

A Community response, based on Council’s Open Space Acquisition Policies, to assist the “Governing Body to reconsider the retention or sale of the rear portion of the site”.



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Background and the project to date

The Boffa Miskell report produced in 2000 confirmed the wider Ponsonby area was under-supplied with public amenity space². Consequently, land at 254 Ponsonby Road was approved for purchase by Council in September 2006 for the creation of a civic space³. Within the decision to purchase the land was the statement⁴ that the rear portion of the site was earmarked for potential sale. This statement was made to both enable funding for the development of the future civic space and because it was deemed surplus to any such planned development – at that time (2006).

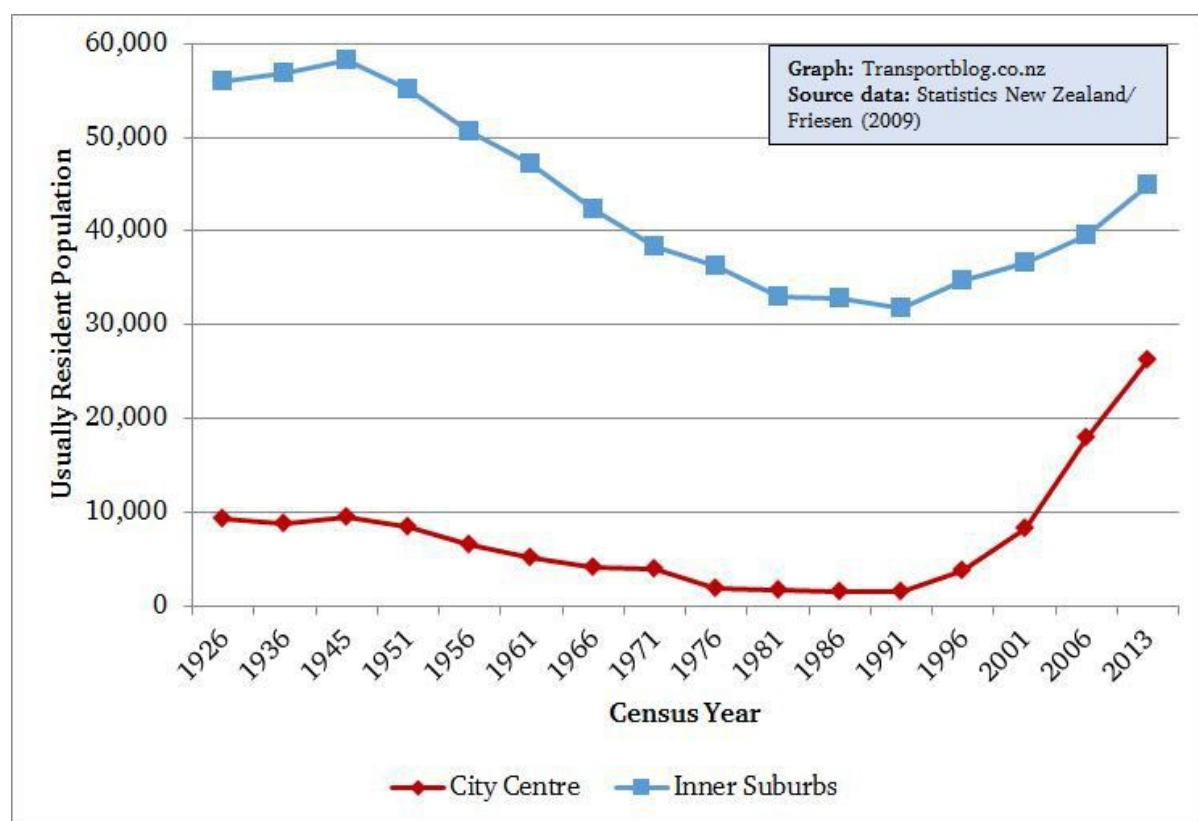


Figure 1: Auckland Central Population Growth

July 2013 the Waitemata Local Board (WLB) produced the Draft Ponsonby Road Masterplan and sought public consultation to guide further-thinking for Ponsonby Road, including the open space project at 254 Ponsonby Road. A key finding of this consultation was the intense interest in the planned development of the site.

In 2014, a petition with over 1240 signatures specifically requested the 'whole of site' option. This resulted in the planning process for the site being "de-coupled" from the Ponsonby Road Masterplan and a project specific consultation was carried out from September - December 2014.

² Ponsonby Open Space Study, Boffa Miskell, December 2000, page 10

³ Finance and Corporate Business Committee Report C8/2006

⁴ "B. That the purchase price be offset by a sensible development of the rear portion of the site and proposals for this to be reported back by the Property Enterprise Board."

Over 77% of respondents (533 of the 698 total) to the site-specific consultation chose the 'whole of site' option for the development of the civic open space at 254 Ponsonby Road.

In March 2016, the project was devolved to the community by the WLB, who established a group of local stakeholders with the brief to;

'Develop a design concept with an indicative budget, for the whole of the site civic open space using Community-led Design principles'.

Applying community-led design principles, a series of needs based enquiry cycles were undertaken with the community - including analysis of the responses from the Ponsonby Road Masterplan submissions). Informed by this work, a series of discussion concepts were created in conjunction with Auckland University's School of Architecture students, based on the needs and aspirations of the community. The public responses led to the creation of the Design Brief which was taken up by 14 professional and volunteer landscape designers.

A clear majority of the 1208 final consultation respondents chose the design submitted by LandLAB for the whole of the site, civic open space development at 254 Ponsonby Road. This consultation included a physical exhibition, as well as an online virtual exhibition, of all the submitted designs. The LandLAB design was then formally presented to the WLB as the community's chosen design along with an indicative budget.

That the LandLAB design is currently shortlisted in the prestigious international competition, World Architecture Festival, in the Future Civic Category⁵ is testament to the quality of the design.

Numbers of people involved in the Community-led design process

- 1243 signed the initial petition for a 'whole of site' open space development
- 698 responses to the WLB's initial 254 Ponsonby Road consultation
- 190 respondents to the 1st CLD consultation
- 115 respondents to the 2nd CLD consultation.
- 1208 respondents to the 3rd CLD consultation.

This is a significant and sustained engagement by the Community.

Figure 2: Size of consultation response at each stage in the CLD process

The WLB then selected the whole of the site, civic open space at 254 Ponsonby Road project as their "One Local Initiative (OLI)" for inclusion in the 10-year plan. It received strong support with 60% of local residents, who responded to the 10-year Plan, expressing support for the OLI. Council has now requested an assessment as to whether the decision to sell the rear portion of the site should be revisited.

This report has been produced by the Community Led Design (CLD) Group, in parallel to the report currently being drafted by Council Officers. Both the Council Officers report and this report are required to base the evaluation on two of Council's guiding documents being the:

- ! Parks and Open Space Acquisition Policy June 2013, and
- ! Open Space Provision Policy 2016.

5 <https://www.worldarchitecturefestival.com/civic-future-project>

Method

Both guiding documents address the important issues that must be considered when deciding whether an area needs further open space provision, the size and form of such open space, and how to prioritize such procurement.

This report addresses applicable issues identified in the Policy documents in the order they are raised within those documents. Issues are presented in a tabular form along with the project specific information relating to that issue as identified during the Community-led design process. Following each collected set of information is a conclusion based on that document's guidance. Given that the land has already been purchased for a civic space and that the 2016 policy is the most recent review, more weight should be given to the requirements of the Open Space Provision Policy 2016.

Finally, an overall conclusion is presented based on the collected findings and some specific issues raised through the iterative Community-led design consultation process.

Parks and Open Space Acquisition Policy June 2013

Policy directive	254 Ponsonby Road 'whole of site'
(Introduction) Parks are expected to have social, environmental, economic, and cultural benefits.	Through the CLD consultation process, the community expressed concern over (social) a lack of connection space for social network creation and (environmental) a restful "green" area suited to all-weather use. They also strongly endorsed the opportunity for (economic) markets and (cultural benefits) the desire for a wide variety of activities. Retaining the entire site allows for these policy directives to happen simultaneously rather than sequentially thereby ensuring universal access.
(Acquiring land for Parks and Open Space) Auckland Plan "maintain and extend an integrated network of quality open space across the region that meet community needs and provide a diverse range of recreational opportunities by 2040".	The community has repeatedly expressed a need for both event space (a town square type area) <u>and</u> a restful "green" space to meet and develop social networks. This shows that these needs are not currently being met by the existing open spaces in the area. These nearby open spaces, as evidenced by community feedback, fall short in meeting the Community's needs.
Population Growth, resulting in more people using Parks and Open Space.	Significant intensification has already occurred in the WLB area and further development is predicted. It is now almost 20 years since the Boffa Miskell report identified insufficient open space in the area and during this time the situation has significantly compounded (see Figure 1: Auckland Central Population Growth). Retaining the entire site will; alleviate potential conflict between users and conflict for space, will prevent degradation of the urban green space due to overuse and will ensure the civic space is sufficiently big enough for Ponsonby 'events' to be held there.

Changing leisure trends, such as increasing demand for places to meet, be entertained and exercise informally, when it suits their schedule.	In 2006, when the site was purchased with the accompanying rider to sell a portion of the site, a clear instruction to include informal meeting places (as per this policy) was not part of the decision making process. Therefore, this requirement of the 2013 policy could not be considered. However, in the context of 2018, the expressed community need and desire for informal meeting places adds significant additional weight to retain the whole of the site. Earlier 'park' development was less 'urban space' and more traditionally a grassed area that is not well suited to social capital development and diverse activities.
(Policy and Legislative Context) Place Based Plans and Local Board Agreements	The Ponsonby Road Masterplan assured the community that the 'whole of site' development was a Council sanctioned option with the consultation being carried out by Council Staff. The feedback from the Ponsonby Road Masterplan consultation (and all subsequent consultations has) resoundingly approved and supported the 'whole of site' option.
(Decision making roles) Local Boards have an important role in advocating local views to the Governing Body.	The local views have consistently been and still are in favour of the 'whole of the site' development at 254 Ponsonby Road. The WLB as advocate for the community, strongly supports the 'whole of site' aspirations of the community and selected this project as their "One Local Initiative" for inclusion in the most recent 10 Year Plan. The collaboration between the WLB and the CLD group has actively involved the local community and the intended end-users. This has ensured community engagement and that the LandLAB design will serve the needs of the community.
(Funding Options) Most Auckland Council's funding for acquiring land for parks and open space comes from development contributions.	Firstly; the site is already in Council ownership and therefore future costs are only development related. Secondly; development contributions must now be spent in the area where they have been generated, so a portion of the development contributions over the next 5 years could be ear-marked for this project. This would provide a reliable revenue stream to achieve the project in a timely and complete fashion.
(Acquisition Opportunity Assessment Process) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Opportunity identified 2) Opportunity assessment/site suitability 3) Political Reporting and decision 4) Site added or proposer notified of decision 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The WLB presented the opportunity through their OLI on behalf of the clearly stated wishes of the community. 2) The retention of the entire site aligns with the criteria and prioritisation (see below). 3) The Governing Body and WLB through the OLI has asked for the previous resolution⁶ be revisited. This assessment aims to assist in

	<p>guiding that decision.</p> <p>4) Pending decision...</p>
<p>(Acquisition criteria 1) Meeting community needs, now and in the future</p>	<p>The community has clearly expressed their needs (via the initial consultations of the CLD process) and identified that the 'whole of site' civic open space project as designed by LandLAB, will meet those needs. Further, the Boffa Miskell report, the Ponsonby Road Masterplan, and the WLB consultation on the 'whole of site' option, have all endorsed this assessment. This criterion is therefore met and moreover qualifies under the <u>High Priority classification</u> (page 16).</p> <p>With the already realised and the projected future intensification, this need is increasing steadily.</p> <p>Open space interventions need to be considered as an urban investment that delivers the strongest benefits over a long period of time.</p> <p>"In a Society becoming steadily more privatized with private homes, cars, computers, offices and shopping centers, the public component of our lives is disappearing. It is more and more important to make the cities inviting, so we can meet our fellow citizens face to face and experience directly through our senses. Public life in good quality public spaces is an important part of a democratic life and a full life." Jan Gehl</p> <p>"Planning and design of urban green space interventions should actively involve the local community and the intended end users. This will ensure community engagement and the delivery of interventions that serve the needs of the community." Urban Green Spaces: a brief for Action (2017) World Health Organisation.</p>
<p>(Acquisition criteria 2) Connecting our parks and open spaces</p>	<p>As the site is located on a main transport route, on a busy retail "strip" with good PT connections, it will act as a connector and 'signpost' to other more discrete recreational opportunities. Therefore, the project also meets this criterion under the Medium Priority classification.</p>
<p>(Acquisition criteria 3) Protecting and restoring Auckland's unique features and meanings</p>	<p>No historical features or lwi concerns have been identified for this project. Local lwi have been consulted and kept up to date through regular provision of minutes from CLD Group meetings.</p>
<p>(Acquisition criteria 4) Improving the Parks and Open space we already have</p>	<p>The historical plan for a 'town square' open space development will be significantly improved in meeting both the community's needs and flexible functionality in Ponsonby, an area of significant change.</p>

	<p><u>High Priority classification</u></p> <p>In addition, the 'whole of site' civic open space will offer vital connections to other parks and open spaces within the CBD both in terms of civic functions – art, music, parades involving movement of people, but also as a biodiversity eco-pathway link for native birds, animals and insects displaced through intensification.</p>
<p>(Site suitability assessment)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Location and physical characteristics 2) Financial aspects 3) Community aspirations and partnerships 4) Amenity 5) Planning and legal restrictions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Shading assessments show the entire site is well suited to and necessary for the project, being a mostly flat site gently sloping to the West with the Westerly aspect allowing for all day usage. There are good connections to public transport. There is established passive surveillance by neighbours on 3 sides of the open space. The proximity to cafes is complementary to many user outcomes (e.g. lunch area, market space, gathering place). It is sited in the 'centre' of the Ponsonby Road strip thereby putting the civic open space close to the people. 2) Further opportunity to acquire land in Ponsonby is unlikely and would be very expensive. Identified community needs are unlikely to be met if this opportunity is lost. Urban open space is an important investment that local authorities make on behalf of their citizens and their wellbeing. 3) The community has been engaged in the planning process through the CLD method and has clearly and consistently voiced its aspirations for this development to be a 'whole of the site' civic open space. Community participation assures use and acceptance of, the civic open space. The CLD project has, for over 3 years, engaged the community through a group of dedicated volunteers. Progress on the project is watched closely and with anticipation, through social media and a monthly Ponsonby News column. 4) Amenity: rest, relaxation, and social capital are all core needs identified by the consultations undertaken. Existing open spaces are not all-weather, are often mainly grassed spaces, or are occupied by active

	<p>(noisy) recreation pursuits. Frequently there is no interface with Ponsonby Road and many of the existing open spaces are disconnected. The community strongly supports the 'whole of site' civic open space, as designed by LandLAB, to meet their amenity needs.</p> <p>5) Planning and Legal restrictions: The site will require re-zoning no matter which outcome is selected by Council.</p>
<p>(Disposal of Parks and Open Space) Disposing of Public open space must be treated cautiously as parks and open space can be difficult and expensive to replace, and future demands difficult to predict.</p>	<p>The prescient wisdom of this guidance is clear.</p> <p>254 Ponsonby Road is a prime example of a decision to sell land having been made by those unable to predict future demands. The current needs of the community for a space to easily meet and connect, to be entertained and delighted, whilst also having the opportunity to be in a green and restful area (away from busy street activities) had not been expected. Only the retention of the whole of the site enables these demands to be met without exclusion. Ponsonby's overarching characteristic is that of diversity and the 'whole of site' civic open space encourages and nurtures this diversity - without exclusion.</p>
<p>(Disposal of Parks and Open Space) Community views and preferences.</p>	<p>It is clear that the Community wants, needs, and expects the 'whole of site' development that they have repeatedly selected through successive consultations. There can be no doubt Council has, by repeatedly asking if the community would like this option, offered it as a viable and realistic outcome - One the community has clearly, consistently and repeatedly chosen.</p>

Outcome: Parks and Open Space Acquisition Policy 2013

Based on this assessment of the 2013 Policy, the proposed 'whole of site' development at 254 Ponsonby Road would meet the threshold for acquisition, but as Council already holds the land, the question now is, 'should it sell any of the land'?

Community needs and aspirations will not be met by a lesser option than the whole of the site civic open space development. The original, smaller development envisaged over 12 years ago, is no longer fit for purpose. Funding is available through development contributions generated within the area, the OLI 10 Year Plan funding, transfer of value of development rights and private capital.

The community, environment and even the quality of the water in our harbour will all be significantly enhanced by the whole of site approach. It is clear this Policy only supports the retention of the entire site at 254 Ponsonby Road for a civic open space.

Open Space Provision Policy 2016

Policy directive (Auckland Plan) “Maintain and extend an integrated network of quality open spaces across the region that meets community needs and provides a diverse range of recreational opportunities by 2040”.	254 Ponsonby Road ‘whole of site’ The CLD process identified that the Community’s needs are not being met by the existing types of open spaces in the area. A set of unmet needs were clearly identified which only the whole of site development option can meet.
(Responding to Auckland’s Growth) ...council’s investment in open space, in the existing urban area priorities improving the existing network.	Council already owns this land, and now can improve the planned development to encompass the needs and community aspirations that cannot be met by a part site development option. Retaining the entire site will also improve the existing network by reducing congestion in our open spaces.
The focus for investment in open space in the existing urban areas is: ! Investing in the established open space network to offer a wider range of activities for more people	The opportunity to develop an area that both maintains and grows social cohesion, as well as providing an urban experience to visitors to Ponsonby, supports the proposed ‘whole of site’ project. The full site allows for more and varied activities, more people to be accommodated there and more options for multiple activities at the same time.
Part 1: Network Principles Treasure: Create distinctive places ! Locating open space at focal points.	254 Ponsonby Road is on the Link bus route and is centrally located between the two arms of the Ponsonby Road experience (3 Lamps and the Ponsonby Central zones). The proposed ‘whole of site’ design has been shortlisted in the 2018 World Architecture Festival. It will create a distinctive and well-designed space that will be able to offer destination activities and will also be able to provide a calm and relaxing area for respite and relaxation for visitors, locals, workers, shoppers and business owners, at the same time.
Part 1: Network Principles Enjoy: Enjoy our parks and open spaces Make safe and welcoming spaces.	The proposed LandLAB design, has been created by one of Council’s existing landscape architecture design providers. It is an innovative design and incorporates CPTED principles (see comments above as to the international recognition of the design’s quality). The ‘whole of site’ civic open space at 254 Ponsonby Road will be inclusive, diverse and multi-functional. It will improve environmental conditions, protect and improve biodiversity, promote outdoor activities (in all weather, under the repurposed canopy) and active lifestyles, increase social interaction and exchange, and provide healthy urban conditions for good physical and mental wellbeing. The LandLAB designed civic open space will be universally accessible and will provide benefits for <i>all</i> members of, and visitors to, the Ponsonby urban community.
Part 1: Network Principles Enjoy: Be considerate of neighbours	The LandLAB design specifically zones potentially disruptive activities (e.g. market days or events) into the sheltered spaces near the street front (Ponsonby Road) where buildings will shield neighbours from noise. The rear part of the site buffers neighbours in a way a smaller site option cannot. Neighbours have been supportive and

	welcoming of the 'whole of site' civic open space development for these reasons – and even more so, after seeing the quality of the chosen LandLAB design.
Part 1: Network Principles Enjoy: Provide the right size and shape	The longer shape of the 'whole of site' option is perfectly suited to the flexible nature of the intended open civic space. Closest to Ponsonby Road will be the active/retail/participatory type of activities, whilst within the rear portion of the site, quieter areas for connection and relaxation exist. The Westerly aspect lends itself to this as the natural flow is to the West with the trajectory of the sun.
Part 1: Network Principles Utilise: Link open spaces together	The proposed LandLAB design will create a hub to direct users to a variety of other specialised local open spaces (dog walking areas, play equipment, skateboard areas etc.). The original design also incorporated a proposed laneway through to Tole Street (linking with the existing reserve).
Part 1: Network Principles Utilise: Consider resilience	<p>The community's selected design includes all-weather usable areas and multi-functional flexible-use zones. Utility buildings (toilets, storage etc.) further enhance future options for use. Food trees, a swale (rain garden) and green roofs all create resilience and enhance the environment.</p> <p>Urban living limits access to nature and can increase exposure to certain environmental hazards, such as air and noise pollution. Urban areas face increasing pressure from expanding populations and the growing impacts of climate change. These challenges must be addressed in order for cities to provide healthy and sustainable living environments. Civic open spaces that contain green spaces within them, increase the quality of the urban setting, enhance local resilience and promote sustainable lifestyles, improving both the health and the wellbeing of residents and visitors to the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biodiversity is protected - Environmental hazards such as air pollution are reduced - The impacts of extreme weather events (heat-waves, extreme rainfall) are mitigated - The quality of urban living and working is enhanced - The health and wellbeing of all members of the urban community is improved.
Part 1: Network Principles Utilise: Support greater urban density	Open civic spaces support and enhance greater urban density. Retaining the entire site at 254 Ponsonby Road will allow for more diversity of activity, more space for people, and more sustainable infrastructure to be incorporated into the site. Indeed, it will very likely become an exemplar and industry standard as to how storm water run-off can be mitigated to protect our waterways and the harbour. With increased medium and high

	<p>density housing in the area, the all-weather, restful and social capital capabilities of the proposed whole of the site development will be a great support to both users of Ponsonby Road and residents of the area.</p> <p>Connectivity via the Inner Link bus circuit, will facilitate greater access to this amenity.</p> <p>The wide range of experiences that the 'whole of site' civic space can accommodate, (and therefore that can be offered), is of real value for multiple and consecutive use and users.</p> <p>The design has already received international recognition.</p>
Part 2: Provision metrics Civic space	<p>Town centre guidelines allow for one medium civic space</p> <p>This development has been consulted through the Ponsonby Road Masterplan. Significant support led the WLB to select this project as their OLI for the 10 Year Plan. 60% of local resident submissions within the WLB area supported the whole of the site urban civic space development at 254 Ponsonby Road.</p>
Funding of open space	<p>As discussed earlier, locally targeted development contributions can provide a reliable "income stream" to fund the project in conjunction with contribution from the Parks budget and OLI 10 Year Plan funding.</p> <p>As the 'whole of site' civic open space development is expected to benefit both the residents and users (retailers, tourists and visitors) to/of the area, such a focused targeting of development contributions will provide more than local effects and will amplify the benefits of this spend.</p> <p>In addition, sale/transfer of development rights may allow for a lump-sum addition to funding.</p>
Additional open space provision Variation in provision will occur across Auckland	<p>The CLD needs-based consultation is a classic, textbook example of how Auckland's neighbourhoods can develop unique solutions to their needs. The CLD work has identified how the residents and users of the Ponsonby area want their ideal open space to be, through their selection of the LandLAB design.</p> <p>Repeatedly they have said they want an area that will both enhance the Ponsonby Road experience for visitors and also provide local social-cohesion opportunities.</p> <p>The 'whole of site' civic open space development will provide public amenity for residents and a new attraction for visitors.</p>
Development of new parks Local Boards are responsible for approving the design and development of new local parks.	<p>The WLB facilitated this design through a robust Community-led Design process. The LandLAB design has been shortlisted for a prestigious international architecture award https://www.worldarchitecturefestival.com/civic-future-project</p> <p>The WLB approved the design and submitted it for Council's approval through the "One</p>

	local initiative” process, contained within the 10 Year Plan.
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Outcome: Open Space Provision Policy 2016

Based on this assessment of the 2016 Policy, the proposed ‘whole of site’ development at 254 Ponsonby Road is compatible with the strategic context, network principles, and provision metrics/funding provisions of the policy document.

Community needs and aspirations will not be met by a lesser option than the ‘whole of site’ civic open space development. The original, smaller development envisaged over 12 years ago, is no longer fit for purpose. Funding is available, through development contributions that must be spent in the area.

The community, environment and even the quality of the water in our harbour will be significantly enhanced by the ‘whole of site’ approach. It is clear this Policy only supports the retention of the entire site.

Overall conclusion

The guidance of the Parks and Open Space Acquisition Policy 2013 and the Open Space Provision Policy 2016 support and uphold the ‘whole of site’ development option for 254 Ponsonby Road.

Further to these Policy documents, Council has over the last few years repeatedly engaged in consultation with the local community presenting the ‘whole of site’ development as an option and this option has consistently been selected by the community.

This now allows Council, with the support of the community and the Waitemata Local Board, to revisit the historical, partial sale of the site decision.

Recommendation

Revisit the 2006 resolution to procure the land and amend it to;

Retain the entire site and develop it into a ‘whole of site’ civic open space as soon as is practicable⁷.

⁷ The Auckland Council Park’s website ‘open space acquisition policy’ states “**After Auckland Council has acquired land for parks and open space, public access will be provided as soon as practicable so the community can enjoy the new park or open space.**” This site has been undeveloped for 12 years!