

RE: TRANSFORMING AUCKLAND'S FOOD AND DRINK ENVIRONMENTS

Tēnā koe,

Local representation is vitally important in building a positive and healthy Auckland for our communities. Healthy Auckland Together (HAT) – Food Environments group consists of over 20 organisations, working collaboratively to improve food environments. One of our key principles of engagement is to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

As a group we would like to acknowledge your experience, skills, and commitment to improve Tāmaki Makaurau, as you seek an active role in Auckland Council through the upcoming local body elections.

We are seeking your support for change in three areas of Council policy, to encourage and promote thriving healthy food environments for our Auckland communities in the following areas;

- 1.Supporting community kai growing spaces
- 2.Restricting unhealthy food and drink marketing
- 3.Improving access to free drinking water

These recommendations are based on local and global evidence of what works to transform food and drink environments, to improve health outcomes.

These changes would support and strengthen Auckland's urban communities' right to greater control over their own food environment, and, in turn, support the growth of a healthier, happier Auckland. In addition, they would support Auckland Council's overarching commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, healthy and sustainable food environments under the C40 Cities initiative, and many of the Auckland plan 2050 outcomes.

Please feel free to contact us for further information or with any questions.

Healthy Auckland Together (HAT)
Food Environments Action Group



SUPPORTING COMMUNITY

KAI GROWING SPACES *

Auckland Council's Thriving Communities Strategy Ngā Hapori Momoho 2022–2032 is an aspirational document that aims to put community wellbeing at the heart of everything Council does. Within it, Auckland Council sets out its support for local, sustainable, healthy food systems, and commits itself to ensuring a more integrated approach that encourages community led involvement.

While the current Auckland Unitary Plan allows for community kai growing spaces, it makes no mention of, nor provision for, agriculture (producing, processing and distributing food) within urban zoning regulations. This means that the Unitary plan does not enable the creation of small-scale projects such as urban farms or allotments, either commercial or community focused, on land zoned as urban. In addition, the approval process for communities seeking to use Council land for community kai growing purposes is complex and often opaque.¹

In Auckland, provision of and support for space to be used for community urban food production is recognised as a key policy strategy to improve local food environments and reduce food insecurity in communities.²

Global and national authorities have taken action to support community kai growing spaces.³

This Call to Action distils two key policy asks tailored to Auckland Council's Thriving Communities Strategy Ngā Hapori Momoho and is based on leading international and domestic evidence.

***Community kai growing spaces:** community-managed food growing areas on council-owned or managed open space for the surrounding community. Designed to provide benefits to access nutritious food, waste minimisation, build connection to land, belonging, and community, health and environmental benefits.⁴



CALL TO ACTION

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TO BE CHAMPIONS FOR THE NEXT UNITARY PLAN 2026–2036

Update the Auckland Unitary Plan 2026–2036 to make clear mention of, and provision for, long-lasting community kai growing spaces within urban and open zoning regulations.

These changes would:

- Align Auckland's Unitary Plan with regional and international approaches like Christchurch's District Plan and Los Angeles' Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act.
- Support the growth of small-scale urban agriculture, such as Pourewa in Ōrākei, and urban farms like Kelmarna Farm, across Auckland.^{1,5}
- Further support community self-sufficiency and resilience.^{6,7}
- Help achieve aims set out in Auckland Council's Thriving Communities Strategy Ngā Hapori Momoho.

SUPPORT THE STREAMLINED PROCESS FOR COMMUNITIES TO SEEK APPROVAL

Support the recently published *Kai Growing Spaces: Community Guidelines*, a unified, Auckland-wide approach to the approval process for community agricultural activities on urban and open-zoned Council land.⁴

- Auckland's 21 Local Boards offer valuable perspectives, but the varied approval process can lead to delays and uncertainty, limiting community potential. Streamlining this process will build on local strengths, reduce delays, and empower community initiatives.^{8,9}
- A consistent process will unlock greater opportunities for community-led and driven projects across Auckland.



RESTRICTING UNHEALTHY FOOD AND DRINK MARKETING

Auckland Council's Thriving Rangatahi Plan commits to supporting children and young people to thrive in Auckland. There is an opportunity to update several advertising policies to enable children and young people to lead this vision.

Auckland Council aspires to support children and young people to be healthy and well, and feel connected to te taiao (the environment). However, our current environments heavily feature unhealthy food and drink marketing, in particular in low-income areas:^{1,2}

- 62% of primary and intermediate schools have ads within 500m of the school gates.
- 83% of food and drink ads near schools promote unhealthy products.³
- Children see about 68 junk food ads daily (compared to about 26 healthy food ads).⁴
- Self-regulation from the Advertising Standards Authority and Out Of Home Media Association voluntary codes, are failing to protect our tamariki from unhealthy food and drink marketing.⁵

Jurisdictions around the world have taken action to protect children from exposure to unhealthy food and drink marketing in outdoor settings.

This Call to Action distils three key policy options tailored to the Auckland context, based on evidence from leading international examples to support children and young people to thrive.



CALL TO ACTION

RESTRICT UNHEALTHY FOOD & DRINK ADVERTISING ACROSS ALL PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEMS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Update the Auckland Transport Advertising Policy to include a ban on unhealthy food and drink advertising.

- Bans already exist for tobacco, alcohol, and gambling advertisement.
- Similar policies are found worldwide, such as in London, Amsterdam, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia.
- The Transport for London policy reduced household food calorie purchases by 6.7%, with flow-on positive health effects and cost saving.^{6,7}

RESTRICT UNHEALTHY FOOD & DRINK ADVERTISING ON COUNCIL-OWNED SPACES

Revise the Auckland Council Signs Bylaw to include advertising restrictions on and within Council-owned property.

- This type of policy is in place in 21 local councils in the United Kingdom.⁸
- The ban would cover marketing on and within Council-owned parks, sports fields, public squares, beaches, as well as community facilities like libraries, playgrounds skateparks, and recreation centres.

RESTRICT UNHEALTHY FOOD & DRINK ADVERTISING IN A 500M RADIUS OF ALL PRIMARY & INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

In Auckland Council Signs Bylaws, specify a ban on unhealthy food and drink advertising in school zones.

- Similar policies are in place in India, Kiribati, and Portugal.
- A Wellington case study estimated that banning unhealthy food and drink advertisements within 400m of schools would result in an overall 25% reduction in exposure to unhealthy food and drink marketing for children.⁹
- However, a 500m road and walking path network better reflects the evidence on the spaces that matter most to children in Aotearoa.¹⁰



IMPROVING ACCESS TO FREE PUBLIC DRINKING WATER

Auckland Council has a unique opportunity to promote community health, reduce plastic pollution, and encourage environmental responsibility by making fresh drinking water freely and easily accessible to everyone.

Despite the quality of our tap water, it is often hard to find a clean, working, public drinking fountains in Auckland. Bottled drinks are easier to find than drinkable water stations, and Auckland is saturated with marketing for sugary drinks.¹ Kiwis dispose of approximately 828 million single-use plastic bottles a year, the equivalent of 165 Olympic swimming pools.²

- Over 50% of Aucklanders say they would drink more water if more water fountains were available.¹
- 70% of people say they will only use a water fountain if they can refill a water bottle.³
- 47% of people say cleanliness affects their willingness to use a water fountain.¹

With modest investment, Council can make free public water fountains

- more widely accessible
- attractive and hygienic
- easier to find and use.

This Call to Action highlights examples to make water the first and easiest choice.



CALL TO ACTION

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FREE DRINKING FOUNTAINS AND PRIORITISING AREAS WITH LESS ACCESS

Longer-term commitments

- Champion a local “Right to Water” policy framework.
- Push for water fountains to be integrated into planning consent requirements for major venues, events, and transit upgrades.

MAINTAIN / UPGRADE EXISTING DRINKING FOUNTAINS TO BE HYGIENIC, VISIBLE AND BOTTLE-REFILL FRIENDLY

Short-term actions

- Announce your support to upgrade water access in your ward.
- Visit and review current water fountain conditions and locations.

ENGAGE COMMUNITIES TO CO-DESIGN INITIATIVES MAKING DRINKING FOUNTAINS EASY TO ACCESS

Short-term action

- Host a “hydration audit walkabout” with locals and youth groups.

Longer-term commitments

- Work with schools and sports clubs to ensure water access at events.
- Collaborate with health and environmental groups to fund pilot upgrades or new water fountain projects.

LAUNCH CAMPAIGNS ENCOURAGING REUSABLE BOTTLES AND FREE PUBLIC DRINKING WATER

Short-term action

- Promote reusable bottle use on social media and council signage and billboards.

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