SUBMISSION TO
AUCKLAND COUNCIL ANNUAL PLAN 2026/2027

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Introduction

The Parnell Business Association represents more than 1,100 businesses and an area with a capital value exceeding $2.2 billion. We work to strengthen Parnell's business environment by advocating for effective local services and settings that support innovation, investment, employment, and increased customer and visitor activity.

We share this common goal with the Auckland Council group to promote Auckland's economic prosperity.

Proposed Annual Plan 2026/27

The mayor has proposed a focus for the coming year is transport reform. After years of frustration, Auckland Council is taking back control of transport in Auckland. Auckland Transport will become a public transport service provider only, with the rest brought into the council which should make decisions simpler and faster, and increase accountability.

This will be a welcome change. We agree and endorse the notion that transport planning should sit alongside land-use planning, and delivery must be practical, cost-effective, and focused on the whole network, not silos.

We further agree with progressing the next phase of CCO reform, including a more commercial approach to urban regeneration, better property management, and stronger economic development. Auckland's city centre is critical to our region's success, contributing a significant share of our GDP.

You have said you will work with central government on new funding tools for visitor attraction and economic development, including exploring a bed night visitor levy for major events and destination marketing. We have always believed that attracting visitors and securing, promoting and delivering major festivals and events, is vital to developing Auckland's economy and we need a funding mechanism to secure that. You have said you will facilitate international and domestic events, including musicals, concerts and exhibitions.

We would like to reiterate the importance of events on the trade in town centres such as Parnell. Our hospitality providers report a definite uptake in days pre and post a large concert,

especially if it is held in Spark Arena or Eden Park, and to a far lesser extent if it takes place at Mount Smart. It is harder to measure a definite uptake in trade from waterside events such as Moana Auckland, potentially due to the amount of hospitality near the event, but we still support their importance as contributing to a vital exciting city.

In addition, strategically planning and investing in town centres, infrastructure and community amenities to enable sustainable development and support vibrant, connected neighbourhoods is of great importance to us.

Rates

You have noted an overall rates increase of 7.9 per cent is planned (for the average value residential property), whereas the estimated annual increase for the average business ratepayer is 9.84%. This would effectively mean that most of the ratepayers in Parnell would experience in excess of a 10% increase.

Although you have justified the increase, it is still a sizeable percentage, which will be passed from ratepayers to tenants. The past two years have been very lacklustre in terms of retail and hospitality spend, with many businesses teetering on the edge.

This also needs to be assessed together with the current geopolitical volatility that will exacerbate the outcome.

Local Board Priorities – Waitematā Local Board

The Waitematā Local Board have stated their key priorities for the Annual Plan 2026-2027.
We recognise that the board, like households across Auckland, is facing increased costs to deliver existing services, and that there is an estimated budget gap of around $1m.
However, reductions to streetscape services—particularly in and around our town centre—have a direct impact on amenity, place quality, and the visitor experience.

We also wish to highlight persistent issues with tree pits that we have raised over the past eight years. Responsibility for maintaining the hard assets around the base of certain street trees remains unclear between Auckland Council and Auckland Transport, resulting in inconsistent outcomes and delays. We expect the proposed integration of Auckland Transport into Council to help resolve this through clearer accountability.

More broadly, we observe limited forward planning for the renewal costs associated with ageing infrastructure, including the management of mature street trees and the repair of footpaths. We encourage the Local Board to ensure long-term programmes and funding pathways are in place for these essential maintenance items.

We support the reduction of library hours, including the earlier closing time at Parnell Library (5.30pm), as a practical response to current budget constraints.

We also acknowledge Council's focus on achieving additional savings; however, there remains opportunities to reduce operational inefficiencies. For example, following repairs, marketing and tenant procurement for the building at Heard Park, the premises remain unoccupied more than two years later. This type of delay increases holding and delivery costs and suggests further efficiencies are still available.

Finally, we request continued advocacy for the safety improvements and renewal works proposed for St Georges Bay Road until the project is delivered. After many years of effort to progress this work, the project was scheduled for January 2025 but deferred due to NZTA / The Strand optimisation. It was then rescheduled for January/early February 2026 and deferred again. A meeting with Auckland Transport and affected landowners to discuss mid-year options was subsequently cancelled and postponed, and we are now seeking a meeting in April.

Parnell Station Precinct

Our key advocacy project for the Waitematā Local Board is the Parnell station precinct.

The Parnell Business Association funded a CPTED Report as part of our Crime Prevention Fund Grant, based on an assessment of three, street-based routes between Parnell Road and Parnell Rail Station as well as two rail underpasses that connect Parnell Rail Station with Auckland Domain.

(The walking connection between the station and Auckland Museum, was not included as part of this report, but should still be noted that this is an important connection, which does not currently work, for many of the same reasons as set out below).

The CPTED assessment of the impact of Pedestrians & Streets was as follows;
The current street network and condition of the pedestrian environment between Parnell Road and Parnell Station (on the routes covered in the report) do not currently support convenient, safe and high amenity connections between Parnell Road and the rail station due to: slope, narrow footpath widths, poor maintenance (broken paving), lack of signage, indirect routes and a lack of activity to attract pedestrians/foot traffic.

1. We need advocacy from the WLB to work with KiwiRail, Auckland Council/Transport, Mana Whenua and key property owners on a co-ordinated Development Framework for the rail station precinct to optimise outcomes for Parnell town centre and the rail station, in terms of rail user experience, access alternatives to the northbound platforms and ensuring positive outcomes for visitors, vibrancy of Parnell town centre. We believe that Auckland Transport/Auckland Council need to exercise their easement rights over the Summerset property and improve the walkway down to Parnell Station, even while the property is in private hands. Since Summerset withdrew their plans for this site in 2022, all AT plans for the easement improvements were put on hold. The property has been up for sale, but the truth is this could still take many years to conclude.

The proposal for the Waipapa cycleway should be part of the Development Framework. This is a long held aspiration that is part of The Parnell Plan.

2. In the short term we need the advocacy of the WLB for council to maintain the overgrown vegetation on the walkway down to the station, as well as the bottom of the Ngahere steps and around the underpass. And for AT to address lighting concerns and uneven surfaces for pedestrians.

3. Even though there has been recent wayfinding implemented near the station, the CPTED Report still found this lacking. We need advocacy from the WLB to further review signage to the rail station with Auckland Council/Transport to ensure it is visible in daylight and evening time conditions, particularly for first time visitors. This includes signage on the rail site and at the top of Ngahere Terrace;

4. We need the WLB to work with Auckland Council/ Transport on safety and visibility measures for the steep Ngahere Terrace connection. Repair uneven footpath surfaces, including kerbs and utilities in footpath that are currently trip hazards, and deal with overgrown vegetation;

The Parnell Business Association, via Community Facilities, are already trying to address short term concerns where possible, such as potholes and uneven pathways.

We have reached out to council compliance to address the properties on Cheshire Street that pose a danger to pedestrians.

We are working with the Quest Hotel and other adjoining landowners to address the alleyways between the hotel and adjacent properties, as they are a favourite getaway for perpetrators.

We are investigating the option of a large mural to address the tagging on the back of the apartments facing the station.

In conclusion, with the City Rail Link opening this year, we encourage the board to continue advocating and partnering with relevant agencies and landowners to maximise the social, economic and cultural opportunities associated with the city fringe residents, businesses and visitors. Parnell Station has the potential to be a key link for employees and visitors; however, current access, amenity and safety conditions mean it is not yet achieving that potential.

Kind Regards
Cheryl Adamson
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*Please note that from 7 April 2026, Adriana Avendano Christie will be the GM of the Parnell Business Association, as should be included in all future correspondence – adriana@parnell.net.nz