

Voice of the Community

Naenae pool and town centre



INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present this report which captures the voice of the community on the future of Naenae's town centre and swimming pool.

This report includes the views of the Naenae community, residents of wider Lower Hutt and pool users from around the region. It tells us what our community values, and can be used to guide decisions being made by Hutt City Council and others.

This project marks the start of an ongoing conversation with our communities, which will enable them to help shape the future to make our city the best it can be - a place where everyone thrives.

PARTNERSHIP WITH EMPATHY

For this project Hutt City Council has partnered with Empathy, a team of design researchers based in Wellington. Our teams have worked side by side to design and carry out engagement with the community, with two aims – ensuring the approach is both best practice and objective, and building our internal capability in community engagement. Empathy's work focused on capturing the voice of the Naenae community through deep dive and intercept interviews, community workshops and open days.

BACKGROUND

Naenae Pool

The closure of Naenae Pool in April 2019 due to earthquake concerns had a significant impact on both the local community and pool users from across the region. For the Naenae community, the pool was a focal point and 'the' place to gather, particularly for tamariki and rangatahi. It also provided local access to many programmes and services, including learn to swim, water safety, recreational swimming, school holiday programmes and gym services.

As well as being a valued community asset, Naenae Pool was also a significant regional aquatic facility. Two thirds of pool users came from across the wider Wellington region to take part in aquatic sports and activities including competitive swimming, water polo and canoe polo. The Pool also generated a lot of foot traffic in the town centre, so made a significant contribution to the local economy. The Naenae Community Hall had been closed in December 2018 in preparation for work on a new community hub.

While there was urgency to find a solution, there were also calls from the community to take the opportunity to look beyond the pool, and consider the longer term vision for the wider town centre. The Naenae community were also

keen to ensure their voice was heard when decisions were being made.

Council responded with the Voice of the Community Project which was launched in August 2019, with the goal of not only informing decisions on the pool and town centre, but also ensuring that the community felt its voice was heard. Work on the community hub was already well-advanced at this time, and this was paused so that its future could be considered as part of the bigger picture.

Naenae

At the last Census (2013) the population of Naenae was 8,440, which makes up about 8-9% of the total population of Lower Hutt. Naenae has a more ethnically diverse population than Lower Hutt in general – 25 percent of those living in Naenae identified as being Maori (18% for Lower Hutt) and 24 percent as being Pacific peoples (11% for Lower Hutt). In the 2013 Census, 57% of people in Naenae identify as European, 27% as Maori, 24% as Pacific peoples, 9% as Asian and 3% as Middle Eastern, Latin American or African.

The male to female ratio has historically, and is projected to remain, the same in Naenae as it is in Lower Hutt as a whole. In the 2013 Census Naenae also had a higher percentage of residents able to speak at least two languages (30% compared to 23%) and, who are of Maori descent (28% compared with 19%).

Since the early 2000's Naenae has had a younger population compared to Lower Hutt in general. Both are likely to experience an aging population in the future but the proportion of those aged over 65 is currently lower in Naenae and is expected to remain lower until 2043. Naenae residents are more likely than the total Lower Hutt population to be regular smokers and there is little or no difference in the transport methods used by both groups to travel to work.

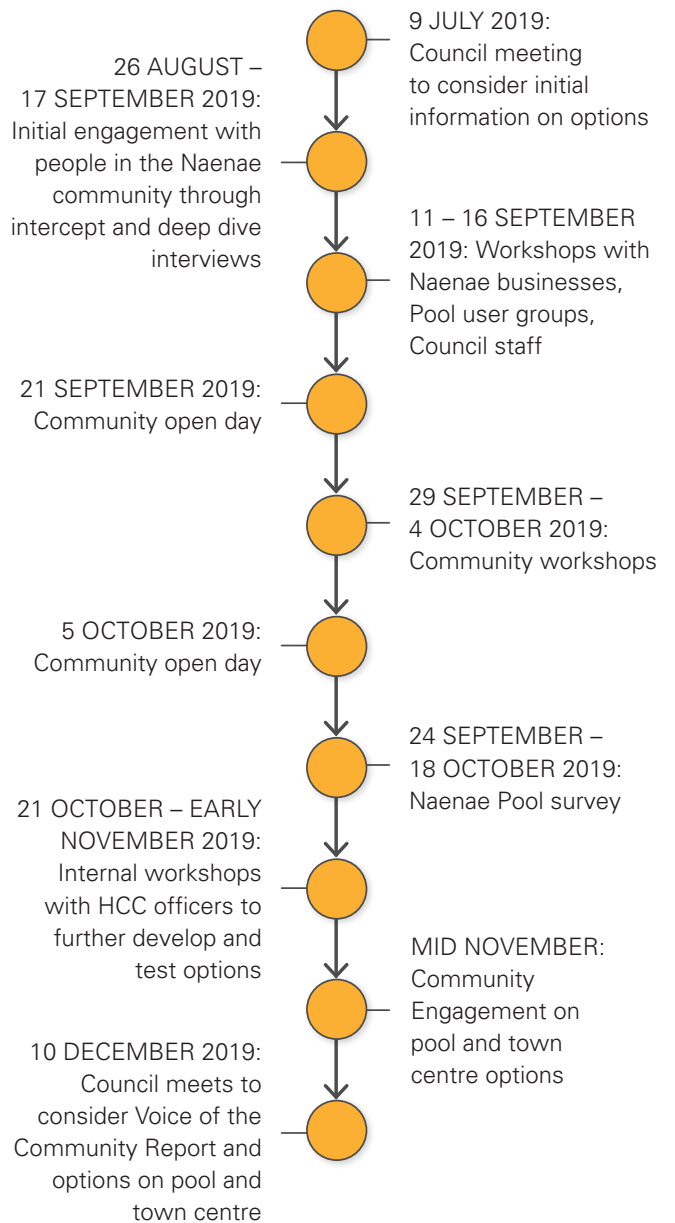
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APPROACH

The Voice of the Community project has enabled thousands of people to have their say in lots of different ways, including:

- Deep dive and intercept interviews with members of the community
- Community Open Days
- Community Workshops
- Workshops for specific groups including businesses and Hillary Court retailers, pool users and young people
- The Naenae Pool survey (regional)
- An online forum at haveyoursay.huttcity.govt.nz/naenae
- Display, engagement and suggestion box at Naenae Library
- Engagement with people using other Lower Hutt pools





The voice of the Naenae community

Hutt City Council wanted to genuinely engage with people in the Naenae community to inform and inspire the future of the pool and town centre. The Council commissioned Empathy, a company specialising in human system design, to help them achieve that objective. Empathy led a joint team through a rigorous process, bringing experience and objectivity.

This section summarises what's meaningful and valuable to people in Naenae. It outlines the vision the community have for the future of the pool and town centre, to inform and inspire decisions. Empathy's full report is provided as a separate document. It contains more detail about the process and results, along with quotes and anecdotes from the people of Naenae.

APPROACH

Hutt City Council and Empathy formed a combined project team through key phases of this project. Working in a collaborative and tight-knit team allowed us to make the most of our respective expertise and networks.

Our approach was designed to:

- build on existing knowledge, including results of past engagement
- speak with a wide range of Naenae residents, including those who are less likely to be heard by council

- go beyond what people say they want to uncover underlying values, needs and belief systems that underpin how people experience the town centre
- define the Naenae community's vision for the pool and town centre.

We spoke to over 150 people through the course of the work — on the street, at community open days, in people's homes, and in organised workshops. Conversations lasted between five and 90 minutes. We used frameworks and theories based in anthropology, design research and te ao Māori to interpret our data, pull out key themes and uncover how the Naenae community sees itself and value in their town centre.

THE IDENTITY OF THE NAENAE COMMUNITY

Understanding what the Naenae community values in a town centre requires a good knowledge of the context people are living in.

Through our conversations with the people of Naenae, we built a picture of the qualities that define their community. Some of what characterises Naenae was clearly explained to us. Other characteristics became clear in the way people talked about what they hold dear, and why.

The following statements reflect majority themes, not every person's view. They illustrate how most people in Naenae experience their community.

- Naenae is an inclusive community. We are proud to embrace diversity. Most people are open to others. Most want to share their culture and learn about others.
- The people of Naenae show great care, compassion and manaakitanga for each other. We look out for each other. Many people share or give to others in the community when they can, in whatever way they can — even if they're struggling themselves.

- The loss of public facilities, businesses, and activity in the Naenae town centre over time is testing people's resilience. Some people remain hopeful, others do not.
- Naenae people are proud, but not of the state of the spaces and places in the town centre. We care about how people see Naenae and how it feels to be here.

While it isn't part of the identity of the Naenae community, it was very clear in conversations that many people are struggling day-to-day. Difficulties related to money, ability to access services, health, housing, and more.

"It's the diversity of cultures. Different cultures come here. It's acceptance. It's a good thing, bringing different people in and taking care of everybody."

"I've seen this place change over thirty years. I think we are a forgotten community. The pool going down is a big impact. I didn't use the pool much but I can feel it around me that people are sad."

"Imagine coming to a place where you can't afford food, can't afford to travel outside of the place, and everything around in the local town is closing. What would you do?"





WHAT THE NAENAE COMMUNITY NEEDS FROM THEIR TOWN CENTRE AND POOL

To be valuable to the Naenae community, the town centre and pool must meet their specific needs.

We have grouped needs under themed headings to make sure the voice of the Naenae community is clear. Not every need will be equally present and pressing for every person, but we have followed a rigorous process to make sure we present a view that represents the community as a whole.

A town centre where people can do the basics

Being able to do their basic day-to-day living in the community they are part of is important to the people of Naenae. To be valuable to people in Naenae the town centre needs to support their everyday lives. People need to be able to live life in Naenae as much as they can. It's disappointing to have to leave for simple tasks. Going elsewhere costs time, money, and energy. The town centre should provide access to basic necessary things to make people feel valued, and ensure their lives are not made more difficult because of where they live.

"We can get a free bus to the Hutt but we cannot carry our shopping by ourselves, so we have to take my car. If I don't take them then we all won't get groceries for our homes. We are all old."

A town centre where people can stay active

Access to physical and social activity that suits their age and interests is important to the people of Naenae. To be valuable to people in Naenae, the town centre needs to help them stay active. It needs to enable different activities for different reasons. People want to stay healthy, feel a sense of hauora, burn energy, improve at something or enjoy the company of others. People in Naenae need affordable activity — close to home — that lines up with their aims and interests.

"If we just want a social meet up, where's the place for that? I remember when dances and discos were every weekend."

A town centre where people can support local people

Businesses being more than functional places is important to the people of Naenae. To be valuable to people in Naenae, the town centre needs to support locals in business. It needs to help people support each other, and feel supported by businesses. People in Naenae like being more than a customer. The town centre needs to enable a sense of community, whanaungatanga and neighbourliness in the way people do business.

"I purposefully go to the butcher. I want to support the local guy."

A town centre where people can connect regularly

Spaces, places, and activities that can be part of their routine are important to the people of Naenae. To be valuable to people in Naenae, the town centre needs places and activities people can return to often to enjoy their community and form connections with others. People need to see familiar places and do familiar things in the town centre. Feeling like a regular gives people a sense of belonging in Naenae.

“I’ve lived in Naenae my whole life. I’ve always been a Naenae girl. It’s sad because we lose all the socialising and there’s nowhere for people to just go and meet up you know? When those places don’t exist people just do other stuff like drugs and alcohol.”

A town centre where people can gather at meaningful times

Space to gather with family, whānau or groups at meaningful moments in life is important to the people of Naenae. To be valuable to people in Naenae, the town centre needs somewhere they can get together and celebrate. The town

centre should enable people to mark special times, prepare food, and host other people in a big space that welcomes their culture.

“Last weekend, it was my birthday. I had my children and friends over to yarn...the church set it up. I was great seeing my children. They’re spread all around Wellington...It’s valuable to see them all together. It’s special to me.”

A town centre where people can make memories

Being able to make memories from everyday moments in Naenae is important to people who live there. To be valuable to people in Naenae, the town centre needs spaces they can easily spend time with friends and loved ones. Everyday moments become special memories, and people want them to happen in the place they live. Leaving Naenae takes more time, money and effort. The town centre should help people make memories in the community they’re part of.

“It was a dream, catching them when they jumped in the pool... seeing the smiles on their faces.”



A town centre where people can come together as a community

Events and spaces that build a sense of community are important to the people of Naenae. To be valuable to people in Naenae, the town centre needs spaces and events that cater to the varied interests of people in the community. People in Naenae like living in a place that embraces diversity. They want to be around each other in a lively and inclusive town centre.

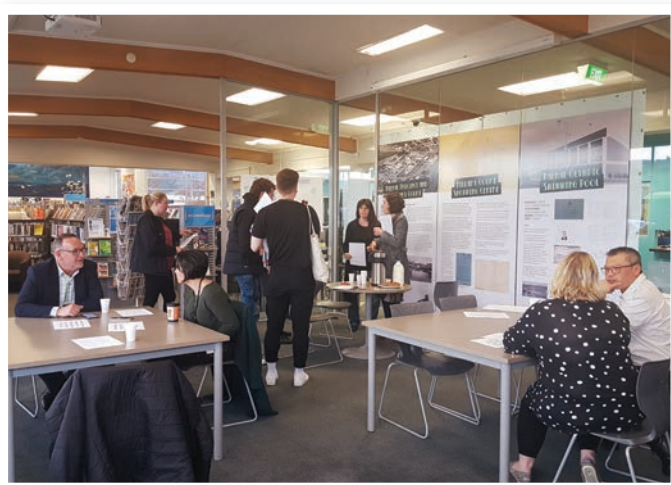
"[It was] a fun evening out, under the stars. Bring a pillow, watch a movie. It felt like owning our own community."



A town centre where people can be safe and satisfied

Public places that are cared for and used are important to the people of Naenae. To be valuable to people in Naenae, the town centre needs a sense of activity. It needs to look inviting. The town centre should help people feel safe and be at ease in public places. When no one is around, people worry Naenae is seen in a bad light.

"It was always busy. It was always moving here. People were coming and going. Now there are hardly any cars. Look at it. It's empty. It's dead as!"



THE NAENAE COMMUNITY'S VISION FOR THE POOL AND TOWN CENTRE

The outcomes of this work reinforce a previous Council survey finding that people want a 'hub' in Naenae. The community defines hub in its own way. We now know what type of hub will be most valued in Naenae, and why.

The vision includes a new pool in the Naenae town centre, to replace what has been lost and deliver on many of the things people in Naenae value most. However, the vision is for a town centre that doesn't rely on a pool alone to deliver what the Naenae community needs and values.

The vision is for a lively, functional town centre with multiple spaces, places and facilities that are separate but feel connected.

The idea of a hub appeals to many people in Naenae, but people told us they don't want the council to try to put everything they value under one roof. The history, layout, identity and community needs of Naenae mean a hub like those that have had some success in other parts of the city won't be the best option for this community. People in Naenae are yearning for something new to bring energy to the centre of their town. But their view of Naenae's centre is wider than what could fit in the footprint of a single building. Naenae needs an energetic, compact precinct that brings together what's most important to the community.

"If everything is in the same building, then what's the point? It will kill Hillary Court."

"[Hillary Court] is the beating heart. We've got to help it beat."

We uncovered some key principles for the design of the precinct:

- Create functional reasons for people to use different parts of the town centre.
- Enable different generations, cultures and social groups to intermingle.
- Connect spaces and places — to create a lively precinct.
- Make places open, enable visibility.



- Make spaces and places accessible — physically, emotionally, and financially.
- Let people choose how they use space.
- Cater to Naenae's big families and groups.
- Support and enable young people.
- Provide access to technology.
- Support people in need, and those who support them.
- Support local owner-operators.
- Preserve heritage without impeding functionality.
- Reflect local iwi and history.
- Remember all the senses.
- Create green spaces.
- Do it in a Naenae way — regenerate, don't gentrify, in partnership with the community.
- Deliver these principles through the build process — not just in the final places and spaces.

"I don't think we should go so far in our attempts to bring life to Hillary Court that we kind of forget where we are. ... We've got to remember our whole audience is. ... It's multi-cultural. ... People who have great jobs and people who don't have jobs at all. People who own businesses and people who don't even own a car."

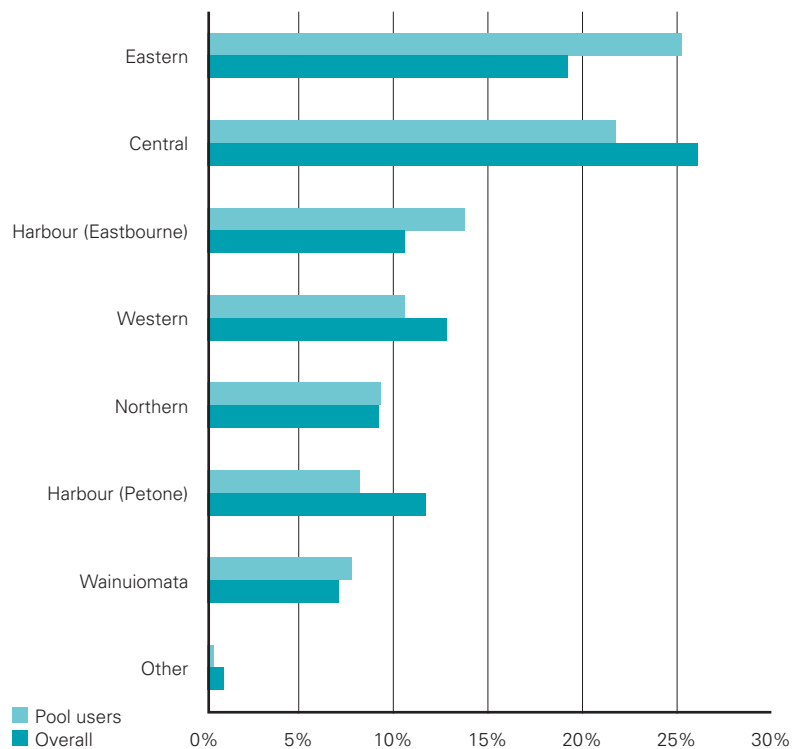


NAENAE POOL SURVEY

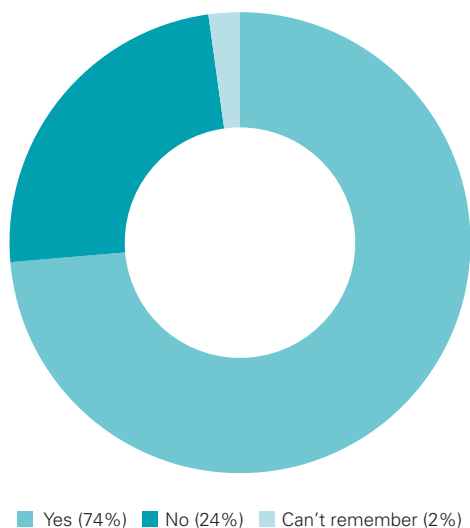
As part of our Voice of the Community project we ran a survey for all Lower Hutt residents and pool users from around the region.

The survey ran between 24 September and 18 October 2019. The following is a summary of the 2,876 responses received.

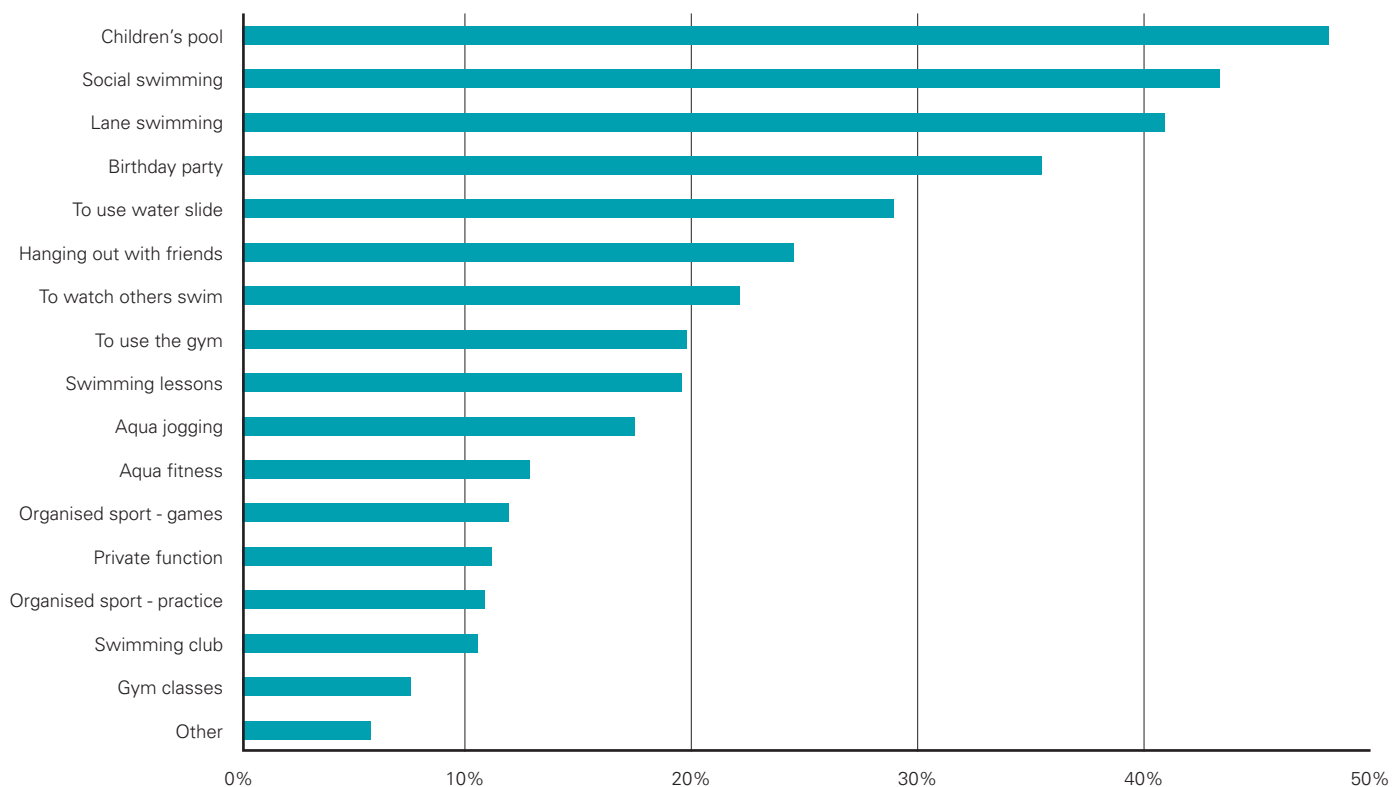
A third of respondents noted their suburb of residence, and of those, a quarter lived in the Eastern Ward suburbs.



Three quarters of those who responded had used Naenae Pool in the 12 months prior to its closure; a quarter had not; and a very small percentage could not remember if they had or hadn't.



The top 5 uses of the pool given by respondents were: children's pool use (48%); social swimming (43%); lane swimming (41%); birthday party (35%) and; water slides (29%).





I think an upgrade would be awesome I would like to see a bigger better children area with more slides things for them to play on and with a spa, sauna, stream room. Upgraded gym. Could even extended it and make it event centre or put the library in it and/or indoor sports centre make it a complex sort of thing possibilities are endless.



The pool and adjoining facilities were good, perhaps a bit more of a link to the surrounding park areas otherwise would just like to see it open as a safe environment and returned as the hub of the community that it was.



Refurbished toilet and showers. More family change areas. More pleasant spectator areas.



Better kids pool facilities, keep the slide, improve/ upgrade changing facilities, better spectator/ supervisor areas especially in kids pool area. Put in a spa area.



I think it was great maybe just some modernisation.



The area is ideal for a 'hub' based approach. Combining the community hub and linking with the bowls centre could provide council with a transformative means to serve the community's needs. Offering facilities to be proud of and places for families and groups to connect and prosper.



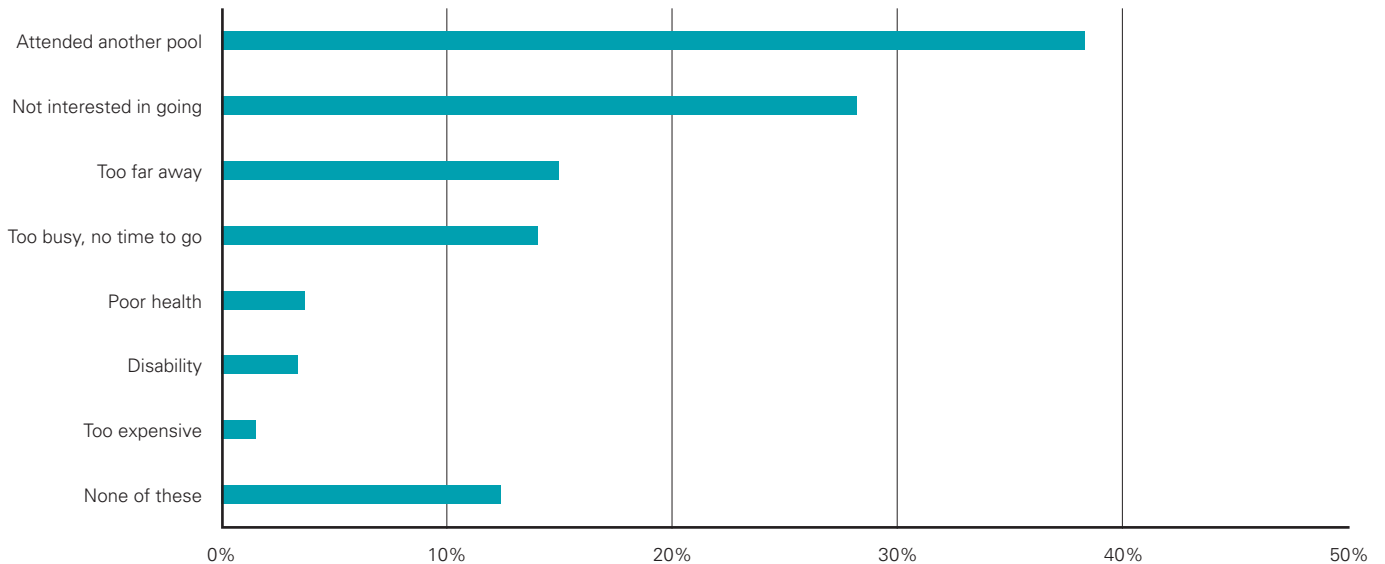
I think it's a great opportunity to make the design something really special. Bring natural light in, include plant life to make it feel natural. There are some amazing indoor nature inspired pool areas around the world to draw design ideas from. An outdoor spa area would be awesome.



The location is great. If it was refreshed I could see us using it more.



The majority of those who had not used the pool recently had not because either; they attended another pool (38%) and, or they were not interested in going (28%).



Those who had not attended the pool recently either: use a pool closer to their home or work; use another pool as Naenae did not meet their needs; did not currently use a pool but had or intended to be a frequent user; or were unaware of its existence.

When recent users were asked what they liked most about the pool, and/or wanted to keep the most frequently occurring themes were:

- Pool size/length/depth/temperature (39%)
- Children’s pools and activities including inflatables/ obstacle course (33%)
- Slide/zoom tube (26%)
- Location and convenience (22%)
- Contribution to community (14%)
- Experiences/family/social/community atmosphere (12%)

When asked about the improvements they would like to see the themes were:

- Changing rooms (25%)
- Kids area and activities (14%)
- Physical structure (incl. earthquake safe) (13%)
- No changes liked as is (11%)
- Spa (10%)

Users fell into one of three groups when asked about improvements:

- those who wanted to see the pool reopened with few if any changes

- those who wanted the changing rooms, seating and/or kids area upgraded and a spa
- those who wanted a new upgraded regional facility offering the pool specifications needed to host water polo, underwater hockey and/or competitive swimming.

Many respondents, implicitly or explicitly, indicated that they would settle for less than what they would really like to see in order to have the pool reopened as soon as possible.



“ Ideally would like to see a larger facility with 2x 50 metre pools to allow one to be dedicated to swimming sports given the demand placed on it. Have a cafe and relaxation area parents can read, watch tv or just relax when they are with children. Definitely larger seating capacity to allow Naenae to host national and international swimming related events - a great boost for the local economy. ”

“ I would love to see more interactive things in the kids section. Splash pad style fountains. Kids area needs to accommodate more various age groups. Also the zoom chute needs to be upgraded to maybe two different kinds. ”

“ Keep all the features and layout as is, maybe upgrade changing rooms and hydro slides. A spa pool somewhere would be nice. Maybe attached to the beginners pool for parents watching kids. ”

“ Ideally I would like a new up to date pool with zoom tube that will draw more people to the area but this will take too long so just do what is needed to get it open quickly. ”

“ Just how it was; was great. ”

“ Learn-to-swim classes for toddlers and babies would be great. I like that it's in the centre of Naenae, easy for the community to access and it gives some life to the main street. ”

“ Better changing, showering and toilet facilities. More space near the reception desk as often it could get quite crowded. Better access for people with mobility needs. ”

“ We want Naenae pools back and bigger. It is an asset to the community and visitors as well. ”

SUMMARY

Council believes it has a sound understanding of the community voice, based on surveys, workshops, online forums, open days, in-community conversations, and more.

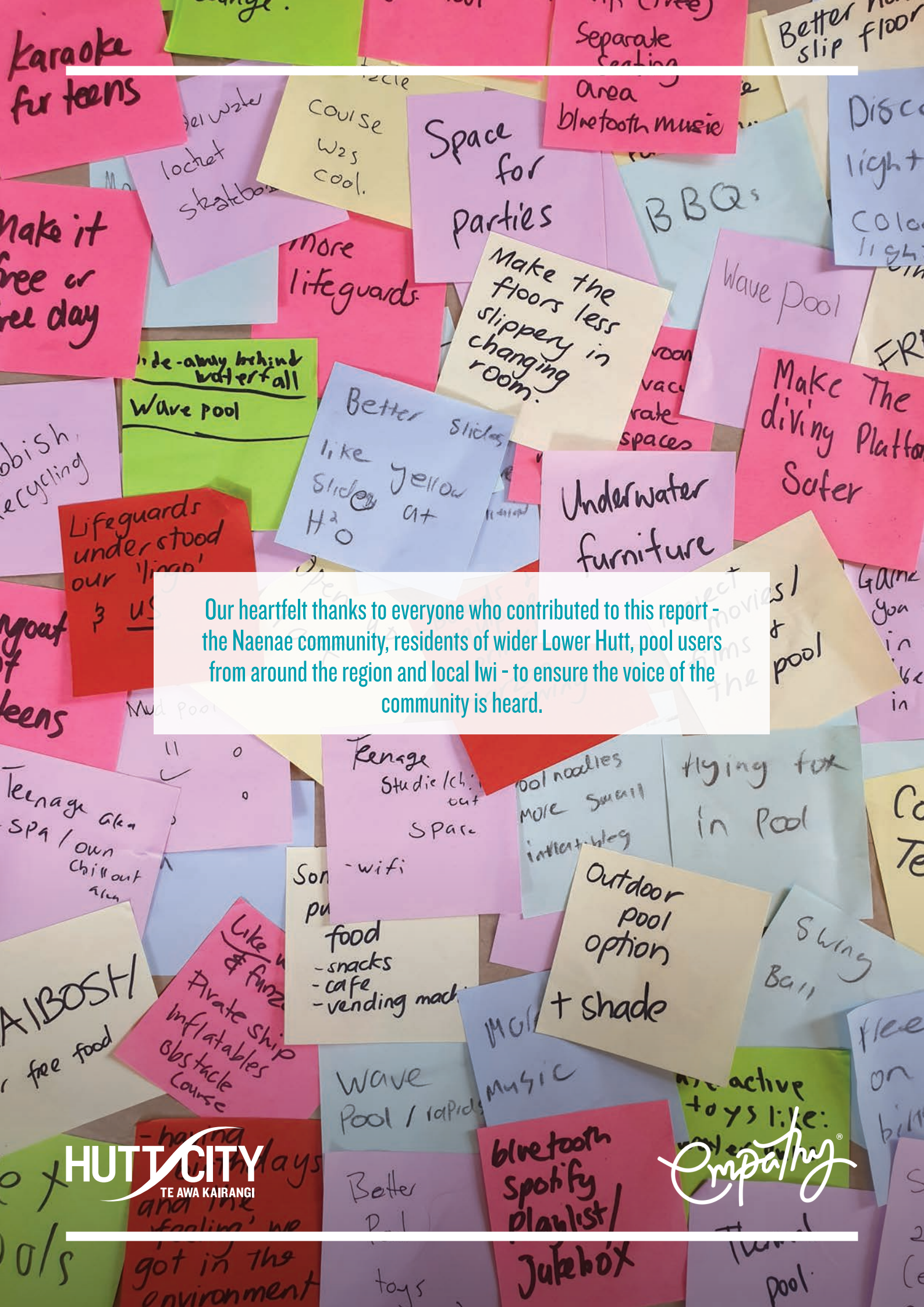
Pool users, the Naenae community, and residents of wider Lower Hutt agree on replacing the pool. The dominant view from each group is that the pool does not need to be a state-of-the-art aquatic centre. They want what they had — with improved accessibility, a more welcoming entrance, and easy flow to great outdoor spaces. The size of the pool, the different areas for different activities, and the 'zoom tube' are all features that the community wants returned.

The pool is an important part of the Naenae community's vision for the town centre.

However, the vision is for a town centre that doesn't rely on a pool alone to deliver what people need and value. The vision is for a lively, functional town centre with multiple spaces, places and facilities that are separate but feel connected.

The idea of a town focal point appeals to many people in Naenae, but most people told us it would be better if it wasn't all in one building. The history, layout, identity and community needs of Naenae mean a hub like those that have had success in other parts of the city won't get the long-term outcomes the community is seeking. People in Naenae are yearning for something new to bring energy to the centre of their town. But their view of Naenae's centre is wider than what could fit in the footprint of a single building. Naenae needs an energetic, compact precinct that brings together what's most important to the community.





Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this report - the Naenae community, residents of wider Lower Hutt, pool users from around the region and local Iwi - to ensure the voice of the community is heard.