UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Mount Pleasant Community Facilities for Youth

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Executive Summary

This report has examined the suburb of Mount Pleasant. More specifically, it has examined the youth population and has attempted to ascertain what the youth population want to have built in the suburb by means of a local community facility.

- The report's research question was "What community facilities do the youth of Mount Pleasant want?"
- The research question arose when it was realised that very little research had been undertaken regarding the youth population of Mount Pleasant. Also, there appeared to be a gap between the youth population and the remaining adult population regarding what facilities would be beneficial. Therefore, this research has aimed to fill this gap.
- The data gathered for the report was done in a qualitative fashion. Data was gathered from a focus group and a survey.
- The data revealed that the youth of Mount Pleasant feel that there is very little available for them in the way of facilities. Thus, the research discovered that a tangible option in regards to creating a facility would be to construct a temporary "hub" located on McCormacks Bay Road. The most important aspect of his "hub" would be the provision of entertaining activities that aren't readily available at home. Also, smaller, more specific facilities such as a BMX track or skate park were suggested.
- The most notable weakness of the research is the limited sample size. As the sample size was small it cannot be considered truly representative and the results cannot be extrapolated to the wider youth population. A secondary limitation was the discrepancy between results and previous research. The most prevalent example is respondents that provided "Mount Pleasant School" as a Mount Pleasant hub while stating the area is used only when activities are being held there. Third, the potential cost or necessary funding of initiating the suggested "hub" has not been considered in the current research.
- If future research were to be conducted, a larger sample would need to be captured. This would give more representative results and provide more robust information. In addition, more research and analytical techniques would have to be employed.

Introduction

This research has examined the youth population of Mount Pleasant. More specifically, it has aimed to answer the question, "What facilities do the youth of Mount Pleasant want?" The initial concept brought forward was to discover what facilities would increase community participation within the suburb. However, it was made clear in subsequent discussions with key community players that few social ties between youth exist and there is currently a lack of data surrounding youth and their behaviours. Hence, the research aim was changed to focus on the youth of Mount Pleasant aged 12-18 years.

Figure 1: Mount Pleasant Census Area (Christchurch City Council, 2012).

Background

The suburb of Mount Pleasant is located seven kilometres from the central business district. It is bounded by Redcliff's to the east and Summit Road to the south. The suburb is separated by three ridges which the houses are built on (refer to figure 3), therefore there is no one path for residents to enter and exit through (Mount Pleasant Memorial Community Centre and

Residents Association Inc., 2013). The accessibility in Mount Pleasant is complicated with five entry and exit points (refer to figure 2) (Christchurch City Council, 2012). As there is no central area within the suburb, Mount Pleasant lacks a hub that is accessible to the entire community. Currently Mount Pleasant has one primary school, a community centre, a restaurant and a small number of commercial facilities. As the suburb houses few commercial facilities it requires residents to travel outside of Mount Pleasant to partake in everyday tasks, such as shopping or going to high school.

Figure 2: Entry and exit points of Mount Pleasant

Figure 3: Geographical layout of Mount Pleasant

Information based on the 2006 Census displays that at this time Mount Pleasant was in a strong position with a prosperous and growing community (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). At the time of this Census Mount Pleasant previously housed approximately 4000 people, this number decreased to 3000 following the 2011 February Christchurch earthquake (Christchurch City Council, 2012). Mount Pleasant has an older demographic with the largest number of the population aged 65 and over, while only 50% of Mount Pleasant residents have children living at home (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

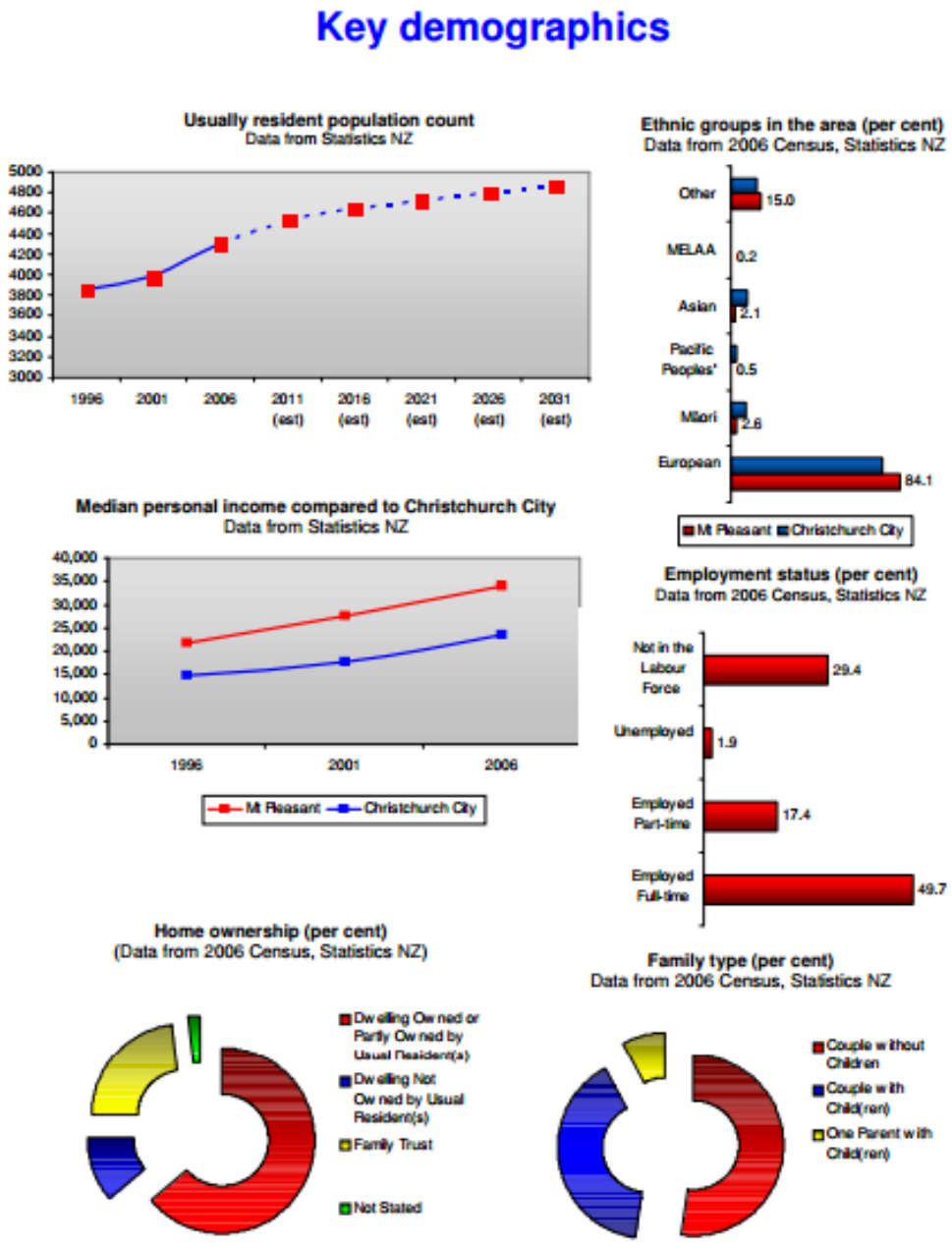


Figure 4: Mount Pleasant key demographics (Christchurch City Council, 2012)

The Christchurch February 2011 earthquake severely harmed Mount Pleasant and initially left residents isolated from other suburbs. Immediately following the earthquakes there was an increase in community spirit and connectedness as neighbours reached out to the community to give or ask for support, especially for accessing basic services. Mount Pleasant residents organised their own tent city at the Mount Pleasant School grounds following the 22nd of February earthquake, as many residents' houses were not safe to occupy. This tent city brought local residents together in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake which allowed many to bond and become familiar with others in the community. Long term negative effects of the earthquake occurred within the suburb with a significant number of houses assessed as yellow and red, as well a significant movement of people within and out of the Mount Pleasant area (Christchurch City Council, 2012). The local community centre and the Mount Pleasant School hall were among the well-utilised community facilities that were extensively damaged and have been since deemed unsafe to use. As many of Mount Pleasants' community facilities have been unusable, residents have had to go elsewhere for many social activities. The long term impacts of the earthquake have been significant with a decrease in population of over 1000 residents, the demolition of 500 houses and several community facilities uninhabitable (Christchurch City Council, 2012).

Literature Review

Intra-psychic, is a psychological theory that explains place attachment which helps to understand how different people may react to a place or environment (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Place attachment has either a positive or negative effect on the residents of a community. It has a negative effect if people are only in one place for a certain amount of time, as they are unlikely to build community bonds and act cohesively with a community.

Positive place attachment occurs when people are passionate about where they live and have often resided in this area for a long period of time. These people are more likely to participate in community orientated events (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). This is important to be aware of when examining youth, as the longer they live and spend time in the area the more positive place attachment they may have. This directly affects the research undertaken, as youth may live within the suburb and spend no time there, which could lead to negative place attachment. If there was a space for youth to go which compel them to spend more time in the suburb, community bonds and positive place attachment may be formed. Engaging with community leaders and residents at a personal level is also seen as a major benefit before conducting research. After place attachment and community opinions are taken into consideration it allows the overall needs of a community to be assessed to provide the most beneficial results (Webber & Jones, 2013).

Funding is another common theme among literature. The funding of projects must be long lasting and not just one off payments as community facilities or new buildings tend to deteriorate if they are not maintained regularly. Self-sustaining neighbourhoods are also often viewed positively and can give a unique identity to an environment or community (Hull, 2000). The literature has highlighted the need for long term assessments within the research process, in order for any recommended facilities to be viable in the long term.

Aims and Objectives

Through initial consultation with community leaders, the theme of community ties was seen as important. This has been the basis of the research however the overall aim has changed over time due to conflicting community opinions. The initial research focus was, "what community and commercial facilities do the residents of Mount Pleasant want?" This

changed as it was found previous research had been conducted on a similar topic. After discovering few facilities were available for youth in Mount Pleasant and little research had been conducted regarding this, the focus question was subsequently changed to "what community facilities do the youth of Mount Pleasant want?" This research focus shift was made in order to understand what facilities would increase the presence and social ties of youth within the suburb. A 12-18 year old demographic was targeted as this is the secondary school age range.

Methodology

During the research process a variety of techniques were used to obtain data. The research conducted followed a qualitative research design. This methodological framework is best suited when gathering information regarding opinions and behaviours, which was the main focus of this study.

The first task was to get a basic understanding of Mount Pleasant as a suburb. No members of the group were familiar with the Mount Pleasant area. To remedy this, the group visited the suburb early in the research process. While there, a number of key locations were observed such as Mount Pleasant School, the Old School Reserve, the small number of commercial facilities, the sports fields at McCormack's Bay Reserve, and the complex road system. Becoming familiar with the suburb was important to develop a basic understanding of the community and what is currently available to the residents.

The attendance at the Residents Association meeting on the fifth of August was important in order to understand what has previously been proposed for youth. The meeting consisted mainly of community members who were interested in potential facilities for youth in Mount

Pleasant. While several possible scenarios and ideas were presented at the meeting, a major limitation was that no youth were present. The discussions examined at this meeting gave a number of possibilities to propose to the youth in the focus group. All of the members in attendance were strongly in favour and motivated towards creating new facilities for youth, however this only reflects a small selection of the overall population and others may not share the same enthusiasm.

Interviews were also carried out following the methodological framework from reviewed literature, in order to use the appropriate techniques for the situation. Interviews were conducted with community partner Martin Anderson and the chairperson of the Mount Pleasant Resident's Association, Jocelyn Papprill. These interviews were brief, and the main goal was to find the community leaders opinions on Mount Pleasant; what made the suburb stand out and what facilities they thought would most benefit youth. These interviews were conducted in order to get a greater understanding of the community and to compare what these key community players believed would benefit youth, compared to that of the suburb's teenagers. Of the three main interview styles, qualitative-quantitative interviewers, second choice qualitative interviewers, and authentic qualitative interviewers (Pretto, 2011), the latter was chosen in this situation. The main aim of the authentic qualitative technique is to make the interviewees feel comfortable, to respect their silence and encourage answers that form discussions (Pretto, 2011). Each answer was also analysed to understand the meaning behind the response, to collect the most accurate information.

A focus group was chosen as the main source of data collection. The focus group was conducted with four youth. Focus groups are a strong way to gather information regarding opinions and ideas, as they provide the potential for 'spontaneous group interaction and

dialogue' (Seal, Bogart & Ehrhardt, 1998, p.253). The aim is to get a group of people together to form discussions about the topic to bring forward new ideas (Morgan, 1996). Although focus groups have significant advantages, there are also limitations and bias that occur when this method is carried out.

To find participants for the focus group, the snowball sampling method was used. This method was chosen to locate and contact people who fit the target demographic (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Using this form of sampling allowed us to contact people and invite them to the focus group, as we may have not otherwise been able to locate them. With assistance from community partner Martin Anderson a list of potential focus group participants was created. As this was through one person's contacts, it cannot represent the population as a whole, hence there is likely to be bias in the results.

A major limitation to this study was the small sample, with only four youth attending the focus group. Due to this small sample the variety of opinions and ideas presented was limited. The effects of low attendance may have been mitigated if a greater number of focus groups were held and a larger number of youth were invited to the group. This was not possible however due to time constraints. Although there were a small number of people who participated, the youth that did attend came from different backgrounds which meant the data collected came from a variety of perspectives.

The focus group setting was chosen as it was believed that the informal setting would best engage the youth, to ensure they were willing to contribute to discussions (Cameron, 2010). The focus group was held at Mount Pleasant School, as it was believed the youth would feel comfortable in a setting they were familiar with. Providing pizza and drinks was an incentive

to attend. A laidback atmosphere was also encouraged to allow the youth to feel comfortable voicing their opinions. The event lasted approximately one hour, and several trends were clear, in terms of what the youth liked and disliked in Mount Pleasant.

To ensure a variety of opinions from youth were collected, an online survey was created which was sent to the youth who expressed interest in the focus group but were unable to attend. The survey was also promoted and available to youth through the Mount Pleasant Community Facebook page, the Mount Pleasant School website as well as through community leaders (Mt Pleasant Community, 2013; Mount Pleasant School, 2013). The data from the survey was important to further reinforce what was learnt during the focus group. Similar to the focus group there may be bias in the data due to the snowballing method used.

Results

The results from this research were gathered from the focus group data and survey findings. The results demonstrate what is currently available for the youth of Mount Pleasant and what would most benefit them. The data collected is of a qualitative nature, as previous research surrounding community facilities conducted by the Mount Pleasant Resident's Association in 2012 was of a quantitative form (Mount Pleasant Residents Association Survey, 2012). The total sample size was 10, which equated to a response rate of 40%. From each data source, four themes were prevalent; the youth's Mount Pleasant hub, youth's main transport methods, personal hub and the facilities they believed were currently available for youth in Mount Pleasant.

Mount Pleasant Hub

The data showed that over half of the respondents considered 'Mount Pleasant School' to be their hub within the suburb (refer to figure 5). However, only one respondent of the 61% actually attended Mount Pleasant School. This is important because although many respondents noted the school to be an important place in Mount Pleasant, it is generally only used when activities were being held there. If nothing was happening at the school, only one respondent would consider using the space. A third of the respondents reported that they did not have a hub in Mount Pleasant.

Main Transport Methods

The majority of respondents considered the local bus service to be their main form of transport. The bus was used to travel to locations outside of Mount Pleasant, most commonly their personal hubs. The remaining respondents had private transport arrangements (refer to figure 6). While 60% of the respondents used the bus, it was made clear that the current bus services provide limited transport. Most notably, to travel from Mount Pleasant into Christchurch city requires two connections and can take up to an hour of travel time (refer to figure 7).

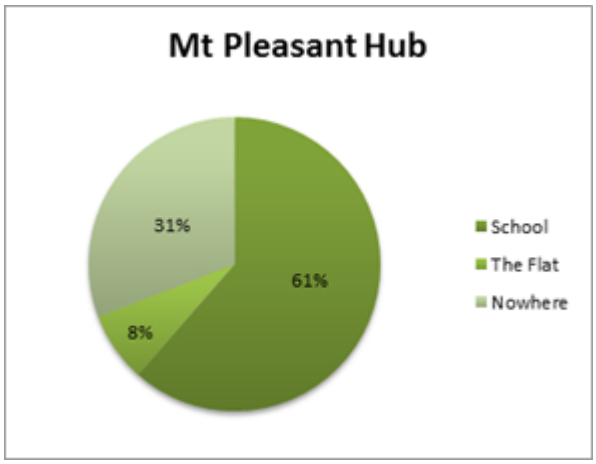


Figure 5: Opinions of "hub" within Mount Pleasant

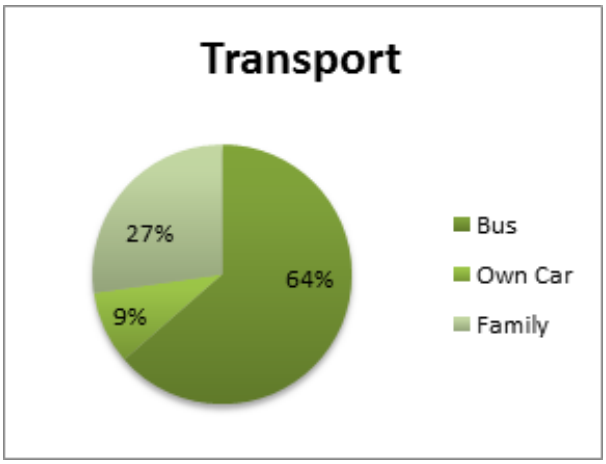
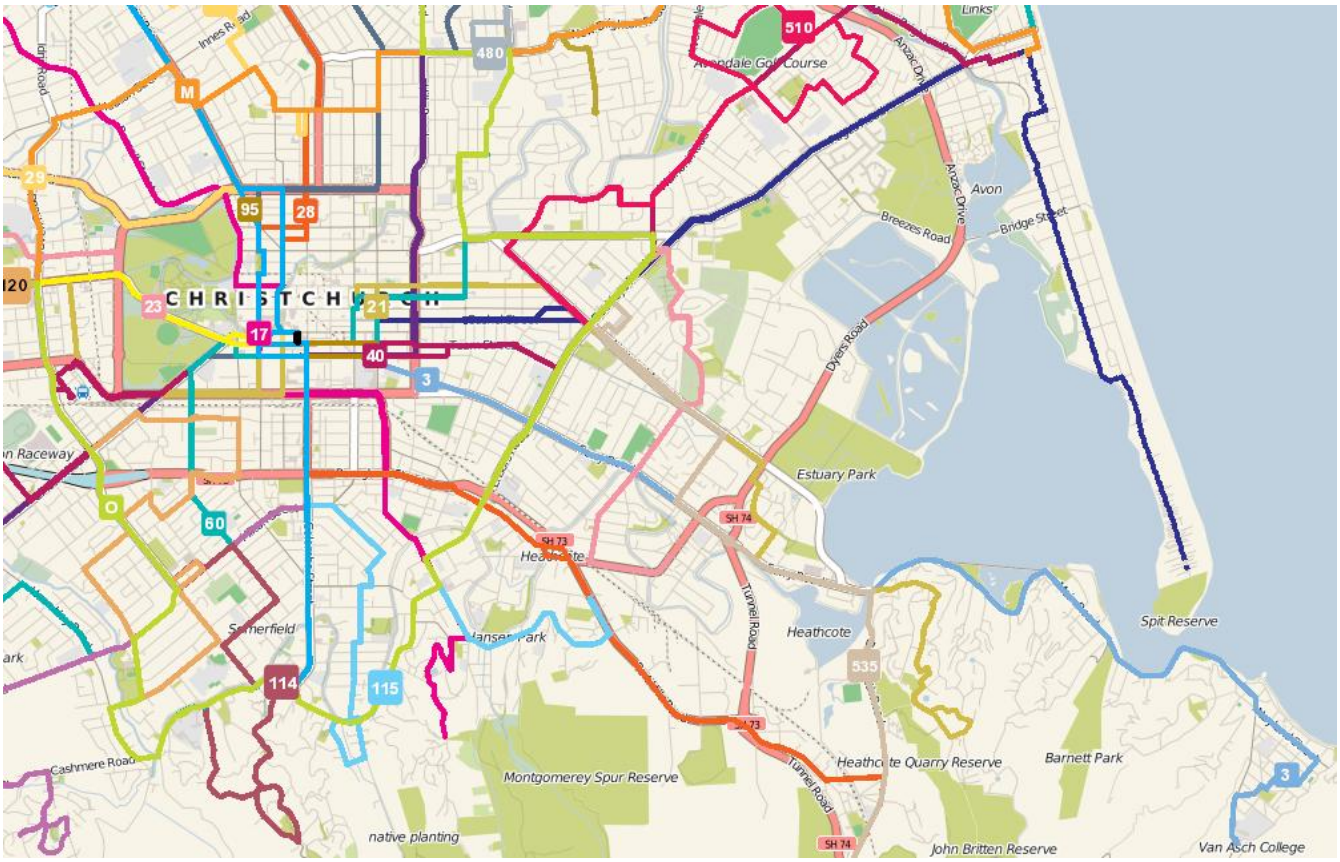


Figure 6: Main transport methods used.



KEY:
AIRPORT SUMNER
LYTELTON/HEATHCOTE
ILAM MT PLEASANT
Figure 7: Christchurch bus route connections to Mount Pleasant

Personal Hub

The data showed the majority of respondents considered their current high school to be their main centre. It was found that the bulk of activities that these youth engaged in existed through their schools. Sumner and Westfield Riccarton Mall were also noted as hubs, although the amount of time spent at each location was less than that spent at their high schools.

Facilities Currently Available for Youth

This data was the most compelling within the research and has played a significant role in structuring the recommendations presented. The data showed that of the total respondents,

half did not consider there to be any facilities available for youth in Mount Pleasant (refer to figure 8).

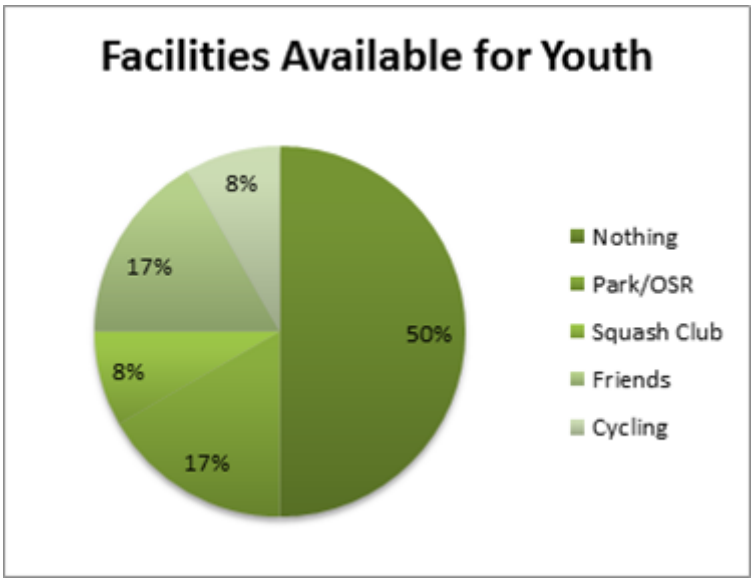


Figure 8: Opinion of facilities available for youth

The remaining half cited specific activities such as the park/old school reserve, the squash club, friend's houses or cycling, as activities that are available for youth. Overall it was captivating to discover that half the youth participants did not consider there to be any facilities available for youth in the entire suburb.

Discussion

The data gathered has produced significant results that contribute to answering the research question. The results show that half of the respondents do not consider there to be any facilities available for youth in Mount Pleasant. The respondents suggest that youth do not feel a strong affiliation or connection towards the suburb in which they reside. It could also explain why many of the respondents have found personal hubs located outside of Mount Pleasant.

From the research conducted it was found that all respondents were in favour of the creation of a hub for Mount Pleasant youth, indicating that if it was designed specifically for youth it

would be utilised. The youth suggested a temporary facility located on McCormack's Bay Road that provided fun activities and food would be a valuable space. It was noted that currently youth do not spend a great deal of time on McCormack's Bay Road, however the majority of the respondents stated that if there was something attracting them to this area they would most likely spend time there. Participants noted that travelling to the flat for the hub would not be problematic, as travelling distances is a part of their everyday life.

The youth participants were in consensus that a space that fulfilled their needs would be a well-used space. The idea of a youth hub was favoured; however the respondents were clear that this space must include attractions that cannot be found within their homes. While the youth of Mount Pleasant want a place where they can spend time, it is essential that the space is designed for the target demographic. It is important to ensure the equipment available in a youth hub has been selected for their benefit. The majority of the youth participants stated games tables, such as pool, air hockey or foosball, as the main attraction that would encourage youth to the space. While this set up would bring youth and their friends into the venue, there were other requirements needed for a youth hub. A place for self-service food was widely sought after. This could be achieved by installing vending machines in the space. Through the various data collection methods it was found that the majority of the community want a space for youth to spend time in order to meet others, form friendships and stay within the suburb of Mount Pleasant (Mount Pleasant Residents Association Survey, 2012).

In order to attract the greatest number of youth to this space it is important that it is a space separate to adults, to ensure the youth are comfortable. Quinn (1999), suggests that the reason for youth wanting to be separated from the adult population is an innate desire of wanting a space that reflects their "youth" status. The idea of a container converted into a youth lounge

was supported by a number of participants. This allows the space to be separate from other facilities and may attract the demographic due to its ability to capture the interest of youths from an early age (Quinn, 1999). A temporary facility also ensures the overall cost is reduced and allows the community to examine how necessary this hub is to youth. The possibility of running this space in conjunction with the community centre was favoured by many participants as adult supervision would be nearby, it would also allow the hub to be monitored and maintained with greater ease. It is suggested that parents, as well as the wider adult population, need to be assured of the safety and validity of a dedicated youth space before they are willing to support it (Quinn, 1999). However, once parents are assured of safety, they are usually very responsive (Quinn, 1999). If the hub was located on the community centre grounds it could decrease the overall cost as this space is currently owned by the Mount Pleasant Resident's Association (Mount Pleasant Resident's Association, 2013). Furthermore, if the hub were operated in conjunction with the community centre it could create possible funding opportunities, although this concept is not one that has been explored in the data. The possibility of a number of outdoor spaces was also favoured by the youth, such as a basketball court, a BMX track and bike tracks.

Overall it was found that additional requirements to the original Residents Association survey are essential in order to attract youth to a hub. A possible reason for this is stated by Robinson (2000). Robinson (2000) notes that youth may have an innate instinct to want a dedicated space that reflects their "youth" status. However, this can sometimes encourage the remaining population to view them as problematic due to the stigma surrounding youth identity (Robinson, 2000). As Mount Pleasant is a suburb with an older population the creation of spaces specifically designed for youth to meet, may be viewed as an intrusion on public space (Robinson, 2000). Therefore, if youth population are determined to create a

social space, the remaining population would have to be assured that it would not pose any commercial or social threat to their simultaneous use of space in the suburb (Robinson, 2000). This concept would have to be explored in subsequent research.

Limitations

During this research, limitations have arisen that may have affected the results. Although the current research is qualitative, the small sample of 10 youth was a limitation as the results are not able to be extrapolated to the wider youth population. The sample size could be attributed to the target demographic, with few youth spending much time in Mount Pleasant, making it difficult to contact and distribute information to them.

Within the sample, bias may have occurred due to siblings and friends who have similar opinions participating, which may have limited the views brought forward. Another challenge encountered was that the youth who participated in the focus group struggled to think of feasible ideas for facilities they wanted in the Mount Pleasant community. This encouraged the suggestion of ideas, which youth then accepted. This may have influenced the results. As to the target demographic is not specifically measured in the Census it was difficult to locate the total population in Mt Pleasant. This created a challenge when examining the research results as it was difficult to identify what percentage of the total youth population participated in the study. Due to participants of this age ethical issues arose. This was overcome by ensuring permission slips were signed by parents of all participants. An additional weakness was the format of the survey. A question in the survey asked what facilities youth wanted in the suburb; however this may have been misunderstood as the majority of youth solely suggested indoor facilities, while youth in the focus group supported a variety of outdoor

facilities as well. Although we originally considered the survey well defined, a definition of community facilities may have allowed for additional suggestions.

While these limitations may have affected the overall results, time has been a major influence regarding what research could be undertaken. The change in focus during the beginning stages of this research affected how the study was conducted, while shortening the overall time available to complete the research. The research process constantly changes, which emphasises the importance of adapting to changing environments (Weiss, 1979). This has been evident throughout this research where the approach taken has been adapted, in order to ensure limitations have had a minimal effect on the results.

Conclusion

Overall the results provide a basis for how to go about improving Mount Pleasant for youth, in order to increase social relations throughout the suburb. The creation of a hub with attractions specifically for youth is important to ensure there is a space for this age group to spend time. If a youth hub is to be established it is important to consult with the target demographic throughout the creation process, as well as allowing them to have a stake in the maintenance of the facility. The concept of a place for youth by youth is important to ensure the space is designed in a way that interests and attracts them to use the facility.

Finally, further research is necessary to discover how widely supported these suggestions would be by a greater number of youth. Research into how youth and the wider Mount Pleasant community feel about these recommendations is important, to determine how many youth would use the facility and how much community support would be provided. The research concluded that the presence of a hub for youth would be an asset for the younger population of Mount Pleasant, in order for youth to have a place to connect with others their

age. The presence of a hub within Mount Pleasant could dramatically increase connections between the youth population, and result in increased strength and support between the communities' residents to encourage further growth in the suburb.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for their assistance and encouragement:

- Martin Anderson
- Jocelyn Papprill
- Mount Pleasant Residents Association
- The youth who participated in the focus group and survey
- Mount Pleasant youth's parents for allowing them to participate
- Finally to Gregory Breetzke for his continued help and support!

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Appendices

Mount Pleasant Community Group: Focus Group Questions

1) How long have you lived in Mount Pleasant?

2) What highschool/school do you attend?

3) Where is your personal 'hub'?

4) Is there a 'hub' in Mt Pleasant, if so where?

5) Desired transport to/from/around Mt Pleasant

6) What is your favourite thing about Mount Pleasant?

7) What do you currently do in Mt Pleasant?

8) What is currently available for youth in Mt Pleasant?

9) What do you think would be the most beneficial facility for youth to have?

10) Would you go to/use the community centre?

11) Is Mount Pleasant a community environment?

12) What makes Mount Pleasant stand out?