responses are identified in the table below, noting that where comments included multiple themes they have been counted as an individual response under each relevant theme.

Reason provided for level of support (unsupportive or very unsupportive)	Number of responses that included
The Rex is an important building/asset that should be kept for the community. These responses were primarily in favour of retaining the hub or similar concept focused on community use.	150
Failure of Council to complete the project and a result of poor decision making. These responses generally identified that Council should follow through with what was promised.	57
Selling the building now doesn't recover wasted money/investment. Why sell for a loss?	42
Lack of information and consultation to justify selling.	25

Reason provided for level of support (unsupportive or very unsupportive)	Number of responses that included
Important to maintain heritage/can't trust private developers to do so.	19

It is clear from these responses that there was a deep attachment to the Hepburn Hub project or particular elements of that project from those that were unsupportive of the decision to sell The Rex.

From those that were unsupportive of the decision to sell The Rex, there were 38 comments that mentioned (1 or more times) the cinema/theatre, 24 responses that mentioned the heritage, historical/architectural value or iconic nature of the building (excluding comments that referenced historical failings in management), and 3 unsupportive responses that mentioned the public toilets or amenities. This can be compared to all comments in regards to the level of support provided where there were 41 comments that mentioned the cinema/movie theatre, 29 comments that referenced the heritage, historical/architectural value or iconic nature of the building and 5 comments about providing public toilets/amenities.

The following provides an illustrative selection of the responses provided from those that were unsupportive of the decision to sell The Rex:

- “I don’t believe that clawing back a couple of million dollars by selling The Rex is compensation enough for the loss of the site to the community. The Rex has a value to us far in excess of what a developer would be willing to pay.”
- “I feel the council has let us down with poor management of this project and zero consultation with the community before making the decision to sell.”
- “I believe the Council should have taken the advice of the Executive Officers to proceed with the project irrespective of the projected cost. Too much time and money has already been spent on this project. Locals expected it would be completed.”
- “The Rex is an important part of Daylesford’s history. It should be protected with heritage overlay. Surely a combination of public and private financing could help achieve the original objects”
- “The way this question has been phrased ensures a particular outcome. "given the hepburn hub project has been discontinued" this is an issue that should always be addressed. Classic move, to frame a question in a way that bypasses the real issue.”
- “I believe that the new members of council can right the wrongs of many bad decisions made by previous. It is an important asset to the community”
- “The sale would not recoup the level of financial investment already made. The community needs a centralised hub and this building is perfectly situated. I believe there is a way to retain the building for the community and selling is not the answer.”
- “Purchased to benefit our community. For >5 years the community has been adversely impacted by loss of the community cinema and also lack of central public toilets. Funds invested likely lost if sold. I support the sale if all funds spent to date are recouped”.

Supportive

This section outlines the most common responses from those that identified they were very supportive or supportive of the decision to sell The Rex. The most common responses are identified in the table below, noting that where comments included multiple themes they have been counted as an individual response under each relevant theme.

Reason provided for level of support (supportive or very supportive)	Number of responses that included
Sell the building and move on	72
Poor investment/too expensive/shouldn't have been purchased in the first place	42
Sell and focus on more equitable investment throughout the shire	22
Failure of Council/lack of confidence in Council to deliver the project	18
Too high risk for Council who are not property developers. Better in private hands or public-private partnership	18

The following provides an illustrative selection of the responses, which have been kept verbatim with the exception of minor edits for spelling. Comments included:

- “Financially it is not viable for the council to pursue this project. It is well known that smaller rural councils do struggle financially at times. On top of that the cost to council of the recent storms also needs to be considered.”
- “Disappointed that plans for Hepburn hub didn’t work out, but this seems like the only direction forward”
- “As Council has already decided to sell The Rex council should now look to implementing the plan to redevelop the Town Hall. This would allow for the long-held proposal to bring council functions together. including the theatre in the seniors space redev”
- “Council needed to make this decision as The Rex project has the capacity to impact Council finances severely. The Rex project has been mismanaged from its inception and should not proceed.”
- “The Council should be spending money on things that truly benefit the whole community. The Rex has limited benefit, especially for such a bit (edit: big) outlay. Also, Council are not property developers and I have no faith they can manage a project like this.”
- “The Hepburn Hub at The Rex project was very poorly planned and managed such that it is way too expensive for what we get from it. A brand new building would cost less. And in a covid world it is unacceptable to house workers underground in hot-desks.”

- “The Shire needs money and a Hepburn Hub does not need to be on the main street -that accounts for four stars. But I kept one star in case an alternate and profitable use could be found.”

Neutral/not sure

For those that were neutral/not sure there was a range of comments and opinions that included the following:

- “The "hub" was an expensive and stupid idea in the first place. How many buildings does the council need to deliver their pitiful services? So much money has been wasted on this "project" already.”
- “Aware that the cost is overwhelming but the theatre and library need a home.”
- “I'm not sure my vote will count tbh”
- “I am sure Council have valid reasons; it may need corporate \$ to reach its potential.”
- “It is concerning to what the building will be used for if it goes to a private buyer.”
- “I support the sale of The Rex but not until the LGI report is released and council can provide a P&L Statement for the life of the project. Council must not sell the building at a loss.”
- “Sitting in middle ground as I'm not informed enough as to why it may or may not be a sensible decision, either way.”
- “Depends on what the building will be used for”
- “I am only supportive to the extent that the building should not be left vacant. If the council can't/won't develop it as proposed, it should be put to a use that benefits the community and streetscape.”
- “Understand there is no public money to redevelop however concerned about big business moving into redevelop and lose history and character”

Alternative Uses

Those that responded to the survey were also invited to provide any alternative ideas that they have for the use of The Rex building. Of these responses, there were 87 new ideas received as well as 115 comments focused on keeping all or most of the elements of the Hepburn Hub and 72 comments that suggested alternative financial arrangements to complete the original project. 47 Comments focused on selling the building and investing elsewhere. Of the 115 comments to retain the original hub idea, there were 49 comments that mentioned the cinema specifically, 18 mentioned the the community hub, 16 identified the library, 12 mentioned public toilets, 9 included hospitality training and/or a youth enterprise cafe and 22 comments were more general about retaining the original hub plan. Please note that as some comments mentioned multiple elements (e.g. cinema and library) and have been counted more than once, making the total breakdown greater than 121).

Alternative Idea	Number of responses that included
Maintain existing elements (cinema, library, etc.)	115
New ideas (in whole or part)	87
Look for alternative financial arrangements to complete the project as previously intended	72
No alternatives - sell the building.	47
Keep until further consultation is completed	21
Maintain strong heritage protection for the building	5

Where new ideas were submitted, there were a number of recurring concepts, the most commonly mentioned included the use of the building for community spaces (in particular youth spaces or hospitality training centre), a mix of restaurants and shops and an art gallery or performance space. There were some partially new ideas included that also referenced previous hub concepts including 30 mentions of the cinema and 12 mentions of the library. All recurring themes from the new ideas (excluding the cinema and library from the previous hub plan) are summarised in the following table.

Alternative Idea	Number of responses that included
Community Spaces e.g. youth centre, meeting spaces, bookable rooms, hospitality training	26
A mix of restaurants, shops (including pop-ups, supermarkets or co-op), pop up markets and creative spaces	19
Art Gallery/Performance Space	16
Information Centre/public toilets	7
Swimming pool/aquatic centre	5
Apartments, hotel or b and b	4
Carparking (paid or unpaid)	2

Some examples of suggestions and new ideas include the following randomly selected sample (edited for spelling only):

- “An art gallery. Maybe “Daylesford Contemporary” and we can start building a collection of modern works. Bendigo and Ballarat both have great regional galleries, we have huge amounts of visitors already to the town. If it was a beautiful gallery space with good

exhibitions for a small admission fee, it could raise revenue for the shire over time. So many visitors to the town would attend.”

- “Why not open the building as a food court or similar? This would take all the people, who currently sit on the footpaths, off the street into a more comfortable/weather proof environment, thereby increasing the likelihood the facility will be used throughout the year. You could also maybe have a small stage area for local artists to busk/perform creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. It would also be a cosy place to locals to catch up mid week. This would also free the footpaths, encouraging tourists to view the other shops along Vincent St without the hindrance of manoeuvring around tables and chairs. (Would also be safer too).”
- “There are many options including a council kiosk, theatre performance space that can be used by schools and community, local historical museum, information hub, Indigenous information centre with capacity to book indigenous walks and tours, community gallery, planning hub showcasing council’s green sustainable planning approach, rest centre for those needing a quiet space to have a break, and in general a centre of Daylesford, showing visitors all that the region is and giving the community a centre to use for whatever they care to do”
- “Aquatic centre....drop an in-ground heated pool in, make it special to appeal to tourists and locals Or an ice skating rink, plenty would come for that and for locals it could become an ice hockey/figure skating regional epicentre.”
- “Council has an obligation to spend rate payer monies responsibly. this building could be adapted to become a community training and welfare centre for groups such as single mothers, drug rehabilitation, or underprivileged kids offering them career training that their families can’t afford.”
- “Split the building. Sell the back part and finish the front part with the cinema a learning cafe for youth. Maybe a farmers market type operation in the downstairs part”
- “A community hub that encompasses a youth space and social enterprise, creative studios and shared workspaces, a gallery and multi-use performance/cinema. A food hub and home for our Wholefoods coop. Public toilets that are central. There are co-finance options available where the community is supported to co-contribute with Council and retain control (Hepburn wind farm springs to mind). We need centralised climate-controlled spaces for older/vulnerable people as the summers will get hotter. The space could house community services like CAFS, Centrelink or other support services. We could see a community of for-purpose businesses and organisations all housed under one roof. A festival hub for all the various amazing festivals in our town. A volunteer hub for all of our amazing volunteers for all these festivals. Look at models like the donkey wheelhouse in Melbourne or the Ballarat foundation’s volunteer nfp hub development in Ballarat. There are sustainable models that already exist.”
- “Ditch the office’s, make it back into a movie theatre, a great library with a small cafe and a community space, with the ability of locals to hire small workrooms, feature new artists from around Daylesford every month to keep the space interesting. Hire locals to build. Keep it functional and minimal. Another idea is turning some of the space into hospitality training for the high school students and locals to counter the server worker shortages and give young people opportunities.”

Number of respondents who supported specific ideas

Ideas as to how The Rex could be used were expressed in response to different open ended survey questions. Some respondents referred to the same ideas on more than one occasion. For instance, some people referred to cinemas, and others mentioned movie theatres; and some mentioned both. The count below refers to the total number of respondents who mentioned each idea.

The most popular suggestion was to establish a cinema, and/or theatre, at The Rex, mentioned by 156 out of the 370 survey respondents.

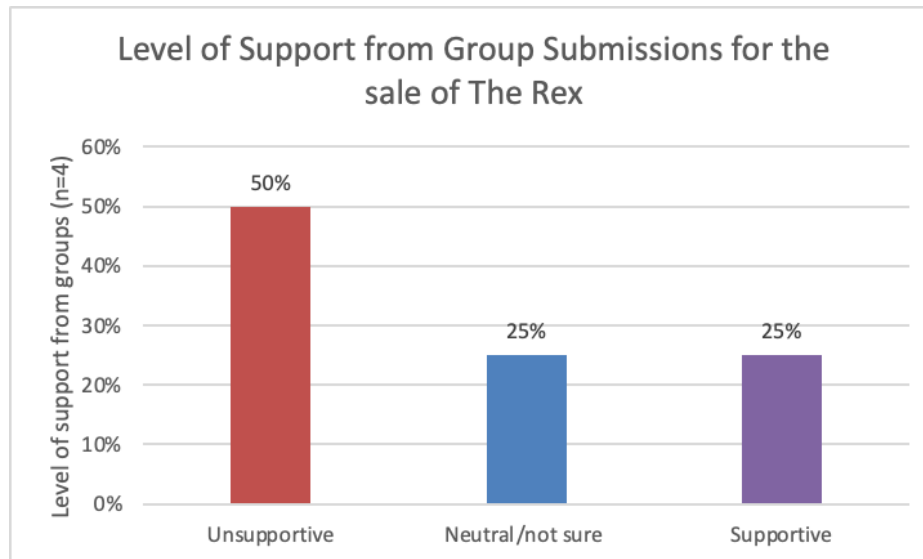
Idea	Number supporting this idea
Cinema/theatre	156
Library	67
Space for youth activities/ training	54
Arts hub/ exhibition space	36
Public Toilets	29
Cafe	28
Shops	26
Visitor Information	14
Hospitality training	12

Community Group Guided Conversation Responses

Over the engagement period, there were also 4 community group submissions that were received from the Public Art Advisory Committee, Rethink The Rex Community Group, Creswick Railway Workshops Assoc Inc and an independent group of local residents. 3 of the 4 groups had heard about the details of the decision to sell The Rex, with the remaining group not being aware of any details prior to taking part in their submission. It is worth noting that within the groups there was a group of 3, two groups of 4 and a group of twelve. As participants were also able to submit individually, each group has been given the same weight for the remaining analysis of guided conversation responses.

Level of Support

All groups had a unanimous level of support on their position on whether or not to sell The Rex. There were two groups that were very unsupportive of the decision (50%), one group that was neutral (25%) and a group that were strongly supportive (25%) as shown on the following graph.



Unsupportive

The comments submitted by those groups that were very unsupportive of the decision are included below. These comments have been partially edited for spelling or contain an extract of comments made as noted below. These comments include:

- "Hepburn Shire Council have spent ratepayers money on a ridiculous level through out this horrific process. Once called the variety store. Now a void.! I pay rates my community should be able to enjoy this space. So many promises made and failed. Why should ratepayers have to contribute to this! Wake up"
- "We are very definite that there are Four Essential Elements that must not be lost. The sale of The Rex as per this consultation, with no conditions on sale, risks losing these essential elements. There is concern that such a sale would result in tourist development/accommodation that does not meet the need of locals.
 1. HERITAGE - We cannot lose the External and Internal Heritage architectural elements of this 95-year-old iconic building in our main street; and
 2. CINEMA – We cannot lose our Community Cinema – an outstandingly successful and rewarding Community Asset; and
 3. COMMUNITY SPACE – We cannot accept the loss of the planned and promised Spaces that would have allowed showcasing of our Art and Products and Community Meetings and Performances; and
 4. PUBLIC TOILETS – Our Community, Our Visitors, Our Families, and particularly our Aged depended heavily on The Rex Public Toilets. We were

promised their priority in returning. We cannot accept their Loss.” (note: partial extract from comment)

Other comments included in the unsupportive submission for the decision include the need for comprehensive community engagement before selling The Rex, including realistic financial figures and sufficient details of the reasons for sale including looking into all feasible alternatives (e.g. different mix of uses or public-private partnerships to aid delivery). It was clearly of great importance to this group that Council communicates how the community services that would have been featured within The Rex will be provided to the community.

Very Supportive

The group that was very supportive in regards to the sale of The Rex provided the following comment:

- “The general feeling was that the costs of keeping the building was far too high and that it was unreasonable to pour more money into it. It would be of nil benefit to Creswick people despite their rates going into it.”

Neutral

The group that was neutral on the topic of selling The Rex provided the following comment:

- “Understand that the decision is primarily economic. The site is also primarily relevant to the Daylesford community and visitors rather than to the Shire as a whole.”

These comments are largely consistent with those received through the broader community survey.

Alternative Ideas

Two of the groups submitted alternative ideas to be considered for The Rex site and some groups submitted several ideas for a new mix of uses. It is worth noting that although out of scope for this question, this group also included a passionate plea to continue the delivery of the cinema, community space, public toilets and heritage protection on this site as discussed in the previous section of this report.

The ideas submitted included:

- “The Rex is seen as having potential as a public art space which could present exhibitions as well as commissioned work such as the Fish Traps public artwork that has been commissioned for the space. It could also support cinema and other cultural activities and events as well as creative spaces, studios etc. However, The Rex may or may not be the best site for this. It would be great to establish a public, community-based arts space that offers diverse creative opportunities.”

- “Cinema: This has already proven to be a profitable venture capable of paying commercial rent and bills. Adding a 2nd screen would increase the profitability of the cinema”
- Wine Bar & Tapis service area in the entrance to ground level with tables onto the street would attract people into the area and increase the profitability of the cinema
- Community Auditorium: accessible space for meetings, dance, choir, U3A activities, festival planning
- Village Square idea: a social space where people can gather on a social basis without any obligation, with tea, coffee facilities. A place encouraging connection on a caring level.
- “Made in Daylesford and Surrounds” shop which could incorporate the Visitor Information service. The shop could showcase regenerative organic produce and manufactured goods together with creative local work produced by local artists, crafts people and artisans.
- Art Space: Workshops, art exhibitions including social media and computer technologies utilised as a new medium for Art.
- Health & Well Being (uses) incorporating Massage, Therapy, Yoga, Herbalism, Pilates
- Youth Space: An area where young people can socialise incorporating hi-tech computer games and research available, pinball and areas of quiet contemplation.

As well as the details of some potential Government grants to assist with funding (including the Regional Accelerator Program, Regionalisation Fund, Investment Fast-Track Fund and others), a further excerpt from this group on how they envision these uses functioning is provided below:

- “To encompass the four essential elements within The Rex, the possibilities of private/ public/ community partnership/ownership should be explored with a view to reducing the financial impost of the project and optimise outcomes for the community. Philanthropic investors have expressed interest in being involved to members of our group.

It should be noted that costs will be substantially reduced by abandoning the plan to develop the wet area at the back of the building. Selling the private residence could also contribute to cost of the project. Unused Council assets should also be considered for sale to contribute towards the cost. Any such considerations should be transparent.

Our Community is very definite in its view that there are Four (4) Essential Elements that must not be lost in either the Re-design or the Sale of The Rex Theatre.

These elements could potentially be integrated. For example, if the cinema is located upstairs, there could be a bar and tapis area located downstairs, possibly spilling onto the street. A Made in Daylesford area could sell locally produced and manufactured goods, produce and artworks, adjoining the hospitality area, with an opportunity to showcase exhibitions of community arts made in Daylesford and surrounds. All these areas could have a training arm and provide opportunities for young people to develop skills and experience. There are many such ideas expressed in the attached document.

What eventuates should be determined by community consultation with consideration to financial viability and community benefit.”

Findings and Limitations

Findings

Overall it was clear that there was a significant portion of the community that are very unsupportive of the decision to sell The Rex and felt passionately about the delivery of a Hepburn Hub or similar style project. However, there were also a number of responses that felt that continuing with the project would be a waste of taxpayers' money and represent an inequitable investment for the Hepburn Shire. Those that were unsupportive of the decision to sell The Rex were from Birch Ward (highest number of survey responses) and Holcombe Ward. There was also a higher level of support from Cameron Ward. However other wards (Coliban and Creswick) were more supportive of the decision.

If Council was to proceed with the sale of The Rex it is recommended that the following be taken into consideration:

- Clear communication with the community about where alternative ideas have been investigated and why an alternative mix of uses or partial adaption of The Rex was identified as unviable.
- An identification or commitment where possible to relocate the key elements of the site, in particular community services, youth spaces, cinema and public toilets.
- Investigating whether it is possible to maintain strong heritage protection on the site if selling the building and communicating that with the community if deciding to sell.

If Council decides not to proceed with the sale, there will also be a number of important factors to consider:

- Whether a public-private partnership or grant can be accessed to assist with funding the project.
- Communicating what money is being spent and how this will benefit the wider shire and not just the residents of Birch Ward (equity of investment).
- Ongoing consultation with the community around the project.

Limitations

There were some limitations with this engagement process which have been noted, as follows:

- Despite the loss of a youth space being raised as an important issue from the sale of The Rex building, there were very few responses from those under the age of 30 to the survey.
- Allowing for group responses and individual responses means that those with a passionate point of view in regards to the project were able to have their views counted twice.
- Groups with a passionate position (supportive or unsupportive) were also able to canvas for additional responses from those that aligned with their point of view.
- There were a limited number of detailed community group responses potentially due to time constraints.

- A number of submissions were not able to respond within the scope provided for alternative ideas due to their passionate support of the Hepburn Hub project/offering.
- There was a lower rate of submissions for those outside of Birch Ward, which makes it difficult to generalise the results for these wards across the population.

These limitations are consistent with other similar projects. It is recommended that future processes may benefit from a drop-in session where more project information could be provided prior to participation in a survey or other engagement method.

Conclusions

This report has provided a summary of the engagement completed during May in regards to the Council's decision to sell The Rex. This engagement has found that the views expressed by the community were very polarised, with participants mainly selecting that they were strongly unsupportive or strongly supportive of the decision, with only a few submissions that felt neutral or less passionately about the issue. Support for the sale differed based on location with those in Birch Ward (the majority of survey respondents) as well as Cameron and Holcombe Wards to the west of Birch Ward, strongly unsupportive of the decision to sell The Rex. Those in Creswick and Coliban Wards to the east of Birch were more likely to support the decision (though response numbers were too low to generalise across the population in these areas).

The survey also resulted in a number of submissions with alternative ideas for The Rex building, though most ideas focused on alternative approaches to make key Hepburn Hub elements viable (e.g. the cinema, public toilet and youth/community spaces). Some of the alternative suggestions included creating an Arts/performance space (similar to those in Bendigo), a community space with a mix of services (training, welfare, bookable spaces etc.), a co-op or supermarket and arcade style shops, an aquatic centre or a cinema complex with shops similar to The Sun Theatre in Yarraville.