



# **Submission: AUCKLAND COUNCIL LONG TERM PLAN 2024-2034 (10-YEAR BUDGET) AND LOCAL BOARD PRIORITIES**

**27<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

Business North Harbour Incorporated

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27<sup>th</sup> March 2024

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## **Submission to Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024-2034 (10-Year Budget)**

Auckland Council is seeking feedback on the Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024-2034 (10-Year Budget)

### **Introduction**

Business North Harbour (BNH) representing the North Harbour Business Improvement District welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on the Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024-2034 (10-Year Budget).

BNH is a significant commercial and industrial Business Improvement District (BID), representing over 4,500 commercial property owners and businesses within the North Harbour area. Collectively they employ over 37,000 Auckland residents and ratepayers. The organisation is located within the Upper Harbour Local Board area, which remains one of the fastest growing areas in the country, in both absolute and percentage population terms, which brings both challenges and opportunities to the North Harbour business district.

BNH represents and works with a wide range of businesses comprising of a mix of sole traders, Small Medium Enterprises (SME), through to multi-national organisations, representing sectors such as ICT, business services, specialist manufacturing, light – medium warehousing, logistics, retail and hospitality. In addition, we have key educational institutions within or on our boundary, including Massey University Albany and AUT Millennium, along with a variety of primary and secondary schools including Rangitoto College, the largest secondary school in New Zealand.

Our primary interests are decisions within the Draft Auckland Council Long Term Plan 2024-2034 (10-Year Budget) which:

- Impact on the cost of business
- Impact on economic development and the ability to leverage value from location
- Support or restrict business growth opportunities
- Impact on access to both regional and localised transport hubs
- Impact on R&D and investment – sector development and capability
- Provide the scope to leverage natural assets for economic development across the leisure and tourism sectors – enhancing Auckland's reputation

There are currently 51 BIDs in Auckland, representing over 25,000 businesses with a combined capital value estimated at \$72.7 billion.<sup>1</sup>

Our role in the Auckland economy is to improve the business environment of our areas, promote innovation, prosperity and employment as well as attract new businesses, customers and visitors.

We share this common goal with the Auckland Council group to promote Auckland's economic prosperity. The Council group plays a pivotal role in providing efficient and effective core services for the city. Auckland must continually strive to attract more visitors, and bid competitively to host major events, as well as support economic development activities.

Overall, BNH can't emphasise enough the need to find more savings and for there to be a much sharper focus on efficiencies and getting the 'basics' right, such as the delivery of core Council

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bid.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/>

services and the timely maintenance of essential infrastructure. We welcome the recent announcement of an overhaul of top management tiers at Council to streamline service delivery and cut costs.

The Long Term Plan 2024-2034 sets out the Council's priorities and how you will pay for them.<sup>2</sup> You are seeking feedback on a number of issues, our responses will focus on:

- (1) Overall Direction for the Long Term Plan
- (2) Transport Plan
- (3) North Harbour Stadium
- (4) Major Investments (Auckland Future Fund)
- (5) Port Land
- (6) Changes To Other Rates, Fees and Charges
- (7) Do You Have Any Other Comments?
- (8) Local Board Priorities

### **(1) Overall Direction For The Long Term Plan:**

*Here you have asked which option do we prefer for the overall direction for Council's Long Term Plan 2024/2034? (Do less (reduce council services/ investment), lower rates increases and less debt); Proceed with the central proposal; or Do more (increase council services/investment), with higher rates increases and more debt.*

BNH supports the *central proposal* overall but is opposed to discontinuing the Long Term Differential Strategy. In addition, we support that aspect of the *Pay More, Get More Scenario* to attract more visitors, bid for and host major events as well as supporting economic development activities. BNH wishes to be assured Council is properly funding core infrastructure services.

As set out in your Consultation Document, the services and activities provided for in the *central proposal* are a capital investment of \$39.3 billion and operating spending of \$72.0 billion over 10 years. The Consultation Document says this will strengthen Auckland's physical and financial resilience, while tackling some big budget challenges. BNH agrees with Council on this.

Overall, rates increases for the average value residential property will be: • 7.5 per cent in year one; • 3.5 per cent in year two; • 8 per cent in year three; and • no more than 3.5 per cent a year after that. We understand that rates for business properties will be around 1.5% higher for each of these periods. We note that this includes discontinuing the Long Term Differential Strategy to which BNH is opposed, but your Consultation Document does not set out how continuing with the Long Term Differential Strategy would affect these rate increases, especially for businesses. BNH hopes that this is not an indication that this proposal is already a done deal.

The central proposal also includes establishing the Auckland Future Fund using the Auckland International Airport shareholding and the proceeds of an operating lease of Port of Auckland, along with a \$50 million annual cost reduction target by year three for Auckland Council delivered services and a \$30 million asset recycling target per annum (\$300 million over 10 years).

As we set out below, whilst BNH supports establishing the Auckland Future Fund with the Auckland International Airport shareholding, we do not support an operating lease of Port of Auckland.

In terms of the need for efficiencies and savings, we believe there should be a sharper focus on finding savings from the management of contractors and consultants by the Auckland Council group. We support a budget package that sharply reduces Auckland Council's group operating costs.

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<sup>2</sup> [Link](#) Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Consultation Document [Link](#) ; Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Supporting Information [Link](#)

BNH also supports borrowing more than the planned 'less than 270 per cent' of group revenue.

Whilst BNH supports Council working with central government on new funding tools to enable more investment into visitor attraction and economic development activities (as set out in the *central proposal*), in the meantime, we ask that a budget for marketing Auckland internationally, to attract visitors, bidding for and hosting major events as well as supporting economic development activities be prioritised (as set out in the *Pay More, Get More Scenario*). We are concerned that under the *central proposal* only the basic suite of events and minimum level of economic development projects will be delivered by Tātaki Auckland Unlimited. We also ask that the budget for local board-funded events, local economic development and town centre regeneration be at least maintained, but preferably increased. These activities are not only what makes Auckland a 'fun' place to live, but they offer an economic lifeline to small businesses with increases in visitor numbers.

## **(2) Transport Plan:**

*Here you have noted that your budget proposes working with government to make progress towards an integrated transport plan for Auckland. It proposes a total capital spend of \$13.4 billion for Auckland Transport over 10 years. This includes: • making public transport faster, more reliable and easier to use by investing in rapid transit network actions, such as making it easier to pay and introducing capped weekly public transport passes; • network optimisation, reducing temporary traffic management requirements and introducing dynamic lanes; • stopping some previously-planned initiatives, such as some raised pedestrian crossings and cycleways. You have asked that we provide feedback on this transport proposal. You have also asked if there is anything council should spend more or less on.*

BNH agrees that a key priority for transport should be to make the most of Council's existing assets and planned spend, including the Council's significant investment in the City Rail Link (CRL) and other large rapid transit network projects. To enable BIDs to support Council and their members, we ask that all transport projects are planned and implemented following consultation with and in close collaboration with any affected BIDs. A key concern BNH has is the disruption caused to business from transport developments, including often excessive temporary traffic management which is doubtless a significant cost to Council. We ask for this to be addressed as it will benefit affected businesses and will also assist Council in its efforts to find cost savings.

We support the particular focus on renewals and maintenance to ensure roads and other network assets are kept in good order and there be a total capital spend of \$13.4 billion for Auckland Transport to address these priorities. BNH also supports a new focus on smaller-scale changes to more quickly improve the performance of our roads and public transport services, including the provision of dynamic lanes and bus lanes.

Making public transport faster, more reliable and easier to use is also supported as is rapid transit investment, focused on busways (following the successful example of the Northern Busway). Transport investment for emissions reduction, such as the ongoing addition of electric vehicles to the bus and ferry fleets is also important to BNH. Getting more people on to public transport will also help Council to reach its emissions reduction target.

Ensuring maximum value from every dollar spent is a given for BNH, as is driving efficiencies and managing operating costs.

One concern BNH has along with Council is the recent government decision to cancel the Regional Fuel Tax (RFT), ending the scheme four years early. We are concerned that this has resulted in a reduction in the level of investment in and re-prioritisation of transport projects in the Long Term Plan 2024-2034. BNH is also keen to see the detailed plans for congestion charging/time of use charging, so that we can assess the implications for businesses relative to the timelines involved.

Adding further complexity is the recent release of the draft Government Policy Statement on land transport 2024.<sup>3</sup> In particular, this reintroduces the Roads of National Significance programme (including for Auckland, Mill Road and the East West Link). The introduction of legislation for the fast tracking of consents for major infrastructure, including the Roads of National Significance and rapid transit projects,<sup>4</sup> brings further opportunity, but BNH believes that an alignment of national and regional priorities needs to be established and asks Council to be proactive on this topic.

### **(3) North Harbour Stadium:**

*In response to the future investment needs of North Harbour Stadium, Council is considering options for the future of the stadium precinct. Council could keep the stadium precinct as it is now and maintain it at a cost of \$33 million over 10 years (Option 1). Or - Council could redevelop the stadium precinct to better deliver for the needs of the North Shore community, funded through reallocation of the \$33 million, the sale of some unused stadium precinct land while retaining the existing community playing fields and any other external funding available (Option 2). Another option is to change the operational management of the stadium to ensure greater use by the community. Changes to operational management can be considered in addition to either Option 1 or Option 2. You have asked which options we support for the North Harbour Stadium.*

There are a total of four major stadiums in Auckland. Three are owned and operated by the Council: Mt Smart Stadium, North Harbour Stadium and Western Springs Stadium. The fourth is the independent Eden Park. The Auckland region faces substantial costs to maintain and operate the stadia in their current configuration and the current operating models are considered to inhibit optimal utilisation and decision making. Some of these venues are under-used and don't make enough money to cover their operating costs.<sup>5</sup> The *2020 Independent Review of Council Controlled Organisations* identified that Auckland has "four under-funded and under-utilised stadiums." The Review also identified that a single operator approach is important to maximise opportunities and efficiencies.<sup>6</sup>

A Political Working Group formed by Council is assessing expressions of interest for a National Stadium based in Auckland. A future decision around Auckland's National Stadium may also affect how the regional stadia network operates collaboratively in the future.<sup>7</sup>

North Harbour Stadium is the least utilised facility in the Auckland stadium network. Attendance at commercial events and matches at North Harbour Stadium was approximately 10% of the number of fans who attended similar events at Mt Smart Stadium in the 12 months to July 2023. Sports organisations and concert promoters do not hire North Harbour Stadium for commercial events and matches as in their experience it has been that it is too difficult to attract fans to the venue – in comparison to other venues in the network.

Under this Long Term Plan 2024/2034, the council is consulting on two options for how to get the best community outcomes from the North Harbour Stadium precinct.

We do not believe that Option 1 which basically keeps the status quo is viable, as this will only serve to create a larger problem and increase the budget deficit over time.

BNH supports Option 2 under which it is proposed that Council redevelop the North Harbour Stadium precinct to better deliver for the needs of the North Shore community, funded through reallocation of the \$33 million and the sale of some currently unused stadium precinct land, while retaining the existing community playing fields. We understand that other external funding will

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.transport.govt.nz/area-of-interest/strategy-and-direction/government-policy-statement-on-land-transport-2024/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/511069/government-unveils-plan-to-fast-track-infrastructure-projects>

<sup>5</sup> Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Supporting Information, pages 157 and 652-675.

<sup>6</sup> Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Supporting Information, pages 157 and 652-675.

<sup>7</sup> Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Supporting Information, page 654.

likely be necessary to achieve the redevelopment. BNH believes that the operational management of the stadium should be changed to ensure greater use of the facilities by the community.<sup>8</sup>

It is also our belief that there is no need to reinvent the wheel as the current stadium should be adapted to produce a fit for purpose facility that the North Shore community with its growing population needs. We would also stress that any redevelopment must not result in the loss of any fields or other areas/land currently being used, with the sale of any land being confined to unused land in the precinct.

BNH would also note that any change of operational management of the stadium must ensure that whoever is ultimately responsible for the running of the stadium is dedicated to optimising the use of the facility which, if the redevelopment is effective, should include a multitude of stakeholders including the local business community.

#### **(4) Major Investments (Auckland Future Fund):**

*Council is proposing a diversified investment fund for Auckland (the Auckland Future Fund). The overall concept involves the transfer of Council's shareholding of just over 11 per cent in Auckland International Airport Limited (AIAL) to the fund to enable the subsequent sale of any or all the shares by the fund manager. However, the Consultation Document identifies four more detailed options: (Option 1) Auckland Future Fund with AIAL shares and port lease proceeds; (Option 2) Enhanced status quo (no establishment of an Auckland Future Fund); (Option 3) Auckland Future Fund with AIAL shares only; (Option 4) Auckland Future Fund with AIAL shares and Port of Auckland (POAL) dividends. You have asked what is our preference?*

*Council is also considering changes to the way the Port of Auckland operates, which may also result in further investment into the Auckland Future Fund. You have also asked whether we prefer to continue Council group operation of the port or lease the operation of the port for the future of Port of Auckland. And if the Council group continues to operate the Port of Auckland, how would we prefer the profits and dividends to be used?*

Overall, BNH supports Option 3 - Auckland Future Fund with AIAL shares only. We do not support a lease of the Port operation.

We have previously supported the partial sale of Council's shareholding in Auckland International Airport Ltd ('AIAL'). Although you have considered in your Consultation Document using the cash from the sale of the remaining AIAL shares to reduce council debt, you have not formally progressed this as an option.<sup>9</sup> Although our preference would be to use the cash from the sale of the remaining AIAL shares to reduce council debt, the closest option we agree with in your proposals is Option 3 (Auckland Future Fund with AIAL shares only). You have described this option as establishing an Auckland Future Fund and transferring the Council's remaining AIAL shareholding into the fund (as in the proposed Option 1), but POAL would continue to operate the port (as set out under the enhanced status quo option, Option 2). Under Option 3, those returns would not be invested in the Auckland Future Fund.

Turning to the proposed lease of Port operations, under this option, you have said that Auckland Council or POAL would grant a lease of around 35 years over the port land and operations to an external private party to operate the port. The Council would receive an upfront payment for this lease and the private operating company would have the right to run the port, make capital investments and earn profits from these operations over the period of the lease. Council would not receive returns from the operations of the Port during the period of the lease. At the end of the lease, control of the port operations (and associated land) would transfer back to the Council

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<sup>8</sup> Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Supporting Information, pages 661-662.

<sup>9</sup> Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Consultation Document, page 60.

group. The underlying ownership of the port land and wharves would stay with the Auckland Council group throughout the lease. The lease agreement would also set out key parameters that would help ensure that the council's ownership objectives and lease conditions were met.<sup>10</sup>

There are several reasons why BNH does not support a lease of the Port operations.

First, the various reports commissioned on the future of the Port of Auckland have reached the same conclusion that the Port will outgrow its present site in 20-30 years.<sup>11</sup> Also, the capacity constraints are not limited to the Port itself. The reports agree that the road and rail networks that service the Port will need significant upgrading to improve connectivity and integration. As a consequence, locking the Port into a lease of around 35 years does not seem to align with the need to integrate transport links or shift the Port in 20-30 years, or provide the flexibility necessary for these decisions.

Further, in recent decades the city centre has transformed dramatically and the area around the Port has become an important commercial and residential centre in its own right. There are differing stakeholder aspirations for the area leading to tensions between the growth in freight volumes on the one hand and increasing residential and recreational use of the waterfront on the other. One hundred per cent ownership of POAL and the land on the Auckland waterfront means Council can better manage the differing stakeholder aspirations and requirements.

In addition, the privatisation of the Port will likely mean Auckland businesses would end up paying increased costs to deliver profits to a private port operator (who will have a monopoly). Major price hikes from private terminal operators have led to concerns recently in Australia. BNH has concerns that any financial benefits from the lease will be outweighed by increased costs for businesses and consumers. Moreover, the Port of Auckland has recently seen a major turnaround under new management producing increased dividends for Council.

## **(5) Port Land:**

*Whether or not the operation of the Port of Auckland is leased, you have said that some land and wharves currently used for port operations could be transferred to Auckland Council and used for something else that provides public benefit. Captain Cook and Marsden wharves could be transferred to Council within 2-5 years provided that resource consent can be obtained for work at the Bledisloe Terminal. The Bledisloe Terminal site could be freed up and transferred to Council for use in another way within 15 years. You have asked what option we prefer for Captain Cook and Marsden wharves? And what option do we prefer for Bledisloe Terminal?*

The Council's strategic vision for the city centre waterfront involves improving public access to the waterfront for Aucklanders. The proposal in the Long Term Plan 2024-2034 to free-up wharves by consolidating the physical area of the port operations would support this objective.

Although Marsden and Captain Cook wharves could be freed-up for alternative use and transferred to Auckland Council with minimal impact on port operations or profitability, this would require that the port operations currently taking place on these two wharves be relocated to the Bledisloe Terminal. This would require construction work at Bledisloe North wharf and an additional vehicle handling building at the Bledisloe Terminal. These works are estimated to cost \$110 million and would require resource consent approval. The Consultation Document says that it is likely that this could be achieved over a two-to-five-year timeframe.

Although releasing the Bledisloe Terminal for alternative uses could provide significant new public benefits, it would also substantially reduce the scale and value of the port operations. The

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<sup>10</sup> Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Consultation Document, page 62.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.poal.co.nz/our-story/future>

Consultation Document says that this option is not considered viable in the short-term but is an option Council could look to implement within the next 15 years.

First, BNH does not fully understand how the proposal to lease the Port aligns with the proposals to free-up the Marsden and Captain Cook wharves. The Consultation Document says releasing these wharves would not materially change the amount of the prepaid lease, but less would be paid. However, removing the Bledisloe Terminal from port operations would reduce the lease prepayment the Council would receive by up to an estimated \$300 million.

Further, if the Bledisloe Terminal was no longer used for port operations, imports of bulk cargo like construction industry materials (such as steel and aggregate) and bulk food (such as banana shipments) would likely need to be unloaded at other ports and be transported to Auckland via truck (or possibly by rail). This would likely add cost to supply chains and increase road congestion and emissions.

In addition, the range of alternative uses for the freed-up Bledisloe Terminal land could be restricted because these other uses (such as for recreation or apartments) will be located alongside a working port that will be operating twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week with all the associated noise, lighting and traffic impacts. The implications for any new cruise ship terminal would also need to be considered.

If the Council retains ownership of the Port, removing the Bledisloe Terminal from port operations would result in lower profits from the port at some point after the 10-year period of this plan. Higher rates would then be required. There would also be a reduction in the value of Auckland Council's assets as the value of the port would need to be written down by the value of the lower profits.

The longer-term financial implications of the freed-up Bledisloe Terminal would depend on the nature of the alternative uses. Creating new public infrastructure or amenities would generally have a net financial cost to Council, while residential or commercial development on the site should have a net financial benefit (after accounting for any necessary infrastructure development or remediation work). This would all likely occur outside the 10-year period of the Long Term Plan 2024-2034.

Overall, we agree to Marsden and Captain Cook wharves being freed-up for alternative uses, but not the Bledisloe Terminal (at least not at this stage).

## **(6) Changes To Other Rates, Fees and Charges:**

*Here you have noted Council's proposals to change business rates, targeted rates, fees and charges. You have asked what we think of these proposals and whether we have any other feedback.*

Our overall feedback is that what businesses need most from Council is a fair, transparent and stable approach to rates.

### Long Term Differential Strategy (LTDS)

BNH is very concerned about your proposal to discontinue the Long Term Differential Strategy which has been gradually lowering the share of general rates paid by businesses and business ratepayers.

We do not accept that a business differential should be applied to rates especially based on the reasons you have given that "businesses place more demand on, and impose more costs on, the Council's transport and stormwater services", or that "rates are more affordable for businesses" or because "businesses can also claim back GST on rates and expense rates against tax." These



reasons do not justify the business differential, particularly for small businesses who make up most businesses in Auckland, many of whom have spent the last few years struggling to survive following the pandemic and in the face of ongoing financial pressure due to rent increases, high interest rates and reduced income, as customers feel the pinch of the cost of living crisis.

BNH asks that the Long Term Differential Strategy remain in place.

We are also very concerned about your proposal to increase the share that businesses pay of generally applied targeted rates from 25.8 per cent (originally set at the same level as the end target of the LTDS) to the same share they will pay of the general rate, approximately 31 per cent.

While BNH agrees that Auckland must improve infrastructure to save our harbours, beaches and streams and reverse the decline of biodiversity in the region, we do not accept that a business differential (especially at 31%) should be applied to the Water Quality, Natural Environment, and Climate Action Transport targeted rates.

### Watercare's Increase In Charges

This is another area of concern for BNH. To support a significant increase in capital investment over the next 10-years, Watercare's board of directors has proposed to increase water and wastewater tariffs by 25.8 per cent on 1 July 2024. We question whether these substantial increases in water and wastewater tariffs which appear excessive are fair and reasonable.

### **(7) Do You Have Any Other Comments?**

*Here you have highlighted whether we have any other comments, including on the Local Board Funding Policy and the Council Controlled Organisation Accountability Policy. With regard to the Local Board Funding Policy, your Consultation Document sets out the proposal to move to a different allocation of funding for local boards for their local community services. The new model proposes to distribute available funding based on population (80 per cent), deprivation (15 per cent) and land area (5 per cent). This is different to the current funding allocation which is based on assets in each local board area. In this Long Term Plan 2024-2034, you are proposing a staged approach (or the central proposal) to achieving this outcome.*

Starting with the Local Board Funding Policy, BNH agrees with the *central proposal*, which sets out a 50/50 combination approach (that is, reallocating some existing funding between local boards and providing some new funding (\$20 million opex and \$30 million capex) over the first three years of the LTP 2024-2034.

This will result in 18 local boards being within 5 per cent of their equitable funding levels (opex and capex) by year three of the LTP 2024-2034, with three local boards remaining funded above their equitable levels but to a lesser degree than current levels. Changes to funding levels will only take place from 1 July 2025 (year two of LTP 2024-2034). Staff would use year one of the LTP to prepare for this change.

BNH supports this proposal.

With regard to the proposed amendments to the CCO Accountability Policy to reflect recent changes in legislation as well as the new/updated council policies and plans, we support these amendments.<sup>12</sup>

In early 2023, Auckland experienced the Anniversary Day floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. These devastating events showed that the effects of climate change are becoming more frequent and

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<sup>12</sup> Long Term Plan 2024/2034 (10-year Budget) Consultation Document, page 19.

more severe in Auckland. The Consultation Document says that these events have had a big impact on the Council's finances both in terms of storm response costs and the need to improve Council's storm response and resilience.

Given this situation, BNH assumed that the Council would have considered implementing a targeted rate in the Long Term Plan 2024-2034 to fund these measures (the 'Making Space for Water' (MSW) programme). As this appears not to be the case, BNH would like to know if Council intends to ring fence a percentage of income from general rates to fund the MSW programme and if so, how much and how will this be identified in Council's future budgets?

### **(8) Local Board Priorities:**

Overall, BNH supports Upper Harbour Local Board's 10-year budget priorities and their priorities for 2024-2025 and in addition we would offer the following comments:

- a) BNH would ask Council to ensure as far as is practicable that funding to Upper Harbour Local Board (UHLB) is maintained at its optimum level to enable UHLB to deliver on its identified priorities for the benefit of the wider UHLB community. It is imperative that UHLB is able to maintain an adequate level of service to the community particularly in areas that support peoples' health and wellbeing, both mental and physical, such as the library and indoor/outdoor recreation facilities.
- b) Within their LTP priorities and priorities for 2024-2025 UHLB do not make any specific reference to economic development, however their commitment to creating a connected community and vibrant destination where people want to live, visit, shop, work and connect confirms their intention to support local economic development. Following regular discussions with UHLB regarding the importance the board places on the enhanced economic performance of the local economy, BNH will continue to work with UHLB whenever opportunities arise to further support the growth of the local economy.
- c) Upper Harbour is a diverse and vibrant area, continuing to be one of the fastest growing areas in the country in both absolute and percentage population terms, a trend that is expected to continue. This brings both challenges and opportunity for BNH and as the Local Board's only formal Business Improvement District, we look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with UHLB, leveraging from the ongoing growth of the region.
- d) Maintaining the current level of growth will prove difficult if the infrastructure business needs is not made available. The business community aspires to achieve improved productivity whilst also improving sustainability and reducing any harm to the environment, all of which is critical for the sustainable growth of the region.
- e) Access to, through and around the business district remains of great importance to BNH members and is critical for the 37,000 employees across the North Harbour BID. BNH requests greater support for local transport infrastructure projects which support business and economic development, over and above community or politically led initiatives. We support the increased use of cycleways, walkways and footpaths and making these modes of access more user-friendly, hopefully encouraging some commuters out of their vehicles.
- f) BNH supports any focus that UHLB places on the infrastructure challenges for the growing population and any advocacy for improved public transport and roading networks. We would however ask that the provision for rapid transport does not remove or compromise infrastructure assets and facilities depended upon by commercial trade and employee commuters, in the absence of alternative modal options.
- g) BNH continues to rely on the UHLB's extensive local knowledge and influence across the Auckland Council family to add value to their role of local board governance. We also collectively rely on the board's ability to influence government decisions for the greater good of the region and its economic vitality.
- h) BNH would like to acknowledge the collaborations with and the support received from UHLB over recent years. The Team look forward to working with UHLB in the coming twelve

months and beyond, to achieve the best outcomes for our members and the wider community as a whole. BNH will continue to support UHLB's strategic priorities and outcomes whenever possible.

- i) BNH would like to emphasise that in addition to any economic development initiatives, we would ask UHLB to maintain the services that support peoples' health and wellbeing, sustainability outcomes and connected and engaged communities.

**Business Improvement District (BID) Targeted Rates:**

The 51 Business Improvement Districts across Auckland are directly accountable and responsible to their members for their BID targeted rate level and how it is expended. The Business North Harbour BID targeted rate of \$822,084 for the 2024-2025 period has been approved by our members through the Annual General Meeting process and we fully support its approval by UHLB.

**Conclusions:**

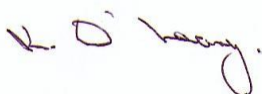
As we enter another year where the resilience of small and medium sized businesses will be tested, we ask the Council to consider carefully the needs of these ratepayer businesses as it makes decisions about the priorities and proposed savings in the Long Term Plan 2024-2034.

We cannot emphasise enough that there must be a focus on providing core infrastructure services which grow the economy and support local businesses, especially in our town centres and industrial/commercial areas.

We fundamentally believe further savings can be made with a culture of efficiency being instilled across the council group. Now is the time for the Council, and its significant number of employees, to adopt a rate-payer mindset but Council must not lose sight of Auckland's ongoing economic prosperity.

Should there be any questions or other matters arising from this Submission, we would be pleased to respond to these.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin O'Leary  
General Manager