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Ōrākei Local Board Plan 2017

Submission from the Meadowbank St Johns Residents Association

This submission from the Meadowbank St Johns Residents Association (MSJRA) is at a high level, as residents will submit on issues specific to them. It aims to identify the key issues that impact on our communities, based on feedback, input at meetings and online discussion.

Overall

The Ōrākei Local Board Plan 2017 is a good reflection of the priorities that have been articulated from within our area. In particular, the recognition of the Glen Innes to Tāmaki Drive shared path as the area's key transformational project is very welcome.

We hope that the Meadowbank - St Johns area will see a good share of investment in amenity and public realm enhancements in the coming years. This includes, for example, some of the town centre enhancements and recreational space investment that other parts of the board area have seen recently. The shared path provides a strong opportunity to catalyse some of those improvements.

Key priorities

1. *Glen Innes to Tāmaki Drive shared path*

We strongly support the Ōrākei Local Board's focus on this path and we have had regular feedback about the potential improvements that it will enable. These include:

- linkages north and south from Stage 2 of the path: connecting communities either side of Purewa Valley, linking families to local schools, and potentially easing congestion on local roads as a result; these linkages are heavily backed by all our communities and their importance cannot be emphasised enough;
- connections from the path into St John's Bush, and related enhancements of existing trails (a project directly referenced in the plan itself);
- improvements to waterways and local reserves, including Tahapa Reserve West – a neglected reserve and one that will become more important as it sits at a key point on the path and will link closely to Meadowbank Train Station.

While there are some strong feelings about the route that Stage 4 will take to Tāmaki Drive, the key piece of feedback we have had is the desire for speedy delivery of the project. If a path

around the eastern edge of Hobson Bay can be delivered more quickly, while leaving funds to enable local connections, this will be our preferred option. This has the advantage of connecting to the new signalled crossing at the bottom of Ngapiipi Road, which is due to open in mid-2018. Otherwise, the desire is for a path across Hobson Bay that will connect the community most directly with the city.

2. *Meadowbank Town Centre and the Meadowbank Community Centre*

This town centre suffers from a disconnection between the shops by the corner of Meadowbank Road and the Meadowbank Shopping Centre. As a result, the town centre does not have a sense of place and is a long way short of its potential. While not referenced directly in the board plan's Outcome 5, we would hope that opportunities for enhancing it are prioritised as part of the objective for 'thriving town centres'.

We believe that the long-talked about redevelopment of the Meadowbank Community Centre, which is referenced briefly in the plan, should be thought of as a catalyst for enhancing the town centre as a whole, and not solely as a 'community space' project. We would therefore welcome any ideas for the centre – including both design and funding options – that would help to boost local businesses and enhance connections for the town centre as a whole. There is a strong desire for progress on this project, and some growing impatience around it.

Other enhancements for the town centre could include: making St Johns Rd easier and safer to cross mid-block; stronger street connections into the shopping centre; a clearer and better-signposted walking route from the centre to nearby Waiatarua Reserve; and a slower speed environment to create a more attractive area, drawing in visitors and encouraging more people to stop and shop.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Ōrākei Local Board and local businesses to build a shared vision for this centre.

3. *Improvements in green spaces*

As mentioned above, there are several open spaces in the Meadowbank – St Johns area that have not benefitted from the same level of attention as other parts of the board area. Tahapa Reserve West is greatly in need of attention, and would suit a playground or sports area.

We welcome the reference to enhancing Ōrākei Basin and would like this to include providing recreational connections to it. In particular, new walkways between the Glenn Innes to Tamaki Drive Path Stage 2 and Kepa Bush, via "boardwalk" style bridges as far west along the Pourewa Creek as possible, would provide significant recreational benefit and access to this unique estuarine environment from both Meadowbank and Kohimarama.

4. *Advocating for quality development*

The MSJRA recognises the many benefits of more people living near the town centre and the area's transport hubs, particularly the train station. However, new larger-scale development should help to enhance and beautify the area, not diminish it. We are concerned that some recent proposed developments fall short of these standards, and ask the board to continue to advocate strongly for better design.

5. Transport and safer streets

Pedestrian safety is a regular concern within the area, and we support the plan's objective that 'Local shops, schools and community facilities are connected through safe walking and cycling paths'. This becomes more important with several multi-unit developments happening around the area and the risk of an increase in vehicle traffic as a result.

Therefore we ask that the Ōrākei Local Board focus on the following, working with/advocating to Auckland Transport as necessary:

- prioritising connections to enhance use of public transport and minimising reliance on cars; this would include for example a bus connection to Meadowbank Station being prioritised over the few carparks it would remove;
- ensuring that pedestrian safety and priority is a core consideration for transport-related projects;
- enhancing the pedestrian environment, including: a safe crossing at the top of Meadowbank Road; delivering the planned pedestrian improvements on Meadowbank Road and at the top of Manapau Road; and identifying other projects that would encourage walking, particularly those that better enable children to walk to and from school safely.

Thank you for your consideration.

Meadowbank and St Johns Residents Association