

# Spring 2020

## Quarter 1: The Beginning ...

Over the Winter seven spaces were available to local residents to be part of a group that would redevelop the Maxilla Bays in partnership with the Kensington and Chelsea Council (you can see the application process [here](#)). In February 2020, the last interviews for spaces on a “**Community Body**” to take forward Maxilla took place, and 6 local residents were appointed for half a day’s paid work per week.

Our first step was to decide which formal structure the organisation should take, and so we spoke to Kensington and Chelsea Social Council to understand the implications of becoming a charity, a company, a CIC, or another type of organisation. We voted to become a **CIC (Community Interest Company)** as this allowed us to start up quickly and have greater flexibility in future, including the capacity to initiate a charity as a parallel structure if this was needed at a later stage.

The research, training, meetings for discussion and the many hours taken to complete the necessary paperwork were very time-consuming. This was, at times, a strenuous step, especially as we were still formative and getting to know one another. One member had stepped down at the beginning of the quarter and another left just before the group agreed to constitute as a CIC. They each left their mark; one in the **naming of the organisation**: Maxilla City, and the other in their vast **knowledge and experience** which they relayed of the local voluntary sector.

And the Covid pandemic finally forces the government to announce **a national lockdown!**

# Summer 2020

Quarter 2: Covid Lockdown period!! The team discover the joys of Zoom  
With 4 Directors left to take forward the CIC application (which was ultimately successful) we recruited 3 additional members in July 2020, all of whom were young local people.

As the team turn their focus from governance to community engagement, we had a day of training with a local expert on **co-design methods and principles** and to support us in the search for a **professional co-design consultant**.

There were at least 2 weekly team meetings at this point, as well as various sub team meetings for specific initiatives such as **Community Engagement, Research or PR and Social Media**.

During the early summer months, the sunshine enabled Maxilla City team to

- build our **website and online profile**,
- recruit a local consultant for support on the co-design process: We appointed the experienced campaigner, trustee, businesswoman and lecturer Eve Wedderburn.
- We met with several council stakeholders in order to get clarity on the timeline and process for going from, appointing directors, a co-design facilitator, a governance structure to redeveloping Bays 17-19

# Autumn 2020

Quarter 3: Autumn 2020: Has the Lockdown ended?

We embarked on monthly and quarterly meetings to monitor and progress the project with members of Adult Social Care and the Property team at RBKC.

Our **social media team** designed the **logo** and started to build a following on Social Media.

With a SM strategy agreed, the team continued to build meaningful content and engagement update. They also built a succinct but important archive to tell the story of the fascinating history of the Bays which Maxilla City feels passionate about representing.

Sadly, 2 of our new appointees had to move on to other opportunities.

We also undertook **formal training** in a number of areas; consultation and door-knocking, financial management, performance management in peer-led structures.

There were also **informal training/reading/discussions** around privilege, intersectionality, and institutional racism as well as specific, target research on changing local needs post Covid for the most at risk groups.

The Community Engagement team undertook a number of interviews with local organisations which helped to build relationships as well as knowledge. These were all positive meetings and we were praised for our curious and humble research-driven approach. We are passionate about meeting the true needs of local people, not duplicating existing provision or making assumptions based on incomplete knowledge. **Please do get in touch via our socials or website if you would like to talk to us or help us fill in the gaps!**

# Winter 2020



Quarter 4: The WINTER LOCKDOWN: The Building: Refurbishing the Bays

Our major focus of the final quarter ending in March 2021, was deciding whether or not to approve in principle both the proposed contractors and the existing design for the Bays.

Maxilla City created a subcommittee to review and scrutinise the information provided and pushed for additional, sensitive information around budgets and value for money. We undertook a number of site visits including one with the Architects. We were given important assurances around safety and the learning taken from Grenfell. We sat on group meetings with ASC (Adult Social Care) looked at the appointment of space jointly and asked questions around their use of space and staff they expect to have on site. We submitted over **30 questions to the RBKC property team** and their potential sub-contractors. See [here](#) a list of answers to the questions we put to a contractor.

Our property subcommittee interrogated the information provided including benchmarking financial and other information with a third party who supports Maxilla City. We are broadly satisfied that from a compliance and ethics perspective (to the best of our knowledge) that the given contractors should take forward this redevelopment.

Our “green light” comes with important conditions; some which are non-negotiable. We forensically scrutinized the development plans as well as the budget, enlisting pro-bono support from experienced Commercial Managers/ Quantity Surveyors Arcadis. You can see an excerpt from their feedback, including a query on 2 cost areas and the subsequent response from ARK Build, [here](#).

We have some aspirational requests which could be more challenging to make happen but would certainly be very welcomed and appreciated by Maxilla City and other local stakeholders for example. Within this quarter we also sadly said goodbye to another Director who was heading up Marketing at the time, but luckily, we were able to appoint a local young person who was on the **social media and marketing team** for Latimer City.

Our **Community Engagement team** are continuing to have regular interviews with **local partners** as part of our research.

# Spring 2021

We successfully fundraised for a food poverty grant which we were able to distribute to our partners, especially those who run food banks and community kitchens. Having interviewed so many local organisations, we were able to hit the ground running and to distribute the grant quickly and effectively to target the rising tide of food poverty in the borough.

We had to carry out several intensive meetings with the council so that we could sign off for work with the contractors. We were able to do this before the deadline of the 31st March which then allowed drainage works to take place at the Maxilla site. This was particularly important as it critically allowed the Property team to secure planning permissions for the development works. If we had missed this deadline, it could have added another year onto the project timeline. Beyond this, we were completely immersed in planning for our event in June – see below.

# Summer 2021

On the 24th of June 2021, at Westway Sports Centre, Maxilla City invited residents (including children) and stakeholders to eat, dance, play and create together. Activating Our Spaces was an informal open space event: people could drop in and out from 3pm to 8pm. Childcare was provided so that parents were able to contribute. In exchange for their expertise, participants were given vouchers, as well as food and entertainment. Maxilla City asked the community: what will North Kensington need to thrive after Covid-19? Working in groups, participants came up with ten proposals. We stuck these ten proposals up on a big wall for everyone to see.

Participants were then given six dots each. They stuck these dots next to the ideas they thought would make the biggest difference. We called this “Dot Democracy”. It helped us identify the most pressing needs for change. This was North Kensington’s community-led call to action. This showed how our empty venues could be transformed and how our community could be revitalised. We were blown away by the attendance and engagement from local people (over 200 residents came) and the following months were spent following up on connections and ideas, as well as working with our Facilitator to capture all the learning from the day.

# Autumn 2021

We finalized re-design plans for the Bays through a series of negotiations with Adult Social Care. This involved several site visits with architects and contractors in order to understand how we could reconfigure the space to make sure that we could share it in a sensible way. We also started a training programme on business planning so that we could begin to work through our business model and our ambitions to be both sustainable and independent.

The initial report that our Facilitator captured involved all the learning from the event as well as our research from community partners. At over 50 pages as a final draft, we knew we had to edit this to make it more accessible for a range of audiences. We appointed a professional copywriter and graphic designer. Luckily at this time we also asked Zakiya Amlak our interim Marketing Director to become a full Director, so she then led this project coordinating feedback and various edits.

Zakiya also led on the various films that we produced and edited, working in the first instance with Faisal from Grenfell speaks and also with a young person called Amira Ibrahim who is very involved in working with local children. We filmed not only the event, but also we made a short film to honour and remember Latimer City, and all the wonderful things it achieved for the community at the time.

# Winter 2021

We met with Lead Members to discuss our business plan model. We also challenged them about some operational decisions within the project which they took on board and helped to change. We finalised the report by getting it down to 12 pages and drew up a publication plan to share it with all our stakeholders. We are proud to share the amazing ideas and creativity of our community and you can read the report [here](#).

Having acknowledged the bad times and difficulties experienced at the site over the years, the team thought it was important to conduct a spiritual cleanse of the building. We worked with Aama Sade to create a Closing and Sankofa event (Sankofa is a West African Adinkra symbol meaning ‘to know where you are going you must know where you are coming from). The intention of the event was “to ensure peaceful closure and uplift the new beginnings and future development for the site.”

This was done in a safe, peaceful, and compassionate way in and around the Maxilla bays site, focusing primarily on:

1. Letting Go and releasing the past.
2. Grounding & Acknowledgments
3. Intentions Looking Forward



# Spring 2022

We began the design process for the Maxilla City site with detailed room data sheets, laying the groundwork for future construction. The decisions were centred around the critical features of the building such as restrooms, broad layout etc which allows for future conversations around design aesthetic.

In collaboration with RBKC, we proposed hoarding the site to conduct drainage works and the other necessary preliminary works; this was in the view that further works were imminent. We also placed information boards and surveys for the cafe to gauge community response. Notwithstanding operational delays, we actively participated in creating the job description and the recruitment process, ensuring the selection of a project manager aligned with our vision and goals.

# Summer 2022

The timely installation of hoardings coincided with the 5-year anniversary of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, reflecting our commitment to community sensitivity. This moment of reflection was expressed in the launch of our 'Reclaiming Our Spaces' event which focused on North Kensington's rich community action heritage which was a resounding success, drawing nearly 100 local residents and stakeholders for a collaborative contemplation and celebration.

# Autumn 2022

This was a period of essential interim board meetings during the pending appointment of a new project manager which we led in our efforts to maintain momentum. We produced our business planning principles centred on affordable space for community organisations and a vibrant community cafe which offers space and opportunities for local people. This culminated with a critical decision paper for the December meeting, influencing significant decisions among lead members. We then spent some time fundraising for partnerships for school holiday programmes.

# Winter 2022

The collaboration with the St Clement St James (SCSJ) CE primary school allowed us to take 50 children on week's worth of activities creating memorable experiences. The partnership with SCSJ continued to build and strengthen partnerships for various initiatives. With this view, we focused on raising future funds for the Easter Holiday Activities, with support from the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) and the K&C Foundation. We also met with various local organisations to learn about the changing demands and service provision within the VCS.

# Spring 2023

Having successfully fundraised for a follow-up school holiday project, a further 30 children took part in engaging activities during the Easter holidays. In the spirit of collaboration, Maxilla City engaged with Westway Trust in their development of an Urban Centre of Sustainability. This is in the view that the projects are aligned strategically and not replicating services to maximise usefulness.

We also initiated a series of workshops aimed at developing a cafe business plan; one that is directed towards maximising affordability, utility and versatility. During this time, we welcomed the introduction of Imaan Abdi and Akil Hunte.

# Summer 2023

We engaged with two experienced chefs who have spent time developing recreational community spaces involving food. They were instrumental in contributing to a revised business plan for the café, including an overhaul of the catering area.

An on-going activity is our external collaboration which build meaningful relationships with external organisations. Our interim director Akil Hunte spearheaded an event called 'Destined for Greatness'; designed to build engaging local relationships in the company of the local MP Andy Slaughter.

# Autumn 2023

As part of our negotiations, we were tasked with developing a social value proposal for the Maxilla City space. This body of work is in its early stages as the primary drivers of this value will be generated by the organisations and projects running in the facility. Given the frequent changeover of councillor portfolios, we re-inducted relevant personnel on the recent developments. This included site visits to monitor and evaluate ongoing developments as well as engaging Westway Trust, TFL and UKPN.

# Winter 2023

We did some more detailed cafe planning with the support of an experienced restaurateur to understand and communicate the challenges with operating a cafe business.

We engaged with Dionne Buckman, who previously oversaw the Maxilla Advisory Group meetings for strategic planning and development activities.

We are also supporting Grow2Know's efforts to bring the first ever Chelsea Flower show to North Kensington in the Maxilla Gardens.