



To: Auckland Council

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Submission on Auckland Council's Long-term Plan 2024-2034

Submitter: Civic Trust Auckland

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Civic Trust Auckland (CTA) is a non-profit public interest group formed in 1968 with activities and interests throughout the Auckland region. It is a regular submitter on matters of interest to it, and has made numerous submissions on Auckland Council's plans, including the Long-term Plans. CTA is recognised by Council as one of its regional stakeholders.

The aims of the Trust include:

- protection of natural landforms
- preservation of heritage in all its aspects
- encouragement of good planning for the city and region.

Our current submission addresses, in order, most of the questions in the feedback form, and refers to our [Annual Budget 2023/24 submission](#), in which we submitted on some of these issues. Quotes in *italics* are from the LTP Consultation Document.

1. Overall direction for Long-term Plan

Q.1a. *Which option do you prefer for the overall direction for council's Long-term Plan?*

A. Other.

CTA generally supports the central proposal, but we would like to see Auckland Council doing more of some things and less of others, as is elaborated on throughout our submission.

1b. *What would you like Auckland Council to do more or less of?*

(a) CTA does not want to see money spent on urban regeneration unless a particular area needs it and the project or programme has been generated by the local community and/or the community has been widely consulted. We propose that Council does not spend money on changing public streetscapes and public spaces unless they are actually broken. As per the Mayor's message on pg 7: *"We need to*

decide what are the problems we are trying to fix, and if what we are doing doesn't fix those problems then we stop doing it ... If there isn't a problem then we should stop doing it."

(b) We do not want Council to pay consultants to work on schemes that Auckland can't afford now or in the near future. Furthermore, our 2023/24 Annual Budget submission stated at 1(b): "We propose a reduction in the fees paid to consultants used by Council and greater accountability for their work, including the use of KPIs."

(c) We do not support a proposed reduction in governance support and heritage programmes. It is not clear what the breakdown of those programmes are, but the significant financial item of any note is the \$59 million 10-year budget provision (8.1 Capital Programme List, Additional Supporting Information, pg 650). We understand that the \$15 million in the 2024/25 budget relates largely to works on the St James Theatre, and we support the successful redevelopment of this building in its pivotal place in the Aotea Precinct.

(d) At another level, we suggest that the Auckland Heritage Festival could be held every two years, not every year.

(e) We note from the supporting information (pg 15) for the Annual Budget consultation, that a risk of reducing or stopping funding for the historic heritage grants is: "Potential deterioration of historic heritage places, sites and areas not owned by the council." Council has an obligation to identify and protect such places, sites and areas, and these amenities have economic value as tourist destinations, as well as wellbeing value for locals.

(f) For Environment and Regulation: Protecting and restoring our natural environment, we support the More scenario, namely (pg 25):

"Greater protection and restoration of our natural environment, compared with the central proposal • More support for community initiatives • Increasing the Regional Environment and Natural Heritage (RENH) contestable grant programme • Additional climate funding to support the reduction of Auckland's regional carbon emissions • Resuming the Natural Environment Targeted Rate at the previously planned level and increase it by 3.5 per cent per year in line with inflation."

(g) As we submitted on the previous LTP 2021-2031, CTA supports the natural environment targeted rate but seeks that Council consider some form of targeted rate for the built environment, which is a critical but under-recognised element of the environment, one in which most of us live most of the time. It contains the fragile resource of our historic heritage, and, at this time of proposed intensification, it is important to support the survival of historic heritage in accordance with Council's regional objectives, as outlined in the AUP.

(h) CTA supports allocating \$200,000 towards stopping the spread of the exotic Caulerpa seaweeds and is of the view that this should be a key priority for Council. We feel that the public can be encouraged to help address this serious problem.

(i) CTA would like to see funding for implementation of the Regional Parks Management Plan, especially developing the recreation and track plans for the Waitakere and Hunua Ranges Regional Parks. We support increased spending on regional parks, including purchasing additional regional parks to match population growth.

(j) We would also like to see:

- an increase in resources for the evaluation of nominations for scheduling of Notable Trees
- the provision of resources to implement the Urban Ngahere Strategy
- the resourcing of treatment by phosphite and monitoring of kauri dieback infected trees on public land in regional and local parks.

2. Transport plan

Q. *What do you think of the transport proposal?*

A. CTA supports most of the proposal.

(a) We support expenditure on public transport and safety improvements across the transport network, in particular, more electric trains and new and improved busways.

(b) CTA supports moves to “enable payment for standard adult public transport fares with Apple and Google Pay, debit cards and most credit cards in addition to the current HOP card, and transition to the National Ticketing Solution (NTS)” (pg 33). However, until New Zealand stops using cash, there should be a cash option available on public transport.

2a. *Is there anything you would spend more on?*

(a) Regarding road safety, this is as much, if not more, about road users as it is about the roads. This includes responsible driving, and Council could support moves by campaigners and central government to reduce and eventually eliminate the legal limit of alcohol in a driver’s blood. Council should also be responsive to complaints about roads/intersections/crossings that are considered by the local community to be unsafe.

(b) “Getting more people on to public transport” is mentioned on page 32 as helping reduce emissions. The question posed on page 9: “How will the council support Aucklanders and the region to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?” is partly answered by getting more people on public transport. This does more than reduce emissions: it reduces congestion, contributes towards people walking more (which is good for our health), among other benefits. Getting more people on public transport should be a key priority for Auckland Council. This can be done through campaigns that applaud users of public transport, through more councillors and local board members using public transport, and through educating people further about the benefits to themselves, the city and the planet of using public transport. We reiterate CTA’s suggestion in previous submissions that Council appoint a public transport champion for this purpose.

(c) As submitted previously, CTA supports bike racks on buses that go over the harbour bridge.

2b. *Is there anything you would spend less on?*

(a) Cycleways, where there would be little demand or where their planned benefits might be achieved by some other more cost-effective alternative, which still achieves the aim of safety. Perhaps the answers may be provided by creating a

comprehensive network of bike routes rather than necessarily an expensive resource-hungry piece of hard infrastructure.

3. North Harbour stadium

CTA is not addressing this part of the feedback except to say that the Upper Harbour Local Board should inform any decisions about this facility, and note that this local board's key priorities include: *"appropriate investment in North Harbour Stadium to be a well utilised multi-purpose facility that meets the needs of the growing North Auckland community."*

4. Major investments

Q.4a. *What is your preference on the proposal to establish an Auckland Future Fund and transfer Auckland Council's shareholding in Auckland International Airport Limited (AIAL) into this fund (enabling the shares to be sold)?*

A. Other.

(a) As per our Annual Budget submission, CTA's preference is to keep all the shares currently owned. This is because, once the shareholding has gone, AIAL can no longer be leveraged or provide any future revenue for Council.

5. Port land

Q.5a. *What option do you prefer for Captain Cook and Marsden wharves?*

A. Other.

(a) If Captain Cook Wharf and Marsden Wharf are, as Council have identified, freed up for alternative use within 2 to 5 years, then we support Council implementing this, and we note, to this end, that Council, as owner of POAL, has agreed with POAL that one of the port company's objectives is to see the port footprint shrunk to provide for alternative community purposes.

(b) As part of the harbourside's transformation from port to public use, the western side of Bledisloe Terminal should be the first part of the terminal given over to public use, thereby by creating a logical eastern bookend to the eventual line-up of Princes, Queen, Captain Cook and Marsden Wharves for public use.

(c) It appears that much of the early heritage of Captain Cook and Marsden Wharves, and also Bledisloe Terminal, have not been assessed in terms of remaining heritage values. A comprehensive assessment of this needs to be undertaken as part of any development plans for the area.

6. Changes to other rates, fees and charges

Q.6a. *What do you think of these proposals?*

(a) CTA supports resuming the Natural Environment Targeted Rate and extending it to 2034/2035.

(b) We support resuming the Water Quality Targeted Rate and extending it to 2034/2035 at a level to only cover the annual programme operating and interest costs.

(c) We support broadening the description of bus services funded by the Climate Action Transport Targeted Rate (CATTR) to reduce the need to consult each year for minor changes to the bus programme.

(d) We support discontinuing the Long Term Differential Strategy and raising the share businesses pay of the NETR, WQTR, and CATTR to align to the general rate.

Q.6b. *Do you have any other feedback on the proposals in question 6a, the changes to our Revenue and Financing Policy, or other changes to fees and charges?*

(a) CTA is of the view that rates increases up to 14% for residential ratepayers in the first year is too much.

(b) We note that on pg 16 reference is made to “A limited funding system,” and also on pg 16 that “The council uses a number of different tools to fund and finance its activities but these are often limited by legislative or other constraints.” We refer to CTA’s Annual Budget submission, which recommends that with a law change to the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 (section 8, Non-rateable land, Part 1 of Schedule 1), which Council can advocate for, tertiary educational institutions – or at least those that make a sizeable profit – would pay rates. We observe that students who attend Auckland University and AUT, and some other smaller tertiary institutions, benefit from various Council services and amenities in the city centre. Universities should also pay rates for their student accommodation properties if they do not do so already.

(c) Like the universities, churches throughout the Auckland region – or at least those that tithe their congregations and/or those that hire out their premises to groups that pay fees – could pay rates too.

(d) Perhaps offshore banks that serve and profit from the citizens of Auckland could be invited to make a greater contribution through the payment of higher rates, commensurate, hopefully, with their enormous profits.

(e) CTA would also encourage the Council to consider whether the rates and leases paid by some of the 13 golf courses in Auckland operating on 535 hectares of Council owned or managed land could be increased, particularly those without general public access.

(f) CTA is of the view that parking fees in AT controlled parking buildings could be increased. This could encourage more use of public transport and the reduction of emissions.

(g) We reiterate a proposal we presented in our Annual Budget submission (at 7(h)): Council could reduce costs by a reduction in the salary of Council’s highest paid employees.

(h) Council supports an asset sales target of \$300 million. Any heritage values Council-owned properties may have should be properly recognised and provided for prior to potential sale, and, until then, they should be properly maintained with appropriate budget provision for renewals. Council should consider assigning the proceeds from the sales to fund investment in qualifying heritage buildings.

(i) Council's funding is limited by legislative constraints. It should therefore work with central government to develop some mechanism to attract private capital to assist in funding city works. Council has advocated for new funding tools such as a bed night visitor levy, and reforms to some existing tools such as development contributions. One regional responsibility Council for which there is general support but difficulty in funding, is Council's responsibilities in terms of heritage protection. Council could work with government to develop some form of tax incentive to invest in seismic works to qualifying buildings.

(j) Part of Council's revenue and financing should be the robust prioritising of existing projects, with a willingness to scale things, having due regard to the difference between 'need to haves' and 'nice to haves'. Council should be willing to exit projects that are unnecessary. There should also be policy provision for review of significant projects to trim or remove unnecessary or unnecessarily expensive elements.

7. Local board priorities

CTA commented extensively on local board priorities in our 20-page submission last year on the draft local board plans. We support local board initiatives that:

- preserve and protect built heritage (especially the seismic upgrade and redevelopment of the Leys Institute buildings and St James Theatre in the Waitemata Local Board Area)
- promote and celebrate heritage through digital content and place-based stories
- investigate selling underperforming / under-utilised assets to invest in other well-used assets, including valued heritage buildings, as submitted in particular by Devonport Local Board
- contribute to a comprehensive and coordinated information service for Auckland's historic heritage, e.g., local boards reviewing their Heritage Plan
- encourage good design outcomes
- provide feedback on resource consents and planning processes
- protect, preserve and enhance the natural environment, including SEAs
- plan to avoid impact on natural landscapes with high biodiversity values
- support park acquisition and development
- ensure parks and assets are well-looked after
- facilitate the planting of more trees
- deliver local climate action programmes
- address flood recovery and stormwater management, including nature-based solutions
- ensure water quality improvements
- support the community to minimise waste and turn it into resources
- establish and/or extend community recycling centres
- support more walking and cycling options
- trial free or further-subsidised public transport
- improve public transport services in employment hubs and areas of high deprivation
- empower community groups
- build community networks and resilience
- support Māori aspirations by including local Māori input
- increase youth empowerment
- support communities of greatest need
- support community resilience and safety
- support communities to develop emergency planning

- encourage and support volunteerism and community participation
- embrace accessibility and inclusion across services and engagement

8. Other comments

Do you have any other comments?

Including Local Board Funding Policy on page 110, Council Controlled Organisation Accountability Policy on page 19.

(a) CTA supports improving fairness of funding of local boards. However, we consider that existing community facility assets should continue to be maintained in good condition, and we note that some of those assets are used by people from a wider catchment than a particular local board area. It should be noted that the value derived from such assets may have value beyond the provision of community facilities. For example, the Leys Institute buildings in St Mary's Bay are scheduled Category A by Council and Category I by Heritage New Zealand. As such, Council funds expended on those buildings can be said to deliver not only local community facilities but also satisfying Council's regional heritage responsibility. Where heritage buildings of national or regional heritage are concerned, Council should consider that such funding be contributed to on a regional basis.

(b) CTA supports *"Increasing public awareness and engagement in flood prevention"* (pg 22) and we consider that the Making Space for Water programme is important.

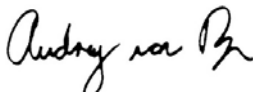
(c) We are of the view that Council staff, whether contracted or not, should all be paid at the living wage rate or higher.

(d) We repeat the following points from our submission on the Tūpuna Maunga Authority (TMA) Operational Plan 2022/2023 in our Annual Budget submission: "We think that all trees should in principle be allowed to live their natural life. We object to cutting down exotic trees on the maunga and we do not see any clarity in the Tūpuna Maunga Authority Integrated Management Plan as regards removing what are described as 'inappropriate exotic trees and weeds.' The climate change emergency requires Council to focus on tree planting, not tree removal. The financial information provided by Council in relation to the TMA's operations are opaque with no breakdown beyond 10-year Long-Term Plan totals for capital and operating expenditure. We remind the Council the maunga are to be administered by their governors for the benefit of mana whenua and all other Aucklanders and to this end, we ask that Council cease funding the TMA's environmentally irresponsible mass tree-felling."

(e) We support Whau Local Board's prioritisation of open space and its wish that Council assist in finding and funding an outcome that could see Avondale Racecourse retained largely as open space

Date of submission: 28 March, 2024

Signature:



Audrey van Ryn
Secretary, Civic Trust Auckland