

Joint Submission on Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024—2034

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward a submission on the Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024—2034.

This is a joint submission from the following organisations:



He karakia whakahoki mai i te mauri ki ngā hapori

An invocation for the return of the life force to communities.

Hoki mai...

Hokia mai te mauri

Hoki mai te akiaki

Kia tupurearea

Kia tupu hapori momoho e!

Return

The life force

Let it be dynamic

Let it blossom

Let it flourish

To grow thriving communities!

We are Community:

We, as a collective of social not-for-profit organisations supported by the Kaipātiki, Devonport/Takapuna, and North Harbour Local Boards, appreciate the chance to address critical issues affecting our community. Our partnership with the Local Boards has enabled us to deliver community development programmes, environmental initiatives, and well-being services that are integral to the thriving of our Community on Tāmaki Makaurau’s North Shore for over 40 years.

However, we emphasise that community organisations, with proper funding support, are best positioned to drive the realisation of Auckland Council’s *Ngā Hapori Momoho—Thriving Communities Strategy 2022—2032*.

This necessitates an increase in Local Board ‘*Locally Delivered Initiatives*’ (LDI) funding to address historical underinvestment in social infrastructure and rectify existing inequities across Wards. The decline in support for community organisations since amalgamation is alarming, compounded by stagnant funding levels that fail to match inflation, resulting in degraded community facilities and compromised service delivery.

We urge a shift towards a community-led approach, as outlined in the *Ngā Hapori Momoho* strategy, to enable diverse and relevant services that truly connect with our community’s needs.

Our summary position in respect of the LTP:

- Community organisations are better placed to deliver on mutually-agreed outcomes that meet Auckland Council’s *Ngā Hapori Momoho—Thriving Communities Strategy 2022—2032* alongside our Council and Local Board partners.
- Community-led Thriving Communities offer a more cost-effective and targeted approach compared to Auckland Council, drawing upon our extensive experience and capacity to deliver services effectively. With increased investment, we can achieve even better outcomes.
- Council services, such as Libraries, risk duplicating existing providers' efforts, leading to potential funding diversion away from community organisations. Prioritising improved funding for Community would yield superior results, aligning with Council's role as an enabler rather than an expert.
- Increasing Local Board ‘*Locally Delivered Initiatives*’ (LDI) funding is essential to address generational underinvestment in social infrastructure and rectify existing inequities across different Wards.
- There has been a gradual decline in support for community organisations across Tāmaki Makaurau since amalgamation and nothing within the LTP suggests this will change for the better.

How did we get here?

Under-investment in physical infrastructure is easy to see and has consequences that are immediately apparent like the broken water pipes in Wellington or the potholes in Northland. At Auckland Council, under-funding has eroded critical parts of the system because rates have been too low for generations and no one is elected on a ticket that suggests the public will need to pay more. This leads inevitably to a tipping point beyond which multiple systems begin to break down and cascade toward crisis. Events such as the pandemic, and climate events like the Auckland Anniversary flooding and Cyclone Gabrielle have served to highlight the fragility of the system in a number of key areas.

By comparison, under-investment in social infrastructure has had more subtle consequences with the effects less easy to see, but which have similarly been growing over some time. The Auckland amalgamation has been a mixed bag for Community, to say the least. Standardisation of some services like Watercare and Auckland Transport has allowed larger scale projects to progress across Tāmaki Makaurau without having to negotiate between bickering city-states, but it has been a double-edged sword for Community. Funding from one Ward to the next is inequitable and has placed undue pressure on Local Boards to fund maintenance, capital investment and delivery of services to their respective communities.

CP Funding has effectively been static since amalgamation in 2010 with the principal topped-up by an annual CPI increment but the base has not been grown to match inflation that has increased on average by 2.4% every year. For example, if your CP Agreement base was \$1 in 2010, this would be the equivalent of \$1.36 in 2023¹ that's 36% just to keep up with the rising cost of living but that is not where we find ourselves today.

Council has effectively reduced funding year on year for community facilities that are under increased pressure to deliver services to a growing population. This has resulted in a gradual decline in respect of both physical and social infrastructure resulting in degraded community facilities, difficulty in terms of staffing costs as wages fail to keep pace with the market, and is short-term rather than long-term thinking.

This needs to change and the proposed 'prudent' response in the LTP fails to address this issue.

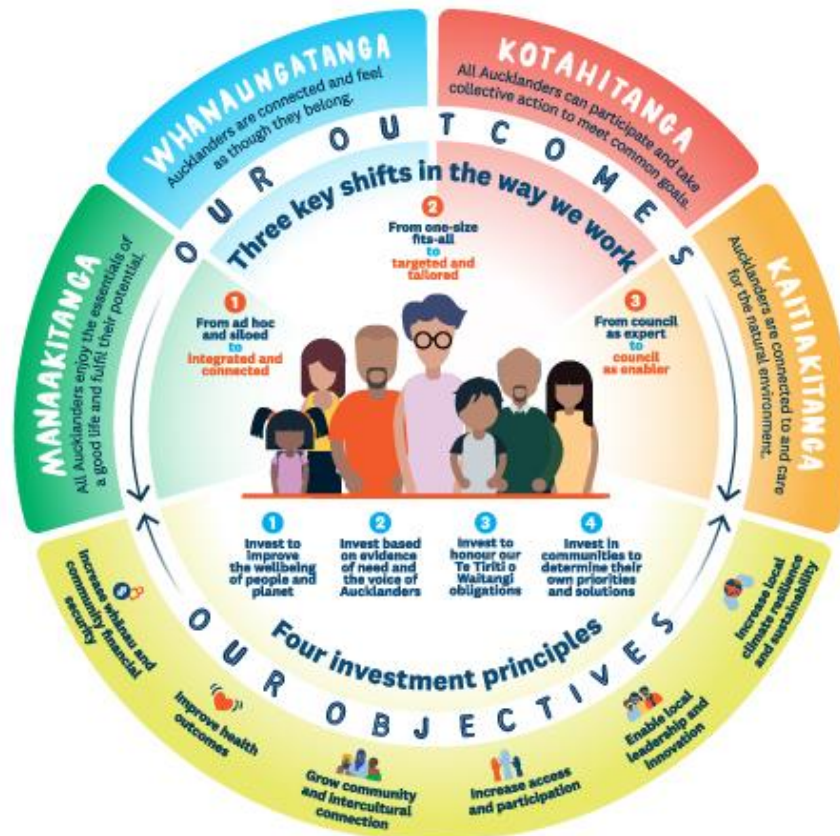
¹ <https://www.rbnz.govt.nz/monetary-policy/about-monetary-policy/inflation-calculator>

Ngā Hapori Momoho Thriving Communities Strategy 2022—2032:

Released in 2022, this Council strategy document says “We want a future where communities work together to take action on the things they care about...”

So do we.

The strategy is summarised in the following graphic:



It notes the key shifts Council needs to make to deliver on this strategy:

- *Move from an ‘ad hoc silo’ approach to one that is integrated and connected;*
- *Move from a ‘one-size-fits’ all to ‘targeted’ approaches; and*
- *Move from Council as ‘expert’ to Council as ‘enabler’.*

Community service providers already work to support the four outcomes, investment priorities and objectives in this plan and have the institutional knowledge, skills and track record to demonstrate our collective success.

Sadly, this is becoming in spite of Council rather than in partnership with it.

Supporting a community-led approach for the delivery of relevant and diverse services that connect the community:

Community development falls under the *‘Enable local leadership and innovation’* objective in the strategy and notes:

“Community leadership and innovation already exists in neighbourhoods, in local networks, and in voluntary and community organisations where people come together to overcome challenges and support each other. This comes to the fore in times of crisis, such as with the sudden flourishing of mutual aid during the Covid-19 pandemic but has endured for decades in many forms.

Often community innovation needs support or resourcing from allies, partners or co-producers. Real change cannot involve just bottom-up or top-down innovations. It requires collaboration at various stages, and it thrives when these conditions are actively created and nurtured for diverse participation.

We need to work harder to ensure that all Aucklanders can meaningfully participate and that they have power to make change in their communities.

We should employ community-led approaches that recognise the knowledge, wisdom, and skills of communities and what diverse communities value (such as church and family). They told us that communities have their own lived experiences and knowledge to draw on which should be trusted and heard above what council staff or elected members may think.”

Great minds think alike.

In conclusion:

In conclusion, the Auckland Council must recognise the pivotal role of community organisations in fostering thriving communities and commit to robust support through increased LDI funding. Embracing a community-led approach, as outlined in the *Ngā Hapori Momoho* strategy, will empower diverse participation and ensure that the knowledge, wisdom, and skills of our communities are valued and utilised effectively. It is imperative that the Council acknowledges the urgent need for investment in social infrastructure and commits to equitable funding distribution across all Wards to address existing disparities and secure a prosperous future for all residents on Auckland’s North Shore and across Tāmaki Makaurau.

We thank you for your consideration.