

ŌTĀHUHU STREETSCAPE UPGRADE 2018



In partnership with



Building networks and experience for design students

The story

Two students have paid internships and are learning industry-based work skills in the redesign of Ōtāhuhu's main street.

In 2017, Auckland Transport sought tenders for the design of Ōtāhuhu's main street upgrade, a 1.5km stretch of urban streetscape. The project will be part of the ongoing revitalisation of the Ōtāhuhu area, with a focus on better placemaking, and connecting the remodelled railway station with the town centre.

TSI worked with Auckland Transport's procurement team to develop the tender, which included

- Support to suppliers who will "increase the proportion of the workforce that live locally, have access to recognised skills training and ensuring local businesses understand the procurement routes and maximise their chances of winning work within the supply chain"
- Encouragement to support communities by contributing to local projects and initiatives that consider the wider impacts of responsible procurement.

TSI, through its networks, developed a pool of potential students who either lived or had an association with South Auckland to submit their CVs. This was a rapidly assembled and informal pool, but which nevertheless supported the project in achieving additional benefits.

The winning tender, from Boffa Miskell Ltd, committed to bringing in students for paid work experience as interns on the project.

The impacts

Two people were selected to join the Boffa Miskell team on paid, part-time internships. One is a landscape architecture student from Unitec, who although not from the area had done previous study on the Ōtāhuhu town centre area. The second had studied interior design and was local to South Auckland.

To date, the two have gained experience in site surveying, use of industry standard design software, and project management. The internship approach has adapted over time, as opportunities presented themselves, and as learning developed on how the best use of the interns' time for the benefit of all. Experience in learning industry standard software was one example that the placement was one of many areas of exposure that were highly valued:



I'm learning programmes, I'm learning site analysis, and in terms of the business itself, it has really offered quite a lot of learning experiences for myself too... These programmes are going to be around most firms, a lot of them use SketchUp, and AutoCAD and seeing as the skills weren't transferred to me in Uni, it's good that I'm getting this opportunity while I'm still at Uni to learn these skills, instead of coming out next year and being a blank piece of paper.

Michael McFarlane, Boffa Miskell intern



"I feel this has helped me out a lot, in terms of my personal development, and it would assist in developing students in future years too. Providing this opportunity for students to even work in it unpaid, students will take that opportunity, we will jump on this opportunity to even get a foot in the door."

Michael McFarlane, Boffa Miskell intern



It's just given me a really good zest and insight into it and really got me all excited and really interested ... so, I'm actually looking into doing the Masters of Architecture next year now. It is a dream.

Cat Munro, Boffa Miskell intern

TSI have maintained regular contact with Boffa Miskell and kept in touch with the interns. The opportunity to contribute in this way is valued by Boffa Miskell, and the local knowledge that the interns bring of Ōtāhuhu is seen as an asset to the project.

The lessons

Behind this work by TSI lay a recognition that many young people in South Auckland lack the social capital to be able to win a foot in the door for internships such as these. There is a need for people like TSI who can make professional connections for young people, to reach opportunities that lie outside their own family networks.

As with many of these case studies, the time limitations for this project, and that intern recruitment was being initiated for the first time meant that the pool of students was developed in a fairly rapid and informal way. None of the tenderers had a pool of students to draw on, and TSI's work to recruit a pool was key to its success. It highlighted the need for more formal links with tertiary institutes for future activity in this area.

This case study shows that social procurement is not simply about trades training, but that it can actively contribute to positive outcomes across design, build and retail opportunities. This has real potential to support young people to develop the social capital that will give them an edge on graduation, and to provide a greater return on the investment in public projects to the areas where they are occurring.



It's great to have [TSI] because it is first time for us to be involved in a Southern Initiative program, and it's also first time for them to have professional consultancy involved.

Yoko Tanaka, Boffa Miskell

As a first run, there will always be lessons for future application. In this instance, the internships are functioning across all design stages of concept, development and detailed design. The final intensive detailed design stage is more intensive and specialised and may not be the best use of internship time; for the future, a more focused approach on the concept and development phases may be more suitable for internships.

The future

This project offers an important signpost for building training opportunities for young people in the design and engagement stages of projects, and not just construction. The experience of these interns highlights how valuable this project has been in building experience and also networks that can support future employment.

Compared to wealthier areas, South Aucklanders don't have the same levels of social capital to support entry into city firms. This is a major advantage to young people and provides a stepping stone into well paid employment. By strengthening their experience and prospects through social procurement, these initiatives also strengthen the potential contribution of young people to their communities.

“Having that opportunity for young people coming through to go into that kind of environment where you're able to make those connections and network.

If there is a pathway that's set up to make it easier to expose people to those opportunities and to that kind of environment is really good because then it just flows back in to the community.

Cat Munro, Boffa Miskell intern

