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Women come out fighting for historical rest rooms

By: CHURCHHOUSE Nick

MORE THAN 3000 signatures calling for the retention of the James Lane women's rest rooms were handed to council yesterday as the public consultation for the Huatoki Development closed.

Janice Taylor, from the New Plymouth Women's Centre, handed the chairman of the development's working party, deputy mayor Lyn Bublitz, a folder containing at least 3200 signatures on a petition that had only been going for a month.

A group of women, mostly elderly, were on hand to support the delivery of the petition, and a feeling of nostalgia and fond attachment to the historical building was evident.

"People are saying we're losing too much of our heritage," one of the women said.

"It's not just a toilet, it's a resting place," another said.

The possible loss, reconfiguration or shifting of the restrooms were not popular options among the Huatoki development plans.

The women went so far as to suggest that the art deco building would stop breezes whistling through the proposed public space, and alleviate views of the Centre City carpark.

Mr Bublitz voiced his own memories, noting that he was last in the rest-rooms 60 years ago as a four-year-old, with his mother.

But he immediately mentioned how wonderful he had found unisex parenting rooms on a recent trip to Taupo, being able to take his grandson in.

The gathering of women, some of whom had used the iconic facilities since the middle of last century, acknowledged that there was a need for men's facilities in the development, but agreed they would not use unisex rest rooms.

Mr Bublitz assured the women present that the petition would be lodged as a submission on the development, and that it would be considered in the next stage of the process.

He added that the fate of the loos was still very much on the table.

"No one's made any decisions yet," he promised.