



THE SPACE TO BE

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

PLANNED SHORT, MED AND LONG TERM STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS



INTRODUCTION

Parnell holds a rich and unique position in the history of New Zealand. The original occupants, Mana Whenua, resided here for some 1,000 years before the arrival of the first settlers. Shortly after this, in the 1840s, Parnell was established as Auckland's first suburb where it developed as an affluent precinct with a thriving business community.

From its strategic location on the shores of the Waitematā, and with superb views over Auckland, Parnell has witnessed significant change in the Auckland inner city environment. It has also observed very real change within its own precinct, particularly since the heydays of the 1970's and 80's when Parnell was home to a picturesque village, New Zealand's first weekend shopping experience, cool bars and restaurants, big spending advertising agencies, visitors/tourists and the like.

Parnell has remained a sought after and affluent suburb of Auckland with all the benefits of being in close proximity to the CBD. It boasts multiple attractions both geographical and as part of the built environment. The development of new precincts Britomart, the Viaduct and Wynyard Quarter posed significant competitive demand in the early 2000's, as have other districts with more trendy hospitality, night life and retail experiences such as Ponsonby with the stimulus of Ponsonby Central in 2012 and subsequent growth since then. In 2019 and 2020 the opening of the mega Westfields in Newmarket took place, presenting huge competition to the retail sector.

Notwithstanding this, some good progress has been made by the Parnell Business Association and the local business community. In the 2014/15 year the Parnell Business Association successfully completed an expansion of the Parnell Business Improvement District (BID) area, taking it from a limited representation on Parnell Road to a full precinct.

The outcome is a stronger voice for Parnell and better funding, whilst also adding a raft of new challenges in terms of connectivity for the expanded area.

2015-18 saw a major rejuvenation of Parnell taking place, with a number of new restaurants, cafés, and bars in the Parnell Rd area, and new commercial and hospitality in St Georges Bay Road and elsewhere. These changes continue to take place as it is becoming increasingly recognised that Parnell is a great place in which to do business.

The Parnell Business Association has been very active in helping to promote that image and regularly reevaluates the strategic direction of the activities of the association activities.

In 2015/16 the Parnell Business Association commissioned a comprehensive report entitled 'Reinvigorate Parnell Blueprint'. This in turn informed the outline of the following Strategic Framework and our five strategic pillars.

In 2016 Ogilvy's in Parnell were commissioned to redevelop the brand and resulting tag line – Parnell the Space to Be.

In 2018 the business association then lobbied the Waitematā Local Board for a council led, Local Area Plan in order to address area wide connectivity and infrastructure needs. The Local Board agreed to sponsor the development which was done with the collaboration of Auckland Council and several community groups. The Parnell Plan was released in June 2019 and the key projects incorporated into the Strategic Framework.

Following three years of COVID disruptions and a council environment that is extremely constrained, the business association again reassessed our strategic priorities in 2023, as outlined in this document and updated annually.

THE PARNELL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION GOAL IS FOR PARNELL TO BE THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER AUCKLAND CITY FRINGE PRECINCT IN WHICH TO DO BUSINESS.

Following the long-term impact of COVID-19 and the following years of economic pressure, the subsequent effect has been felt on our precinct in terms of visitor attraction and spend, plus commercial and retail vacancies. We will continue to monitor our performance in comparison to neighbouring districts in Auckland with emphasis on these three areas.

- *Grow total spend and transactions in Parnell*
- *Retain the attraction of Parnell by keeping commercial and retail occupancy rates as high as possible*
- *Ensure Parnell's growth is supported by a safe and secure environment.*

Our strategic framework is divided into 5 key areas of activity and measured by comparative market demand.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



SPECIAL PROJECTS – 2024/6

The objective is to prioritise and focus on projects that will have a major impact on the attractors and image of Parnell. These special projects will support the intention of The Parnell Plan and specific business objectives.

1. Heard Park as the 'Heart of Parnell'

- PBA lobbied for the Heard Park concept plan to be adapted and funded by the Waitemātā Local Board. (In May 2024 the Local Board committed to funding for the execution of the concept plan in 2024/2025, plus a play installation. Work commenced in May 2025 and the new playground and park was launched in Sept 2025).
- Heard Park will continue to be a focus for events and activations in Parnell.

2. Wayfinding

- PBA lobbied for functional wayfinding to be funded by the Waitemātā Local Board/Auckland Transport for various locations in Parnell including Parnell Station and Auckland Museum. (The Local Board committed \$86,000 to this initiative in 2024. Blade signage was installed in the first half of 2025 and we are still awaiting the installation of 3 plinths as planned.
- A recent CPTED report still highlights inadequate wayfinding to and from Parnell Station, which needs to be addressed
- A long-term objective is to use wayfinding to enhance walkability of Parnell and green spaces.

3. Parnell Road parklets/PODS

- Seek to enhance the streetscape of Parnell Road with parklets/PODS to create additional activation and visual amenity. (No feedback from AT re these permissions)

4. Landowner engagement re the built environment and tenant mix

Board members to use influence where possible to engage landowners, especially on Parnell Road, to consider the importance of the built environment, as well as a curated tenant mix in order to support the following objectives.

- Offer convenience retail for Parnell locals as well as everyday needs for workers - ideally a supermarket or combined offering (such as Ponsonby Central).
- Lease strategically to grow a tenant mix that will attract the younger demographic.
- Address empty premises, consider visual presentation and temporary activation to minimize negative impact.
- Enhance the visual amenity and presentation of the built environment and consider street appeal.

5. Events

Seek additional events and activation as budget allows

6. Parnell Plan

Advocacy for 3 key projects in Parnell Plan, when future council/AT budget allows
Parnell Business Association Strategic Framework Feb 2026/Version 21

THE PARNELL PLAN

TOWARDS A 30 YEAR PLAN FOR AUCKLAND'S FIRST SUBURB.

Published in 2019 this plan seeks to address some of the challenges Parnell faces with respect to East/West connectivity across the precinct, including future key projects that have the potential to cohesively connect the various nodes and enable us to leverage visitation from surrounding attractions.

It was developed collaboratively by community leaders, local board members and Auckland Council staff, in partnership with mana whenua. The Parnell Plan Working Group included representatives from the Blind Foundation, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Parnell Heritage, Parnell District School, Auckland War Memorial Museum, the Parnell Business Association, Parnell Community Trust, Parnell Community Committee and mana whenua. Urban designers from Jasmax provided graphic impressions of potential future projects.

THE PARNELL PLAN – KEY ACTION AREAS

Five key action areas have been identified in the Parnell Plan. These are priority locations where investment in mainly physical and environmental improvements can achieve transformational change. They focus directly on achieving the vision and objectives for Parnell and will be the drivers of our advocacy programme for the next few years as currently none of these projects are funded.

The five areas are as follows:

- **Make Parnell Station a key gateway to Parnell and the Domain** - enhance safe and accessible walkways and links to Auckland Museum/Domain, plus access and easement from Cheshire Street and Parnell Village The environment surrounding the station is embarrassing and unsafe. With the opening of the CRL imminent, this represents tremendous unfulfilled potential. A recent CPTED review of the walking routes to Parnell Station was commissioned by PBA, and highlights several issues which will be taken up with The Waitematā Local Board/AT and Summerset.
- **Realise the Waipapa Greenway** – note, since Summerset have halted development, need to advocate for AT to negotiate other options
- **Reinforce the core of Parnell town centre as the heart of Parnell.**
- **Revitalise the St Georges Bay Road warehouses area with a streetscape upgrade.** Continue to advocate together with the Local Board, for this project to be funded as soon as possible, further cementing its development into a distinctive and attractive business quarter. (Note that safety project for 2026 will replace this aspiration)
- **Enhance key east-west links and realise the Parnell Parks Link Greenway.**

*It should be noted that while all the above action areas remain valid, budget is restrictive and Summerset retraction has affected Parnell Station aspirations

1.ATTRACTORS

IDENTIFY, DEVELOP AND PROMOTE THOSE ATTRACTORS THAT ARE DISTINCTIVE TO PARNELL.

The objective is to invest in excellence in those products, services and experiences that relate to business interests, investors, workers, the lifestyles of residents, along with visitors (tourists: local and international), all of whom will contribute to Parnell being a great place to invest, work, live, shop and visit.

Recommendations for attractors

- Use Parnell's geography as its distinctiveness, with attractors such as signed pathways and routes, digital wayfinding, and work to lobby for improved ways to get around the precinct.
- Encourage the development of a diversity of destination restaurants, cafes, bars, and pubs.
- Build on the design cluster/galleries and the themes that shaped the earlier positioning of Parnell as The Creative Quarter.
- Consider distinctive 'destination retail', convenience retail and branded retail that can position Parnell to attract shoppers.
- Respect the built environment, develop pedestrianised spaces, authentic design, and maybe grow the sense of the "village on the hill".
- Engage with mana whenua to celebrate Aotearoa, encourage the Te Aranga design principles across urban planning and the natural environments within the Parnell precinct and The Domain.
- Consider what attractions are required to attract young people back to Parnell in the medium to long term
- Celebrate the Auckland Museum as a key visitor destination and participate in any options to leverage visitation

2.COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY INVESTMENT

IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT INVESTMENT IN COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE THAT WILL SUSTAIN THE LONG-TERM GROWTH AND REINVIGORATION OF PARNELL AS A GREAT PLACE TO INVEST OR DO BUSINESS IN.

The objective is to support a collaborative and vibrant business precinct, encouraging businesses that are capable of flourishing in changing times, that are forward looking to attract a new generation of entrepreneurs.

Recommendations for commercial enterprise

- Build on existing commercial enterprises that are currently sustaining and driving economic growth in Parnell such as the innovation/tech sector.
- Position Parnell for entrepreneurs and high-end quality long-term businesses as a desirable location and utilize the Prospectus to describe the benefits for commercial enterprise to locate in Parnell. Maintain regular contact with leasing agents to understand opportunities and market trends.
- Use major developments, both private sector residential and mixed use, plus the public sector, as catalysts for further commercial investment and enterprise.
- Support investment in commercial enterprise that builds on Parnell's fame for its design cluster, as well as other clusters that act as attractors/drawcards – e.g., galleries.
- Position Parnell as a dynamic hub for digital startups and new technology enterprises.
- Consider how to capture spend generated from education markets, which are typically young people.
- Seek opportunities to increase funding for Parnell Business Association via sponsorship of events or investments in projects.

3.INFRASTRUCTURE

MAKE PARNELL ACCESSIBLE, LEGIBLE AND LIVEABLE AND SAFE FOR LOCALS AND VISITORS. LOBBY TO INFLUENCE TRANSPORT DECISIONS, PARKING PROVISIONS AND THE DELIVERY OF A DESIRABLE PUBLIC REALM, IN LINE WITH THE PARNELL PLAN.

The objective is to make it easy to get to Parnell, park, get around, and enjoy (implies includes safety) the public realm with:

- different transport modes: bus, train, car, cycles
- new transport modes: tram, shuttle, scooters
- on foot in pedestrianised and green, people-friendly, shared spaces

Recommendations for infrastructure and safety

- Continue to invest in infrastructure (CCTV) patrol service and crime prevention interventions that support and maintain a safe environment for Parnell businesses and their patrons.
- Lobbying to influence transport decisions, parking provision, and supporting the delivery of an improved public realm is a top priority.
- Make 'connecting up' every part of Parnell a major focus for planning.
- Support businesses on The Strand to retain amenity and parking in the face of freight focused outcomes.
- Address unsatisfactory access to and from Parnell Train Station as a major game changer, addressing how to transport people up from the station to Parnell Road, and across into The Domain
- Ensure bus routes serve every part of Parnell, in particular the growing St Georges Bay Road area.
- Address transport packages/incentives to encourage visitors to make day visits to Parnell.
- Increase pedestrianised people-friendly shared spaces.
- Improve signage for roads and walking. Address signage and wayfinding and the provision of information points or services, print and digital, for a more legible destination.
- Focus on infrastructure that supports climate resilience for both the public realm and businesses.

4. BRAND IDENTITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

POSITION PARNELL AS THE MOST DESIRABLE CITY FRINGE DISTRICT IN WHICH TO DO BUSINESS

Continue the positioning 'The Place to Be' as a galvanising force across all interests; a brand identity and position that flies the flag for Parnell.

Recommendations on the positioning of Parnell, Brand Identity and Communications Strategy

- Celebrate and promote the leading categories that drive visitation to Parnell.
- Continue to promote and implement the Brand Strategy.
- Review our understanding of current and desired future target audiences as aligned to the brand positioning and tenant mix and agree priorities.
- Build on the Communication Strategy and crystalise messaging aligned with the positioning.
- Continue to roll out communications to build the image of a differentiated, diversified, and reinvigorated destination.
- Focus on the welcoming and celebrating of cultures.
- Implement this positioning to attract both local and international visitors.
- Measure the attainment of the ongoing communication efforts.

5.VISITOR ECONOMY

INCREASE THE SHARE OF THE VISITOR MARKET TARGETING LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL VISITORS ALIGNED TO THE BRAND POSITIONING AND TENANT MIX.

The objective is for Parnell to increase its share of the visitor market targeting local and international visitors who are high in-destination spenders, for day visits and short breaks.

Recommendations for visitor economy

- Continue to forge a dynamic working partnership with the Auckland Museum in The Domain.
- Continue to build relationships with key tourism partners - tour bus operators, Concierge Societies, Tataki Auckland Unlimited
- Support improved transport systems, in particular, seek to leverage the opportunities for Parnell Station to bring people in and out of the destination.
- Present the different sub precincts within Parnell to attract different visitor markets.
- Diversify the market appeal and attract new market segments, especially FITs.
- Introduce place shaping and urban design initiatives which are visitor friendly – pedestrianised and shared spaces.
- Foster the development boutique accommodation including the uptake of services such as Airbnb.
- Develop events and festivals as attractors and ways to build the brand.

6.SUCCESS CRITERIA

SET SUCCESS CRITERIA TO MONITOR THE DELIVERY OF RESULTS

The objective is to establish the principles for mechanisms that will ensure the delivery of the agreed recommendations in the Strategic Framework.
Bearing in mind the overall goal as follows:

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Key areas of measurement

1. Spend
2. Vacancy rates
3. Crime stats

Current performance measurement tools - spend and support

- Marketview has been the primary measure - reporting quarterly on spend and transactions, definition of support by target audiences. From Dec 2020, BNZ card data has no longer been part of Marketview reports., but we now have access to an online tool enabling easier comparisons to neighbouring districts and other BIDS.

In addition, our office report on

- Added value to budget – publicity value, support of promotions by businesses, plus additional income, prizes etc.
- Website traffic & Social Media engagement
- Database growth and upkeep
- Support of B2B events

Vacancy Rates - information is acquired from regular surveys by leading broking companies

Safe & Secure Environment

- Monthly Crime Stats as supplied by NZ police
- The uptake of CCTV by landowners, integration with AT and monitoring of long term effect