

Submission to Auckland Council

The Auckland Plan and Long-term Plan (10-year Budget)

Executive Summary

Active – Auckland Sport & Recreation is a charitable trust that has been established to make Auckland the world's most active city. It is a key strategic partner of Sport NZ, Auckland Council and major grant-makers and funders. Active invests more than \$11m per annum in a range of delivery partners, organisations and projects that will get more people recreating and playing sport in Auckland, with focuses on young people and communities.

More than one million Aucklanders – adults and children – are active each week.

They are supported by 308,880 volunteers contributing 22.1 million hours of their personal time per annum, worth \$337.3 million to keep the sport and recreation sector moving.

This sector contributes at least **\$1.9 billion to the Auckland economy**, providing **more than 25,000 jobs** for Aucklanders. In addition, there is a **saving of \$115.4 million per annum in healthcare costs for Auckland**¹.

Sport, recreation, physical activity connects Tāmaki Makaurau, and delivers significant physical and mental health and wellbeing, social, economic and educational benefits.

The draft Long-term Plan proposed by Auckland Council contains a Capital shortfall for sport and recreation of **at least \$500m over the next 10 years**. Even with the increase in funding shown in the draft Long-term Plan, Council itself has said there will be a **decreased level of service, deteriorating assets, and risk of failure and asset closure**.

If the proposal proceeds without amendment, there will be a negative impact on our city, communities and economy. This will exacerbate already recognised shortfalls in spaces and facilities. Sport and recreation warrants a higher degree of recognition and prioritisation in both the Auckland Plan and Long-term Plan.

This submission by Active – Auckland Sport & Recreation (Active) outlines options, opportunities and solutions that can be implemented to help to mitigate the current situation. These include:

- Establishing a Regional Partnership Fund for Capital projects of at least \$250 million that is evenly proportioned over the ten-year period, rather than back-end loaded;
- Fully funding sport and recreation Local Board priorities;
- Increasing budgets for Capital investment in both renewals and growth at a consistent level across the Long-term Plan timeframe for parks, recreation and community, and;
- Appropriately referencing the huge influence and impact sport, recreation and physical activity has on Aucklanders and our wellbeing in the Auckland Plan.

¹ ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

Overview

Auckland is anticipated to grow significantly over the next 30 years. To make sure that we build on its strengths and hold on to the things that are dear to us during this growth, we ask Council to prioritise the provision for sport and recreation in its plan for how and where Auckland will grow.

Snapshot of our city

Currently around 1.6 million people live in Auckland. Over the next 30 years this number could grow by another 740,000 people to reach 2.4 million².

Our love of sport and recreation

The statistics prove what we know – Aucklanders love physical activity – it's incredibly important in our lives and the lives of our whanau and friends.

There is clear evidence of the huge and wide-ranging benefits of sport and recreation – improved physical and mental health and wellbeing, social connectedness, economic and productivity gains, and educational outcomes³.

Who we represent

The sport and recreation sector in Auckland comprises:

- Approximately 308,800 volunteers
- 62 Regional Sport Organisations (RSOs)
- An estimated 1,500 clubs
- More than 450,000 members.

More than one million Aucklanders – adults and children – are active each week.

With thanks

Auckland Council is the major provider of our city's sport and recreation facilities. We greatly appreciate this support and investment – without it much of what happens in our sector wouldn't be possible.

We acknowledge the challenge Council faces with balancing the various issues impacting Auckland, such as transport, housing affordability and water quality. We also recognise that there are capital constraints, particularly in the immediate five years.

Our voice

We believe all Aucklanders, regardless of age, ethnicity and ability level, should be able to participate in sport, recreation and physical activity in fit for purpose facilities and spaces to enable them to live active, healthy lives with positive health, community and economic benefits.

For the sake of all Aucklanders, our current generation of young people and generations to come, acknowledgement and investment are key to this now and in the future.

The Auckland Plan

The Auckland Plan will not fulfil its role, reflecting the needs and aspirations of Aucklanders and our future generations, unless it properly references the size and significance of physical activity to the city and our communities.

The sport and recreation sector contributes at least \$1.9 billion to the Auckland economy, employing more than 25,000 people. There are also 308,880 volunteers who contribute 22.1 million hours of their time each year, organising thousands of formal and informal opportunities for hundreds of thousands of people. When it comes to actual participation, 78% of Auckland adults take part in physical activity each week⁴.

² [The Auckland Plan 2050/Our development strategy/Future Auckland/What will Auckland look like in the future](#), Auckland Council

³ Sport New Zealand Value of Sport and Recreation Auckland Report 2015, Sport New Zealand Regional profile Auckland 2013-2014 and the 2013 New Zealand Census and ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

⁴ Sport New Zealand Value of Sport and Recreation Auckland Report 2015, Sport New Zealand Regional profile Auckland 2013-2014 and the 2013 New Zealand Census and ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

Sport and recreation connects people – belonging and participation are valued outcomes of this. This point and others highlighting the positive benefits of physical activity are documented in recent Sport New Zealand ‘The Value of Sport’ research:⁵

- 84% of respondents agree that sport and physical activity bring people together and promote a sense of belonging;
- 73% agree that sport and other physical activities help build vibrant and stimulating communities;
- 89% agree that being active helps relieve stress and is good for mental health;
- 82% agree that sport and other physical activities help to motivate people and create a sense of purpose;
- 92% agree that being active keeps people physically fit and healthy;
- 85% agree that being active keeps their children physically fit and healthy;
- Evidence indicates a positive association between children’s physical activity participation and academic achievement.

Sport and recreation contributes to Auckland Plan outcomes

There is significant research demonstrating the benefit of sport and recreation on the outcomes of the Auckland Plan⁶:

- **Belonging and participation and improving Maori identity, health and wellbeing**
 - Physical activity brings \$115.4 million of healthcare cost savings for Auckland, as well as adding 7,100 additional years of healthy life and contributing to 279 fewer deaths⁷;
 - Participation in sport brings 47.5 million hours of meaningful, positive social contact each year⁸.
- **Homes and places**
 - Evidence is emerging that underspending on facilities leads directly to lower participation levels⁹;
 - Sport and recreation operating spend has a direct and significant correlation with participation levels¹⁰.
- **Opportunity and prosperity**
 - Physical activity has a positive link to improved educational outcomes, leading to an increased \$6.9 million of GDP growth for Auckland¹¹;
 - Physical activity is delivering \$1.5 million in annual savings through reduced crime rates¹²;
 - Physical activity brings \$46.3 million of savings to Auckland through increased productivity levels, due to lower levels of sickness¹³.

Local Boards have all nominated sport and recreation projects in their key priorities under the Long-term Plan. This is further recognition of the key benefits that are delivered through sport and recreation into communities.

The draft Auckland Plan has minimal reference to sport, recreation and physical activity. Currently, it is a chapter of its own (Chapter 5) which we view as appropriate, given the scale and significance of sport and recreation to Aucklanders and the benefits derived by the city and its citizens.

As the Auckland Plan is a key policy document, acting as a reference point for Auckland Council investment, this exclusion is concerning to sport and recreation. The lack of reference is illogical when many of the outcomes in the Auckland Plan are, as demonstrated, achieved to a significant degree through sport and recreation.

Considering the role this policy document has in setting the city’s strategic and budgetary priorities, it follows that the ten-year budget has insufficient investment in sport and recreation – this compounds current shortages and does not adequately account for growth.

⁵ Sport New Zealand ‘The Value of Sport’ Main Report, March 2018

⁶ ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

⁷ ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

⁸ ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

⁹ ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

¹⁰ ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

¹¹ ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

¹² ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

¹³ ACW Auckland City Report 2018, Portas Consulting

The Long-term Plan

Demographic growth and diversity are at the heart of this discussion. Auckland's current population of approximately 1.6 million is expected to grow by another 740,000 people over the next 30 years, reaching 2.4 million.

Obviously, increased population means increased demand – this is an aspect that we are already struggling with as a city with known shortfalls in both indoor and outdoor facilities that are driving participation rates down (refer below).

Growth is placing increased pressure on capacity in existing facilities, with some already approaching breaking point. Several facilities are in such a poor state due to factors such as dampness, unsafe structure and field closures, that their use is limited. For example, Birkenhead War Memorial Park grandstand has been closed to the public since 2016 due to safety concerns about the structure. As a result, three sports clubs and their members have been displaced.

New facilities are experiencing pent-up demand; as an example, Albany Stadium Pool opened just over a year ago in January 2017 – already, many weekends see queues of families waiting to use this new facility.

Exacerbating this is the closure of some Auckland beaches due to water quality and restricted access to the Waitakere and Hunua Ranges. This diverts even more pressure into already overburdened spaces and facilities.

Local Board priorities recognise the importance of sport and recreation to communities

Local Boards have recognised the value of sport and recreation in their communities. This is demonstrated by the key local priorities set out by Local Boards: 12 of the 21 Local Boards have made a sport and recreation project their top priority; all Local Boards have a sport and recreation project in their key priorities.

Examples include:

- Ōtara-Papatoetoe Local Board wants to invest in improved sports field playing surfaces and lighting in Ōtara and Papatoetoe parks to meet growing demand for sports fields in Ōtara-Papatoetoe;
- Albert-Eden Local Board is advocating for a replacement aquatic centre and for an investigation into a replacement indoor multi-sport facility at Gillies Ave, Epsom;
- Howick Local Board wants to provide more all-weather sports fields, such as artificial turf, and improve drainage and irrigation of parks to reduce the impact of weather;
- Henderson-Massey Local Board is advocating for a pool in the north-west area and to buy land to prepare for it plus sports fields and local community facilities in the future;
- Rodney Local Board is advocating for funds for a local indoor court facility at the Huapai Domain.

In addition, the majority of Local Boards note walking/cycling/greenways in their priorities, indicating physical activity and spaces and places are high on nearly all Local Board agendas.

The numbers and the shortfall 2018-28

There is a shortfall of \$1.5bn between what is required to meet demand in Auckland for Community Assets (parks, recreation and community facilities), and what is proposed as baseline for renewals and growth in the Long-term Plan¹⁴.

We understand from Parks, Sport and Recreation that there is a Capital shortfall of at least \$500m for sport and recreation facilities over the next 10 years.

The city's spaces and facilities

Known, current, and well-researched regional facility plans prepared by sports codes demonstrate current, short-, and medium-term shortfalls in facility provision before this current Long-term Plan period is over. This demonstrates that we are already struggling to meet demand in certain geographical areas of our city.

¹⁴ Refer p. 27-8 of Supporting Information Document, Auckland Council

Examples of these shortfalls include¹⁵:

- Indoor courts shortfall of at least 30 courts right now, rising by an additional 24 within the life of the Long-term Plan
- Winter sports fields shortfall in hours the equivalent of circa 30 artificial turfs within the life of the Long-term Plan
- Outdoor netball courts shortfall of more than 70 courts
- Outdoor tennis courts shortfall of approximately 40 courts
- Hockey turfs shortfall of an estimated 15 new turfs plus replacement surfaces on existing turf.

Level of investment

Even with the increase in funding shown in the draft Long-term Plan, Council itself has said there will be a “decreased level of service. . .deteriorating assets, and the risk of failure and asset closure”. With limited funds and various factors to consider, Council is working through these challenges – we appreciate this is no easy task.

However, we are also clear that all Aucklanders have the right to lead active, healthy lives through participation in sport and recreation, which requires continued investment. A lack of fit-for-purpose spaces and facilities poses serious risks to the benefits of physical activity, resulting in a negative effect on Auckland, our communities, our health and the economy.

We all agree growth is a challenge. From the view of sport and recreation, it is essential that growth in population, both at the urban fringe and in the existing urban area, is matched by sufficient investment in new facilities to meet the new demand that will be generated.

Portas’ 2018 Active Citizens Worldwide (ACW) research proves a direct link in Auckland between sport and recreation facilities and the increased participation rates of surrounding local communities¹⁶.

It follows that inadequate investment in maintaining, renewing or building new facilities will drive participation rates down. Again, Portas’ 2018 ACW Auckland research demonstrates that the four Local Boards that comprise The Southern Initiative Area have low rankings in terms of availability of facilities per person, and the some of the lowest levels of self-reported health levels across Auckland.

This area has a high proportion of Māori, Indian and Pacific Island Polynesian communities so under-provision in facilities will hit these communities hardest, further reducing physical activity levels and adding to the already endemic levels of obesity amongst children and adults in those communities.

Physical inactivity already costs New Zealand’s health system hundreds of millions each year (\$200 million in 2013 alone). 32% of New Zealand children are expected to be overweight or obese by 2025, with 21% of 4-year-old children in Auckland already in this category. These obesity rates are crippling our communities and our economy¹⁷.

The sport sector is doing its bit

The sport sector is demonstrating a maturity in creating a sensible and reasonable partnership and collaborative approach to facilities planning and supply. As well as the Sport Facility Code Plans for Auckland, collaborative projects such as the Indoor Courts Facility Plan and the Sports Facilities Priorities Plan show that we, as a sector, are playing our part in making sure every Council dollar is invested wisely for maximum return in benefits to the community.

With OneVoice, the sector co-created the Auckland Sport & Recreation Action Plan (ASARSAP) – the priority strategic action plan for sport and recreation that has been adopted by Council.

Aktive and its key community sport partners¹⁸ are also playing their part, with the support of Sport New Zealand, Foundation North, the NZCT and other funders. *The Auckland Approach to Community Sport* strategy gives priority to Auckland’s young people, and Māori, Chinese, Samoan and Indian populations. As well, it provides significant support to volunteers, administrators and coaches, promotes shared and multi-sport facilities, and supports school/sport partnerships, involving community use of facilities.

¹⁵ Source: National Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy updated by preliminary findings from Auckland Indoor Courts Facility Plan; individual code facilities’ plans supported by findings from Auckland Council Sport Field Capacity Development Plan; individual code facilities’ plans produced by independent consultants

¹⁶ Active Citizens Worldwide, Auckland City Report 2018

¹⁷ Sport New Zealand Value of Sport and Recreation Auckland Report 2015 and Sport New Zealand Regional profile Auckland 2013-2014

¹⁸ CLM Community Sport Counties Manukau, Harbour Sport, Sport Auckland, Sport Waitakere and College Sport

Options – opportunities – solutions

Aktive strongly recommends an increase to Capital investment budgets for both renewals and growth across the Long-term Plan timeframe for parks, recreation and community facilities. This means more investment to maintain services, meet growth and provide adequate facilities in new areas.

To follow are options and solutions that Aktive recommends are adopted to help to improve the lives of Aucklanders and our communities:

1. **Establish a Regional Partnership Fund for Capital projects of at least \$250 million.** Auckland Council is a critical cornerstone investor, a fact that is recognised by it developing a “Facility Partnership Policy.” A Regional Partnership Fund will create a platform to attract investment from other funders, private investors, philanthropists and club members. It will help ensure that the provision of new and existing facilities - specifically multi-sport facilities and indoor courts - keep pace with the unprecedented population growth across Auckland. It will assist to fully fund the Local Board priorities, including One Local Board Initiatives, that pertain to sport and recreation;
2. **Ensure the Regional Partnership Fund is evenly proportioned over the LTP period**, including in the first three years, given that the sector’s Capital needs are immediate;
3. **Increase the Development Contribution percentage from Household Unit Equivalents (HUE);**
4. **Increase the portion of the Development Contribution on Reserve Acquisition** (land acquisition for public open space of all types from small local parks to large regional parks) **and Reserve Development** (development and improvement of local parks, local sports parks and other local open space areas);
5. **Ensure Capital investment is evenly proportioned over the LTP period**, including in the first three years, given that the sector’s Capital needs are immediate.

Additionally, we wish to comment on other aspects of Auckland Council's Long-term Plan proposals:

6. **We support the water quality targeted rate** which will help water-based activities and swimming;
7. **We support the environment targeted rate** which support people participating in physical activities in our regional parks;
8. **We support the transport regional fuel tax and advocate that a portion be used** to enable safe cycleways and walkways to be created between sport and recreational nodes, as well as between homes and places of work, schools and recreational facilities.

Finally:

9. **We urge that sport, recreation and physical activity be clearly and adequately referenced at the highest level in the Auckland Plan**, in due recognition of the positive effect it has on communities’ and Aucklanders’ wellbeing.

Next steps

We appreciate that Auckland Council is contending with Capital constraints, and has to make choices about the mix of services it provides.

Regardless, there is no denying the enormous contribution that sport, recreation and physical activity makes to the health and wellbeing of all Aucklanders, of all ages, socio-economic levels and ethnicities. As demonstrated, physical activity, its wide-ranging benefits and its importance to our community are fundamental to meeting the outcomes identified in the Auckland Plan.

We urge that there be acknowledgement of sport and recreation at the highest level in the Auckland Plan and greater investment under the Long-term Plan. Without this, our current and future community sport and recreation spaces will be compromised to the point of failure. This means our growing, increasingly diverse population will not have access to suitable infrastructure to participate in physical activity – whether it’s a competitive rugby match, social tennis, outdoor netball, school sports events or kilikiti.

All Aucklanders regardless of age, ethnicity and ability level should be able to participate in sport, recreation and physical activity in fit for purpose facilities and spaces to enable them to connect with their community and live active, healthy lives.

The solutions we have proposed will achieve this.