



Ballarat Civic Hall Precinct Redevelopment

The redevelopment of the Civic Hall precinct is a key part of Ballarat's urban renewal. With its close proximity to Ballarat Station, strong alignment to the city centre, and history as a gathering place for locals, the precinct has a true civic heart.

History of Civic Hall

Civic Hall was built in the early 1950s by a local team of architects and builders appointed by Ballarat City Council. In March 1955, Civic Hall was officially opened and immediately became the venue for a range of performances and other events.

As society changed and galas and balls became less frequent, and social habits changed with the introduction of television, the Civic Hall faced a steady decline in use. In 1999, the hall was only used 40 times in 12 months. The last function to be held at the Civic Hall was in 2002; since then the site has been unoccupied.

For many years the City of Ballarat, the Victorian Government and the community made attempts to find a new purpose for the site, with various designs considered, cancelled, and ultimately failing to come to fruition.

Attributes of the Civic Hall building

Located at 300-304 Mair Street, Ballarat's Civic Hall is a large freestanding brick clad, steel framed building designed in an Austere Modern/Stripped Classical style.

The building comprises a number of irregularly placed large cubic masses with plain rendered parapets and concealed roofs. It contains two main wings: a large main hall which runs north-south and a smaller lower hall which runs east-west underneath the stage of the larger hall. The main hall is entered from Mair Street to the south, and the lower hall is entered from the west.

In May 2017, the Heritage Council of Victoria determined that the Civic Hall did not meet the significance threshold for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register and did not warrant inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register.

It found the Civic Hall was of local historical importance, but despite its importance to the Ballarat community it was not a notable, fine, pivotal or influential example of a Municipal Building or Civic Hall. It was determined that the Civic Hall, while an impressive building, did not demonstrate architectural or technical achievement at a state level; and was not a building of social significance at a state level.

City of Ballarat Civic Hall redevelopment

In April 2016, following extensive community consultation, Ballarat City Council approved a precinct master plan to create a flexible community space at the Civic Hall site.

The City of Ballarat has committed \$6.78 million to the upgrade of the Civic Hall including landscaping surrounding the Civic Hall site.

The broad program of work includes:

- Developing the Civic Hall Main Hall and foyer as a multi-function space and a heart of culture and community activity;
- Commencing work on a public plaza;
- Constructing soft and hard landscape to the west side;
- Altering existing car parking access.

The work will be staged, with initial focus on refurbishment works to bring the building up to present day building code compliance so it can be safely opened for public use.

Baumgart Clark Architects has been appointed as the architect for design of the interior of Civic Hall. Early investigations are almost complete, including a comprehensive internal survey and condition audit (including heritage), the development of concept designs, and identification of possible early works.

The refurbishment works will include:

- Lifts to provide access to all public areas (required under the *Disability Discrimination Act*);
- New fire detection and suppression systems;
- New electrical, plumbing and heating/air conditioning/ventilation systems;
- Refurbishment of select spaces to provide modern, compliant toilet and dressing room spaces;
- Acoustic treatment;
- General clean up and restoration.

The council has tendered for builders to undertake these initial refurbishment works to the main hall and ancillary spaces, including the foyer, circle foyer, seating, stage and under stage spaces.



Ballarat GovHub

In the 2017-18 State Budget, the Victorian Government committed \$47.8 million to develop a new government office precinct on the Civic Hall site which will be home to up to 1,000 government employees.

Development Victoria is delivering the project in partnership with Regional Development Victoria, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the City of Ballarat.

John Wardle Architects have been appointed to design the new Ballarat GovHub which will help to revitalise a major part of Ballarat's CBD and stimulate growth in the local economy.

The design firm will focus on integrating the new building within the setting of the Civic Hall site, delivering modern, flexible, technologically-enabled offices for government employees.

The Government's GovHub project aligns directly with the Civic Hall precinct master plan adopted by Ballarat City Council. The GovHub will occupy the development site identified in the master plan which also shows the removal of the lower hall.

More information

To learn more about Ballarat GovHub visit developmentvictoria.com.au/ballarat-govhub or contact us via email at enquiries.engage@development.vic.gov.au.